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Relevance of online video clips for autonomous learning of maritime English

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Abstract. The content of teaching of Maritime English is dictated by the 1995 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW), as amended, which sets qualification standards, including a high proficiency level in Maritime English, for masters, officers, and officers of the watch on merchant ships. However, still more than 30 % of accidents at sea or in ports can be attributed to communication problems, in particular to the poor knowledge of English. The pre-existing language competence of students that enrol in the programs of nautical studies and marine engineering at the Faculty of Maritime Studies and Transport of the University of Ljubljana, Slovenia, ranges from A1 to C1. Therefore, in addition to class work we need to look for interventions that might allow less successful students to catch up with their peers and more successful students to upgrade their language knowledge in the field of Maritime English. Using authentic video is intrinsically motivating for students and may affect student behaviour outside the language classroom. Series of Maritime English video materials are commercially available (e.g., Seagull) but not accessible to students. As a result, this paper explores video materials that are universally available online and could be used as a springboard for autonomous learning of students outside the language classroom. In order to corroborate the relevance of these video materials in terms of real and carrier content, an analysis of online clips that depict the maritime world, in particular different types of ships, was made. The primary aspects that this paper focuses on are relevant carrier content and Maritime English vocabulary.

Keywords. Authentic video materials, maritime English, teaching, vocabulary.

1. Introduction

The product of teaching of Maritime English (ME) is dictated by the 1995 International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW), as amended, which sets qualification standards, including a high proficiency level in ME, for masters, officers, and officers of the watch on merchant ships. Adequate knowledge of the English language is defined as, for instance, the ability of the

officer to use charts and other nautical publications, to understand meteorological information and messages concerning ship's safety and operation, to communicate with other ships and coastal stations and to perform the officer duties also with a multilingual crew, including the ability to use and understand the IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases (IMO SMCP). (IMO 2011: 105)

Therefore, the language competence that students need to have acquired after completing their higher education studies undoubtedly is high. On the other hand, research has shown (Jurkovič 2009) that 25 % of students had not managed to reach beyond levels A1 and A2 prior to higher education enrolment. As a result, we need to look for interventions that might allow less successful students to catch up with their peers and students at higher levels of language competence to become (more) successful lifelong learners. A possible classroom intervention aiming at enhancing these processes is the use of authentic video materials for the autonomous learning of ME and English for General Purposes (EGP).

Several CALL applications exist for the learning of ME: results of projects that are freely available

online (e.g., MarengPlus 2010; Captains 2012) or commercial (e.g., Seagull applications). However, none of these includes authentic video materials. In the teaching of EGP these have an established role but have not been subject to integrated research within the ME domain. In addition, Discovery Channel (e.g., Mighty Ships, Mega Builders) and National Geographic Channel (e.g., Megastructures) series could be used for educational purposes but are protected by copyright.

As a result, this paper explores video materials that are universally available online and could be used as a springboard for autonomous learning of ME outside the language classroom. In order to corroborate the relevance of these video materials in terms of real and carrier content, an analysis of online clips that depict the maritime world, in particular different types of ships, was made. The primary aspects that this paper will focus on are relevant carrier content and ME vocabulary.

2. Theoretical framework

ME is a division of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It is designed to meet the needs of the discipline it serves, in this case the needs of ME users within the maritime community. ME is an umbrella term that encompasses five subvarieties: English for Navigation and Maritime Communications or Nautical English (including e.g. seamanship, cargo work, ship handling, and meteorology), English for Maritime Commerce, English for Maritime Law, English for Marine Engineering, and English for Shipbuilding (Bocanegra-Valle 2013). Therefore, ME also refers to the English used by various shore-based parties (Trekner 2000) but still Nautical English is often considered the “quintessence” of ME (Bocanegra-Valle 2013: 2). Yet, poor knowledge of English remains one of the most common causes leading to shipping accidents (Ziarati et al. 2008). Among the aspects that can cause communication problems often, very often or rather often, the following were identified: correct pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary, technical/nautical vocabulary, listening, speaking, Standard Marine Communication Phrases, reading, and writing (Vangehuchten et al. 2010).

To meet the needs of the maritime industry, the ‘4E’ concept has been developed within the METNET and GLOMET projects (see Pritchard 2003). ME at the essential level is restricted to IMO SMCP. The objective of SMCP is to enhance navigational safety, standardize the language used in maritime communication, and assist MET institutions in training sea-based and shore-based personnel. The extension module is most commonly found at higher education institutions worldwide, and extends to shore-based activities and content. The enrichment module is intended mainly for management level students as it involves activities and topics such as business operations in shipping and terminal operation. Finally, the objective of the elevation module is to provide master’s degree students with the language knowledge that they need to become good communicators and future managers. As far as the role of EGP is concerned, it permeates all levels, and is most prominent in the elevation module. This means that both EGP and mastery of ME are necessary for safe and efficient shipping operations.

