

Model Course 3.17. Maritime English, 2015 Edition, International Maritime Organization. International Maritime Organization, London (2015). 228 pp. ISBN 978-92-801-1622-9.

The teaching content 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 for masters, officers, and officers of the watch on merchant ships. Following the adoption of these international standards, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has developed a series of model courses to help maritime training institutions to fully implement the requirements of the Convention, organise and introduce new courses, or supplement and update training material. After the adoption of the Manila Amendments to the STCW Convention in 2010, several model courses have been revised. The revision of Model Course 3.17 for ME (henceforth, the Model Course) was published in 2015. Based on the requirements for ME as defined by the STCW Convention, the Model Course guides the process of teaching. However, it is not intended to be a rigid teaching tool but rather an assistance tool that will aid ME trainers in reaching the standards as set by the Convention and beyond.

Content

The Model Course is divided into two core sections, Core Section 1 for General Maritime English (GME) and Core Section 2 for Specialised Maritime English (SME). These are followed by the instructor manual, the standards of the STCW Convention as pertaining to ME, and an evaluation section with recommended forms of assessment for ME. Both core sections are divided into the same subsections: course framework, course outline, and detailed teaching syllabus.

Core section 1 (197 hours of classroom teaching in addition to 42 hours of self-study that students are required to spend on learning outside the language classroom) is dedicated to students at the elementary level of pre-existing language proficiency, followed by the intermediate level (with further 244 classroom hours and 49 hours for autonomous study). Therefore, the objective of this section is to provide guidance to instructors for teaching GME at elementary and intermediate levels of language proficiency, and prepare the students to proceed to SME Core section 2. Hence, if the existing language proficiency of students is at a level higher than intermediate, instruction can immediately dive into Core section 2.

Core sections 1 and 2 are based on the communicative approach to language teaching and integrated skills development. Given that speaking is a priority in the maritime industry, this is the language skill that is given advantage over others. In Core section 1, the English language remains the real content of teaching or "teaching language for the language's sake" (p. 1). Examples of topics covered are describing crew roles and routines, naming types of vessels,

identifying the purpose and location of safety equipment, and describing weather conditions and understanding weather forecasts, among others.

On the other hand, in Core section 2 the central position of the English language in SME is reduced to that of a medium of instruction. Thus, the language ceases to be the real content of teaching and the purpose of instruction is to use the specific English language to perform specific maritime duties. The pre-existing language proficiency of students admitted to this section has to be intermediate or higher. Core section 2 is further divided into five parts, based on different seafarer ranks or duties:

SME for officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 GT or more. This SME course covers 90 hours of classroom teaching plus 56 hours of individual student work. The required standards include using English in written and oral communication to, for example, use charts and other nautical publications, engage in communications regarding cargo handling, keep a log and other voyage records, and communicate appropriately with a multilingual crew.

SME for officers in charge of an engineering watch in a manned engine-room or designated duty officers in a periodically unmanned engine room. This SME course covers 105 hours of classroom work plus 56 hours of individual student work. The required standards refer to having adequate knowledge to use engineering publications and perform engineering duties in written and oral form. The publications that students are expected to understand are, for instance, manufacturer's instruction books, or publications on a variety of ship's electrical, electronic, and control systems.

SME for electro-technical officers. This SME course covers 104 hours of classroom teaching and 54 hours of individual student work. The students need to demonstrate to be able to use engineering publications (e.g., those regarding mechanical engineering systems) and perform officer's duties (e.g., to describe automation and control systems of the main propulsion and auxiliary machinery).

SME for GMDSS (Global Maritime Distress and Safety System) operators. This course covers 28 hours of classroom work and 14 hours of individual work of students. The required performance after the completion of the course is to use written and spoken English to communicate information that is relevant for the safety of life at sea. Examples of tasks students are expected to perform include routine communications with coastal stations, reading GMDSS operational instructions, or simulating distress communications.

SME for personnel providing direct service to passengers in passenger spaces on passenger ships. This course covers 42 hours of classroom teaching plus 20 hours of out-of-class student work. The competence that students are required to demonstrate refers to using English to communicate with a passenger in need of assistance, for example when introducing life-saving and fire-fighting equipment on board, or communication related to crowd and crisis management.

The two core sections are followed by the instructor manual, designed to help trainers and their students to achieve the standards as set by the STCW Convention. As stated in the introduction to the instructor manual, it introduces ME instructors "to the principles, terminology and techniques of the contemporary Communicative Approach to language teaching." (p. 109) As such, it discusses the roles of students and teachers, learning styles, needs analysis, lesson

planning, task-based learning, content-based instruction, teaching and learning with modern facilities (e.g., simulators and computers, learning online), active learning, and pair and group work. The instructor manual places most emphasis on the teaching of grammar, vocabulary, the four communications skills, and the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), giving detailed instructions regarding presentation techniques, practice tasks, correcting errors recommendations, revision and extension techniques, and potential assessment tasks.

In the appendices we can find a summary of standards as defined by the STCW Convention for ME, and sample lesson plans for GME and SME. The Model Course ends with a section that addresses evaluation, and a section with general guidance on the implementation of IMO model courses.

