

## **CASE METHOD WITHIN SOFT SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AT MARITIME ENGLISH LESSONS**

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Through e-learning and online training, continuous learning becomes more accessible and helps those working at sea to deepen their knowledge and develop skills both while on and off the ship. More and more global shipping companies are using online training platforms to provide maritime specialists with additional competencies that are not included in their standardized basic training. Today, the focus is not only on the development of technical skills, but also on the skills of human interaction and communication or «soft skills». Even in the future of the global digitalization of the maritime industry, these skills will occupy a leading place, because they provide possession of the situation and effective communication at any stage of the work with complex ship control systems.

The concept of «soft skills» is described in various foreign and Ukrainian scientific works, but scientists do not have a generally recognized definition of this concept. Soft skills are often called interpersonal or human skills with an emphasis on personal behavior and the management of relationships between people [6]. This concept is associated both with the ability of interpersonal communication [7], working with people, and with qualities that a person possesses [9]. It is believed that soft skills are determined by certain personality traits and thus influence the psychological processes that characterize the life development of a person [8].

In Ukrainian scientific works, soft skills are also interpreted as those including mainly interpersonal skills that can be applied in various fields, which makes them «cross-cutting» [3]. This concept is studied more deeply by V. Kudryavtseva, S. Barsuk and O. Frolova, defining soft skills as individual psychological and behavioral properties that are realized in interpersonal interaction and contribute to its effectiveness [2]. After analyzing and summarizing numerous scientific works, we conclude that soft skills include both communication and behavior skills and personal characteristics, innate or acquired, which must be possessed by highly qualified maritime specialists in order to meet the needs of the modern maritime industry. The *aim* of the study is to determine the role of the case method in the development of soft skills at maritime English lessons with senior students.

There are many classifications of the above-described skills. M. Robles considers communication skills, politeness, responsibility, social skills, flexibility, teamwork and work ethics [7] to be the most important skills in the context of work. The most common soft skills in education are critical thinking, problem solving, leadership, responsibility, communication and collaboration [4]. Ukrainian scientists I. Shevchenko, O. Shelever, V. Markova [3] consider it necessary to develop in higher education applicants such soft skills as communication, teamwork, creativity, emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, adaptability, leadership, perseverance, responsibility, time management. In the context of studying maritime English I. Zaitseva [1] emphasizes the importance of developing such soft skills as effective teamwork, proving one's own opinion, finding a compromise on controversial issues, and others.

In the light of the current needs of the maritime industry, namely the practice of developing the skills of maritime specialists through the electronic training courses as part of individual training on the basis of digital educational platforms, it is appropriate to consider those soft skills that are currently in need of leading shipping companies. This is possible through the analysis of the most used e-learning platforms like *Ocean Learning Platform*, *Maritime Education Platform*, *STCW Online*, *CBT Platform*, *Maritime Trainer*, *Seably*, *Maritime Training* used by shipping companies for online training of maritime specialists. According to the results of the analytical analysis of electronic courses on the above-mentioned platforms, a list of 15 skills that maritime specialists should possess was compiled (from the most common to the least common ones): *leadership, communication (oral/written), safety behavior, teamwork, human relationships, team management, planning and organization, problem and conflict solving, time management, crisis management, stress management, harassment and bullying, active listening, mentoring at sea, cultural awareness*.

The results of the analysis show the importance of such skill as *leadership*, which occupies a leading place among others. Moreover, shipping companies have detailed this category in the form of interrelated *team management skills, problem-solving and conflict management, crisis management, mentoring at sea*. Focusing on the leadership qualities of maritime specialists is a priority trend of the maritime industry today, because it is this ability that reduces the risk of accidents at sea and increases the chances of survival of the crew, safety of the ship and cargo.

Due to the fact that the development of soft skills is possible only through interpersonal communication, the discipline «Maritime English» occupies a leading place in this perspective, because it integrates a variety of relevant topics necessary to achieve this goal. During the educational process at the Kherson State Maritime Academy, each training module in this discipline is built and sustained within the communicative and competence approach aimed at developing the skills of interpersonal communication, critical thinking, teamwork, leadership, decision-making, creativity and innovation, motivation of students. This is achieved through the use of communicatively directed teaching methods, the leading position among which is occupied by the *case study method*.

Each training module for senior students contains authentic maritime texts or «cases» based on real situations that happened at sea. Following the leading foreign [5] and Ukrainian scientists [2], we believe that the case study method is the leading one in the development of soft skills of cadets. This method involves a step-by-step analysis of an actual problem described in a small text, which stimulates the use of cognitive skills and information resources to analyze human mistakes and make reasoned judgments. This ability is very important for assessing the situation, analyzing the likely scenarios of its development and response options, especially on a ship. Almost all senior students have experience working at sea, which is why tasks to cases activate critical thinking and strengthen the motivation to compare their own experience with the situation. This method contributes to the development of such soft skills as communication, teamwork, leadership, problem solving and conflict, active listening and others.

The stage-nature of this method covers various formats of work during lessons: from individual familiarization with the case, its paired/group analysis, to general discussion and work with mistakes. In addition, this method can cover only a certain stage of the lesson, if the text is small and touches only one problem for discussion, or all the lesson, where a large volume of text is divided into parts and each one has a detailed work. The effectiveness of this method is that it integrates a lot of other communicative methods and teaching techniques in accordance with each stage: *pre-reading*, *while-reading*, *post-reading*. So, at the pre-reading stage, the teacher actualizes the student's attention to the topic of the case and motivates him to further active work. It can be done by working with illustrative material or a small video material in the form of closed or open format discussions, brainstorming, etc. The while-reading stage may include tasks within *skim reading* (focusing on the subject of the text, without detailed work), *scan reading* (focusing on finding certain information in the text), *intensive reading* (thoughtful reading in order to deeply understand the situation), etc. The post-reading stage includes semi-controlled tasks, aimed at establishing feedback between the student and the teacher (namely how much the first one understands the content of the text), and free speech tasks, contributing to the development of soft skills of the future maritime specialists. Educational tools include *story building/reconstruction*, *reporting the situation*, *dialogue building*, *role-play*, *simulation*, *discussion*, *debates*, *communication strategies*, *problem solving simulation*, *replying to the problem* and others. These techniques are effective for the development of all 15 soft skills that are in the focus of attention of leading shipping companies today.

Accordingly, the following advantages of the case study method in the development of soft skills at maritime English lessons can be distinguished:

- this method allows to immerse into the atmosphere on a ship in clearly distributed roles and a scenario that motivates students to work actively;

- students are interested in the application of already acquired knowledge and experience in situations that simulate real circumstances at sea and make learning conscious;

-students develop the ability to make judgments on any topic, even those where they have limited experience, making the learning process self-directed;

-through self-expression and self-affirmation, students develop the ability to offer a responsible decision strategy and maintain creative and productive collaboration within the group;

-students develop the ability to work for a specific result, effectively plan their time, distribute tasks, take responsibility, which makes learning more initiative and scientific.

**Conclusions.** Over the past decade, the focus of attention of leading international organizations of the maritime industry has shifted towards the development of soft skills, which include both communication and behavior skills and personal characteristics that qualified maritime specialists must possess. According to the results of the study, the first place is occupied by skills related to leadership and management. These skills are considered the most necessary at this stage of development of the maritime industry, because highly qualified specialists reduce the risk of accidents at sea and increase the chances of saving the ship and cargo. Among the most effective methods of developing the soft skills within the maritime education is case-study method, which makes the educational process conscious, motivated, self-directed, initiative and active.

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