Therefore, balancing ME and EGP language skills and systems appears as a necessity (Pritchard 2003; IMO 2009). In the teaching of EGP, the use of authentic video materials has an established role. It has been found that using video has positive effects on the development of listening comprehension and oral production (Weyers 1999), narration and description as micro speaking skills (Rifkin 2000), listening comprehension and vocabulary (Lin 2002), grammar (Herron et al. 2006), cultural competence, knowledge of contextualized use of language, speaking and listening skills in particular, vocabulary knowledge, and other not language-related skills (for instance critical and creative thinking skills) (Seferoglu 2008), vocabulary (Yuksel and Tanriverdi 2009), overall language proficiency (Mekheimer 2011), student interest and motivation (Mekheimer 2011; Tabatabaei and Gahroei 2011), and writing (Čepon 2011). In the ME Model Course 3.17 (IMO 2009), however, video is only assigned the role of “a useful resource for listening practice that catches students’ imaginations, if used carefully.” (IMO 2009: 101) Therefore, we can safely

conclude that in the teaching of ME the role of authentic video has been underestimated and neglected.

With reference to using authentic video in the language classroom, the short-sequence or long-sequence approach can be used. A significant advantage of watching short clips is that they allow focusing on language details, such as specific vocabulary or grammatical forms (Swaffar and Vlatten 1997; Seferoglu 2008). In addition, the short-sequence approach can be used for less advanced learners while the long-sequence approach is more suitable for mature and more advanced learners (King 2002). Watching short excerpts may prevent the development of skills and strategies for extensive viewing of videos that characterize proficient users of a foreign language and the way we naturally watch video in real life circumstances. Therefore, students should be exposed to self-contained videos or sections of varying lengths, in accordance with the learning objectives (Swaffar and Vlatten 1997).

Another important issue is genre given that each has its specific structure, characteristics, benefits and drawbacks. This is the reason why students need to be exposed to a variety of genres. While documentaries have a number of benefits (see Sherman 2003), in the lecture format the visual sign is of minimal importance (Mekheimer 2011) and yet students are frequently exposed to this genre in real life situations.

3. Methodology

Textual and content analysis was used to determine the relevance of online authentic video materials for autonomous learning of ME.

In the first step of the research, www.youtube.com was used to find authentic online video materials on different types of merchant vessels. The following search terms were used: “general cargo ships”, “bulk carriers”, “oil tankers” +ship, “container ships”, “reefers”, “heavy load vessels”, “ro-ro ships”, and “merchant ships”. As the search words “reefers” and “heavy load vessel” only returned approximately 48 and 21 results respectively, they were excluded from further analysis.

The results were sorted by relevance and the first 100 results for each search term or a total of 600 were examined. All videos with no sound (the vast majority of the videos found were amateur videos depicting vessels entering or leaving ports) and those with sound in languages other than English were eliminated, thus reducing the number of videos to be analysed to 70. Several videos were found to be protected by copyright (e.g., videos from the Discovery Channel’s Mega Builders or Mighty Ships series), which reduced the inventory of potentially useful videos to 50. Tab.1 presents the approximate number of results for each search term as given by youtube, the number of videos examined, the number of videos with sound in English found, and the number of analysed videos.

	General cargo ships	Bulk carriers	Oil Tankers + ship	Container ships	Ro-ro ships	Merchant ships	Total
Approximate number of results	3,010	10,800	2,570	48,400	216	4,660	69,656
Number of videos examined	100	100	100	100	100	100	600
Number of videos found	5	9	12	25	3	16	70
Number of videos analysed	5	9	10	10	3	13	50

Table 1: Approximate number of results, number of videos examined, number of videos with sound in English, and number of videos analysed

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The total length of the 50 analysed videos was five hours, 16 minutes, and 36 seconds. Other descriptive data are as follows:

- shortest video: news report (00:00:55 seconds)
- longest video: lecture (00:54:31)
- average length: 00:06:28
- mode 1: 00:01:45
- mode 2: 00:02:28
- median: 00:02:28.

As far as the genre of the identified videos is concerned, the initial inventory consisted of 24 news reports, one computer simulation, six documentaries, five amateur videos, six commercials, two lectures, one interview, and three training videos.

All of the examined videos were uploaded in the last six years: three in 2008, four in 2009, six in 2010, 15 in 2011, 16 in 2012, and five in 2013.