Strengths

The first and foremost strength of the Model Course is its learner-centredness. The course acknowledges the importance of different entry levels of students regarding their pre-existing general English proficiency as well as the considerable differences in the language needs of students that will be performing vastly different duties in their future maritime careers (e.g., the language needs of a marine engineer are significantly different from those of a deck officer). GME Core section 1 starts at the elementary level but does not engage in the teaching of English for general purposes. Instead, it proves that teaching language for specific purposes is possible at lower levels of language proficiency if the content and process of teaching are adjusted to learner needs. Furthermore, despite advocating integrated development of all language skills, the Model Course places particular emphasis on speaking as the skill prioritised by the maritime industry. Last but not least, it recommends that class size should not exceed twenty-four students (although this might not be feasible at numerous higher education institutions worldwide) so that the instructor can dedicate sufficient attention to each individual student.

The Model Course is also centred on ME instructors in the sense that it provides a highly valuable teaching assistance tool to both experienced and novice ME instructors. By examining the course outline and detailed teaching syllabus, experienced instructors are given the opportunity to supplement and upgrade their teaching based on the requirements of the Manila amendments and specific needs of their students as addressed in Core section 2. The summary of mandatory standards regarding the provisions of the annex to the STCW Convention pertaining to ME found in Appendix A is also helpful.

Novice ME instructors, embarking on the ME journey for the first time, will find this tool indispensable for their work. In the detailed teaching syllabus mentioned above, each unit in GME Core section 1 is divided into topic, grammar, vocabulary, phonology, listening and speaking, and reading and writing. These are supplemented with references to possible teaching resources that can be used in the GME classroom. Moreover, the Model Course contains a list of ME references, textbooks designed specifically for ME instruction that have been published worldwide, maritime publications (e.g., various conventions), a list of other model courses, suggested *realia* as teaching aids (e.g., sections of a paper chart), useful websites for the learning and testing of General English (GE) and ME, maritime websites, a

list of available video materials, recommended reading on language and language teaching methodology, other ME resources, and a list of (commercially available) international ME tests. These resources will undoubtedly provide invaluable assistance to anybody looking for useful teaching and learning materials.

The part of the Model Course that novice language teachers other than ME instructors will find very useful is the instructor manual. In it, we can find the theoretical background to and practical tips for the implementation of various teaching methods, such as task-based or content-based learning. Furthermore, for every language skill there is an inventory of possible task formats that can be applied in exercises as well as formative and summative assessment tests. The readers are also reminded of individual differences among students, for instance their learning styles, and instructed how to efficiently manage pair and group work. In brief, the instructor manual is a user-friendly summary of language teaching methods and techniques based on the communicative approach.

Another strength of the Model Course is that it provides a comprehensive presentation of various twinning activities or forms of collaboration between ME instructors and subject matter experts, recommended in particular for the delivery of SME. Given that collaboration with subject specialists is at the very core of any course of languages for specific purposes (LSP), this is yet another section that might grasp the interest of teachers outside the ME domain. Among the forms of twinning the instructor manual suggests cross-departmental meetings, instructor observation, cross-curriculum teaching, sharing materials, assessing tasks, onboard research, sourcing *realia*, guest lectures, technical quizzes, technical presentations, asking the experts, and peer teaching.

Finally, the instructor manual also addresses teaching and learning with modern facilities, including mobile-assisted language learning as a new channel for the delivery and collaborative construction of language knowledge.

Points for consideration

Despite the numerous advantages presented in the previous section, there are some points that the authors of the Model Course might consider in a potential revision.

Firstly, because of the user-friendliness, solid structure, and high usability level of the methodology-oriented instructor manual, an updated list of recommended reading on language and language teaching methodology would be expected. However, among 33 references only three were published after the year 2000 and none after the year 2010. This is not to say that the recommended sources do not provide the fundamental knowledge on language teaching methodology. It rather suggests that recent publications should be included to upgrade and supplement the more traditional resources. Moreover, although IMO model courses address a global audience, the Common European Framework of Reference as one of the fundamental practice-oriented tools for the learning, teaching, and assessment of foreign languages should be included in this list.

Secondly, today we cannot speak of integrated development of language skills unless video materials are part of our classroom routine. However, the Model Course seems to not fully

acknowledge the role that video materials play in the language development of students, in particular those learning languages for specific purposes. The (mostly highly commercial) video-based training materials that it recommends have not been made to match the specific needs of language learning but rather to be used in classes where the subject matter and not language is at the core of the teaching process. This goes in line with the guidelines of SME Core section 2 where English is treated as a medium of instruction but not with GME Core section 1 where English still is the real content of teaching and learning. Moreover, the instructor manual does not address audio-visual reception as a skill significantly distinct from listening with its own good practices and rules.

Finally, evaluation and assessment are essential and sensitive parts of any teaching and learning process. As a result, the evaluation section with its brief summary of potential assessment tasks and recommendations for the assessment of competence in English (although it does refer to previous pages of the instructor manual that contain possible assessment tasks for each skill) should dedicate more attention to the importance of formative and summative assessment, and possibly include sample tests (for GME elementary and intermediary levels as well as each SME course) that ME instructors could rely on as models.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Model Course is based on contemporary trends in the teaching of foreign languages for specific purposes and has been updated to match the requirements of the latest amendments to the STCW Convention. It certainly is a fundamental reference tool for ME instructors teaching in a variety of ME contexts around the world. However, with the detailed methodological guidance that it provides in the instructor manual, it would certainly be an interesting resource to any novice teacher in the GE or any LSP domain and a role model to follow for other disciplines, in particular the ones where the language outcomes are dictated by international standards and/or conventions.

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