

APPROACHES FOR TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE TO MARITIME ENGINEERS

It occurs that getting of educational certificates by graduating future seafarers doesn't guarantee availability of correspondent to their occupation professional skills. These skills are of utmost importance to ensure safe running of the ship equipment and survival at sea. Otherwise, lack of critical competencies leads to unintentional carelessness and even criminal negligence on the working place and the consequences may range from ridiculous to striking.

Analysis of theoretical sources on competency-based learning [1] gives a possibility to consider it as a process of learning, developing and forming of concrete skills unlike to abstract learning, it's necessary to underline its extremely fine grained nature. It means learners move gradually from one mastered competence to the next in order to gain a larger learning goal. In case of reasonable teaching management each competence corresponds to a certain necessary set of individual skills, which together constitute a common learning outcome.

Attentive viewing of STCW Code (1995) and STCW Manila amendments (2010) reveals the urgency of the problem considered by us. We see that same graduated manner of seafarers Maritime Engineers competency-based training for different ranks beginning from ratings and ending with the chief engineer of a ship. First of all, professional training of marine engineering personnel is accomplished on three levels: the 1st is the support level (ratings, wipers, oilers, fitters, the 2nd and 1st class motormen, forming part of engineering watch); the 2nd operational level (officers in charge of an engineering watch in a manned or periodically unmanned engine room) and the 3rd management level (chief engineers and 2nd engineers on ships with main propulsion machinery of 3000kw propulsion power or more). Gaining of each professional level is ensured by learners in course of gradual mastering of certain number of competences: 13 – on the support level; 17 – on the operational level; 14 – on the management level. Besides, mastering of each competence must be confirmed by the availability of learning outcome in form of correspondent individual skills. Further this student may be permitted to proceed with higher learning and still be missing some skills that are crucial to that higher level.

Accordingly to STCW Code all skills of marine engineers independently on their rank must be accomplished by means of the working language of mixed crews – English language. The IMO acknowledged communicative method the only suitable for a competency-based teaching of English language in 2000 already. In that year was published and launched into learning the International Model Course 3.17 for seafarers, which is based on principals of communicative method.

There are some explanations why this very method was acknowledged as well for EME language learning. There is a common for some practicing teachers (S.Tomniac [2011], P. Trenkner [2010], A.Gabrielli [2012]) consideration that

“Engineering Maritime English is a symbiosis between language, communication and alligator spanner wrench” [2]. This subject demands from learner accumulation and elaboration a plenty of linguistic, communication and technical knowledge.

On a certain stage it becomes impossible to accumulate details without their rearrangement; a learner will be unable to move further if does not deny the previous knowledge model in favor of its new structure and content. If we introduce new pieces of learning information as different shapes we will understand that only displacement makes process of information accumulation progressive and able to develop.

If we use traditional learning with just thoughtless plain reading of professionally oriented texts and doing homogeneous exercises for linguistic competence formation, this method activates mostly the left half of learners' brain, which is logical, verbal, linear, vertically analyzing, non-emotional and is occupied with details, and is responsible for knowledge deepening, without putting these details into order. But if we use communicative method with its motley interactive teaching techniques, the right side of the learners' brain considerably activates during horizontal processing of information and putting all accumulated details in emotionally-spatial order with further synthesizing them in one big picture. Using interaction as the means and the goal of study, this method is focused on communicative competence with learning outcome in form of individual communicative skills.

Thus we see that communicative method is greatly contributing to maintain self-extending system of EME learners' linguistic and technical knowledge, and its integration with competency-based approach puts the most number of learning information details into spatial order, facilitates development of communicative skills of learners and graduated formation of maritime engineering professional competences.

In order to manage teaching of EME in KSMA (Kherson State Maritime Academy) the teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and Business EME integrated interactive teaching with aligned aims allowing the language to enter its natural environment: the engine room. Also were integrated theory and practice, i.e. content-based learning and instructing in interactive environment was offered to the learners, and this created a symbiosis between student professional interests and learning activities. This, in its turn, triggered a successful communicative approach to EME, from which the professionally competent maritime discourse evolved.

References:

1. Bowden, J.A. Competency-based education: Neither a panacea nor a pariah. – 1995. [Electronic resource]. – Available at: <http://crm.hct.ac.ae/events/archive/tend/018bowden.html>. Accessed January 3, 20.
2. Gabrielli A., Gabrielli C., Pahlm H. Engineering Maritime English: a symbiosis between language, communication and an alligator spanner wrench. – International Maritime English Conference IMEC 24, 2012, Yangon, Myanmar. – P. 41 – 52.