In the second step transcripts of all sentences that contained at least one token that would be classified as belonging to ME vocabulary were made. The vocabulary that was identified as belonging to ME referred to any maritime activity or occupation, and included (Pritchard 2003):

- strictly nautical or technical terms (e.g., starboard, abaft),
- general English words that acquire specific meaning when used in the maritime context (e.g., check line),
- function words and semi-lexical items (e.g., set [sail]),
- multi-word units consisting of General English words that have a specific meaning in the maritime context, which can be compound nouns (short-sea shipping) or prepositional and adverbial phrases (e.g., heave up [anchor]), and
- linguistic expressions of speech acts in the maritime context (e.g., message markers in radio communication).

The final selection of videos was then made based on the following criteria:

- the ME token-per-minute ratio is higher than 5.0,
- videos shorter than two minutes are removed unless the ME token-per-minute ratio is higher than 10.0, which indicates high lexical density,
- a variety of genres is covered,
- a variety of carrier content is covered,
- videos vary in length,
- the video with the higher ME token-per-minute ratio is kept if two or more videos examine the same topic (e.g., shipping accidents),
- a section of a long video can be used instead of the whole.

4. Results and analysis

The final inventory consists of 14 videos. A brief description of each can be found in Tab. 2.

Title	Carrier content	Genre	Length	No. of lexical units	Ratio
Bulk Carrier Adrift in the Coral Sea1	Shipping accident	News report	0:02:29	23	9.3
Sinking of the MV Derbyshire2	Shipping accident	Computer simulation	0:03:19	48	15.1
Making of Bulk Carrier in Cochin ShipYard3	Shipbuilding	Documentary	0:19:10	86	4.5
Huge ship - horrific hurricane4	Navigation in adverse weather	Amateur video	0:04:50	46	3.8
CMA CGM Marco Polo in Southampton5	Increasing ship size	News report	0:02:38	18	6.8
Container shipping - the world in a box6	History of containerization	News report	0:04:10	19	4.6
Newest, biggest container ship7	Increasing ship size	News report	0:01:40	17	10.2
Marine Transportation – reefer ships8	Reefers	Commercial	0:04:19	31	7.2
Ships - Merchant Ships & Classifications9	Classification of merchant ships	Presentation with video	0:09:17	80	8.6
Men and ships 1940 - Merchant Marine 8115010	History of the merchant marine	Documentary	0:06:21	53	12.2
SkySails bring windpower to container ships11	Wind as an alternative propulsion system	Commercial	0:05:38	27	4.5
Merchant shipping self protection12	Anti-piracy measures	Training video	0:13:55	37	2.7
Lightering of Oil Tankers Offshore US Coast.wmv13	Lightering	Documentary	0:07:50	71	9.1
Mod-01 Lec-15 RO-RO Ship14	Ship description	Lecture	0:07:00	46	9.9
TOTAL			1:32:36	602	
Average			0:06:37	43	7.7

Table 2: Title, carrier content, genre, length, number of ME tokens, and ME token-per-minute ratio in the selected videos

Finally, ME vocabulary was categorized. The initial categorization was based on Fabe's (2005) division into semantic categories but was then adjusted to produce the following groups (with corresponding subcategories): vessels, deck department, shore side, weather, and other. Tab. 3 presents the number of tokens in each category and subcategory, and share. Examples for each subcategory can be found in notes.

	Tokens	Share (%)
Vessels	348	58
○ Types of vessels ¹⁵	117	19
○ Parts of vessels ¹⁶	100	17
○ Ship particulars ¹⁷	22	4
○ Ship's tackle, equipment, aids ¹⁸	65	11
○ Location on the vessel/with reference to the vessel ¹⁹	19	3
○ Ship movement ²⁰	25	4
Deck department	150	25
○ Crew and duties ²¹	59	10
○ Helm orders ²²	15	2
○ Cargoes, cargo activities, other vessel contents ²³	69	11
○ Radio communication ²⁴	7	1
Shore side	48	8
○ Ports and port activities ²⁵	37	6
○ Legal entities in shipping ²⁶	11	2
Weather ²⁷	33	5
Other - collective nouns and multi-word units ²⁸	23	4
TOTAL	602	100

Table 3: ME categories (number of tokens and share)

5. Discussion and conclusion

The objective of this paper was to explore video materials that are universally available online and to corroborate the relevance of these video materials in terms of real and carrier content for autonomous learning of ME outside the language classroom. Thus, the analysis represents the first step of informed materials design (the final result will be the creation of an online workbook with tasks related to these videos).

The analysis has confirmed the availability and relevance of online video materials for autonomous learning of ME. All selected videos display a high frequency of ME tokens and a high ME token-per-minute ratio. They cover a variety of ME categories although the categories of vessels and deck department are significantly larger than others. In addition, some categories found in previous research (Fabe 2005; Jurkovič 2012; Jurkovič 2013) have not been found, for instance engine room department and shipbuilding. All categories belong under the umbrella term of Nautical English (see Bocanegra-Valle 2013).

The final selection of videos includes a variety of genres, from documentaries and lectures, to commercials and news reports. Therefore, the benefits of each genre can be exploited to their full potential when designing the language tasks. Also the length varies, from the longest video (19.10) to the shortest one (1.40), which allows for the long-sequence and short-sequence approach.

The final inventory of 14 videos was made based on the initial inventory of a total of 600 authentic videos found and sorted by relevance using www.youtube.com, which represents a significant limitation of this study. The first 100 results per search term only were examined because the identification of potentially useful videos proved to be the most time-consuming part of the research process. Other search terms and other search engines might produce different results, which this paper does not explore. Finally, the search terms only referred to different types of merchant ships and produced results that can be classified under the category of Nautical English while no other Maritime 'Englishes' were represented in the videos although they are essential parts of the extension, enrichment, and elevation ME modules. In order to corroborate the relevance of online video materials for the teaching and learning of other aspects of ME, other and broader search terms would have to be used.

The analysis has shown that freely available online video materials could be used as a relevant tool for autonomous learning of ME. This would not only expose students to authentic language

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used in context, introduce the target community of the maritime world to pre-experience students, and primarily allow them to improve their language competence. It may also stimulate them to refer to other authentic video materials outside the ME classroom. The element of motivation, together with other desired results, however, would have to be corroborated through empirical quantitative or qualitative research.

6. Notes

- 1 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_m23xOd4Y5I (in the analysis referred to as BC1)
- 2 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9tN4xROtMjI> (BC2)
- 3 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-dh1Afr6Z9o> (only the time frame between 00:09:40 and 00:19:10 is included in the analysis) (BC3)
- 4 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GSvuMupKjIA> (only the time frame between 00:00:00 and 00:04:50 is included in the analysis) (BC4)
- 5 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Oh8i-u3d7Y> (CS1)
- 6 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IDmLEFDDd-c> (CS2)
- 7 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z3rRf2fY4V0> (despite the short length, this video was kept because of the high ratio of Maritime English lexical units per minute) (CS3)
- 8 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qxjSDvb8eTU> (GCS1)
- 9 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zskbBNb5LXI> (MS1)
- 10 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi-UCMu8ZkM> (only the time frame between 00:00:00 and 00:06:21 is included in the analysis) (MS2)
- 11 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qyLjISR6XQQ> (MS3)
- 12 http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=StwxJI_OP0c (despite the low ratio of Maritime English lexical units per minute, this video was kept in the inventory for the relevant and interesting carrier content) (MS4)
- 13 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GjfSYmXU1EQ> (OT1)
- 14 <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrZJvmc006s> (only the time frame between 00:00:00 and 00:07:00 is included in the analysis) (RR2)
- 15 Bulk carriers are ocean going vessels used to transport unpackaged cargo items in bulk, such as iron ore, cement, bauxite, coal, grain in their cargo holds." (MS1)
- 16 "The fore peak ballast tank takes on water with every wave, and in less than 12 hours is more or less filled." (BC2)
- 17 "Gross tonnage: 160,000, TEU: 16,020, length: 396m, beam: 54m, draft max. 16m." (CS4)
- 18 "Auto pilot for auto steering, GPS navigator, AIS, upgraded radars, and comprehensive data display." (BC3)
- 19 "Decks are continuous from port side shell to starboard side shell." (RR2)
- 20 "The ID integrity had no cargo on board unlike the Shen Neng that ran aground on the Great Barrier Reef off central Queensland in 2010." (BC1)
- 21 "One hour per day, in fair weather or foul, bosun, chips, able seamen, oiler, fireman, wiper, steward, cook, and messboy into the lifeboat, for American ships - already the safest in the world - must be kept safe." (MS2)
- 22 "Hard-a-starboard." (OT1)
- 23 "Pallets are loaded through the ship's side door to the storage warehouses." (GCS1)
- 24 "Mayday mayday mayday. // This is MV Way, MV Way. // In position 12 degrees 30 minutes North, 045 degrees East, transiting the international recognized transit corridor. // We are under attack. // Shots have been fired. // We are under attack on the port side. // Mayday Mayday mayday." (MS4)
- 25 "A dredging campaign is to start shortly to bring a new deep water container berth on stream by the beginning of 2014." (CS1)
- 26 "A French container ship operator took over from Maersk Line the record of the shipping line owning the world's largest capacity container ship." (CS4)
- 27 "As the typhoon approaches and conditions worsen, the master – following normal practice – turns to keep the waves at a slight angle to the bow." (BC2)
- 28 "The ships that are invariably reported in the greatest of difficulty tend to be ships under flags of convenience." (BC4)

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