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## PROFESSIONALLY-ORIENTED COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCY OF SEAFARERS

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### ABSTRACT

Though the system of maritime education and training in Ukraine has already been formed there is still the lack of graduates' ability to perform specific duties especially the difficulties in the use of Maritime English during shipboard practice and professional activity. It stresses out the need to develop the system of professional training to provide the growth of quality and effectiveness of higher maritime education and to guarantee the development of communicative competency of future seafarers.

The current study investigates the growing need of professionally-oriented communicative competency formation and development while teaching cadets/students of higher maritime institutions is based on the requirements stipulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to the level of English language level proficiency and the recognition of the English language as the working language of multicultural shipboard environment.

The research shows that the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers must be regarded as a complex phenomenon which must be studied from the point of view of a systematic approach as a single integral system that encompasses a specific amount of components.

The study demonstrated the structure of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers and analyzed the core structural components of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers.

### KEYWORDS

higher professional education, professionally-oriented communicative competency, English for effective communication, communicative competency

### Introduction

The changes in economical and social aspects of life in Ukraine have resulted in the renovation of all life spheres including the system of higher professional education. The professional training of future seafarers is becoming more and more significant and namely the formation of the personality capable of performing professionally-oriented foreign language communication when carrying out specific professional duties in multicultural environment. To meet the above mentioned requirement it is necessary to integrate into global community by stipulating the strategic focus of language policy in the sphere of teaching English for Specific Purposes as well as in the sphere of highly qualified personnel training able to carry out professionally-oriented foreign language communication on a level with professional knowledge.

The growing need of professionally-oriented communicative competency formation and development while teaching cadets/students of higher maritime institutions is based on the requirements stipulated by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) to the level of English language level proficiency and the recognition of the English language as the working language of multicultural shipboard environment. According to the basic international document that stipulates the requirements to the minimum standards of professional training and certification of seafarers every officer must be able to use English for effective communication with the crew [1]. The command of the English language enables adequate record keeping, navigational equipment maintenance and use, efficient communication with shore authorities and thus provides for the safety of navigation, environmental protection and also promotes the effectiveness of vessel traffic control.

The purposes of the article are to study the communicative competency in terms of system approach; to work out the structure of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers; to analyze the core structural components of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers.

### **The methodological basis of the research**

To work out the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers structure it is required to study all aspects of the "communicative competency" phenomenon, to define its essence and functions.

The term communicative competence is comprised of two words, the combination of which means competence to communicate. This simple lexicosemantic analysis uncovers the fact that the central word in the study of communicative competence is the word competence. Like many theoreticians in the field of language learning and teaching, competence refers to one's underlying knowledge of a system, event, or fact. It is a non-observable, idealized ability to do something. With regard to language, therefore, competence is one's knowledge of the language system itself. It is as a classic distinction between competence (the monolingual speaker-listener's knowledge of language) and performance (the actual use of language in real situations) [3]. The thorough study of the term "communicative competency" enables the conclusion that it is usually viewed as the knowledge the learner must master and as the skills he must be able to use in a particular communicative situation. There is a global tendency as for defining the term "communicative competency" as the key one to describe communication and presupposes the ability to correlate the means of language with the particular tasks and conditions of communication, to organize communication with the respect to language norms and communicative practicability [2]. From the pedagogical point of view the structure of the communicative competency is represented as the combination of key psychological features of a person which influence his/her development: knowledge, skills, practical experience, way of thinking, needs, emotions and feelings, will, values, consciousness, beliefs, etc. [2]. The level of communicative competency mastery determines the effectiveness of future professional activity of students.

Thus, the communicative competency is first of all connected with the personal ability to be conversant with different communicative situations in the course of interpersonal interchange. It means that the communicative competency is gained by the person in the process of socialization under the influence of the whole bunch of social factors on the basis of the specific language system mastering by means of

formation and further improvement of skills to use the acquired knowledge in the course of situation-driven communicative activity. Based on the fact that in the process of communication the addressee is being influenced, social relationships between the speakers are established it is believed that there are 3 key factors that are crucial for the communicative competency formation:

- 1) mastering basic language and communicative skills;
- 2) communicative situation analysis and the choice of communicative (verbal/ non-verbal) behavior program;
- 3) comprehension of the system of rules and basic requirements which regulate the use of language means in the course of communication.

### **Main results and findings**

Having adopted the argument that the “communicative competency is a complex multi-component system which comprises several types of competences it has been defined that to fully comprehend the essence of the communicative competency phenomenon and the ways of its formation and development, especially for a particular professional group, it is crucial to analyze its structure. That is why consider it necessary to study this aspect detail by comparing the ideas of researchers.

The analysis shows that there are different opinions as for the constituent components in the structure of the communicative competency. This fact is explained, first of all, by the use of different approaches in the course of their research (lingvodic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic, functional and the like). Besides, the differences in the proposed structures may be explained also by peculiar features of different target groups and subject areas. For example, Yu. Fedorenko suggests the structure of communicative competency of senior school students [4],

D. Izarenkov focuses on the basic communicative competency components and the means of its formation when teaching non-philological students [6], O. Pavlenko provides for the aspect analysis of communicative competency components of customs officers [5], V. Smelikova attempts to define professionally-oriented communication components of future navigators [7], the research by y I. Sekret it is suggested the specific component structure of professional communicative competency of high technical institutions students [8]. So, the main sphere of interest for the paper is the amount of scientific results based on the application of different approaches for different target groups and subject areas.

The fact that the structure of the communicative competency is represented in the “Project of national educational standard for foreign language” (1998) [9] provided for the growing attention to this matter paid by many scientists. According to this document the communicative competency structure is based on the principles of the systematic approach and comprises three key component competences types: communicative, linguistic and sociocultural, which, in turn, may comprise the number of other subcompetences.

A bit later the new approach to the language teaching was introduced by the Common European framework of reference for languages. The main focus is on the fact that in the past to know the language meant to know the words and grammar rules. Now to know the language means to have and develop communicative competency. Based on such interpretation it is acknowledged that the knowing of the language system is not

a goal in itself anymore. The more important now in the society is the communication, communicative act and its consequences. Though without the mastering specific linguistic knowledge to use the language would be practically impossible, this means that the communicative competency structure should comprise the following components:

- 1) sociocultural competence (this is not only the knowledge of this or that country and language peculiarities but also the ability to interact within this social community);
- 2) communication competence (speaking, listening, reading, writing);
- 3) pragmatic competence which was known before as common learning skills
  - a) discursive – the ability to organize the speech and to structure it in compliance with the topic;
  - b) functional – the ability to produce all forms of speech utterances;
  - c) interactive competence – the ability to socially interact in accordance with the certain schemes, models etc.

These components can provide for the person's ability to act using specific language means and are realized while performing different types of communicative activity (perception, production, interaction or mediation).

Taking into consideration the fact that in the higher educational establishment the key focus is on the specialized (professionally-oriented) language training of future specialists, so the structure of the professionally-oriented communicative competency is different from the structure of the communicative competency formed during the school language training. The thorough analysis enables the statement that different professional spheres require specific communicative competency structure and model which can best meet the goals of its demonstration.

The analysis of syllabi comprised on the basis of the National Curriculum for Universities "English for specific purposes" adopted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and on the basis of the "Project of national educational standard for foreign language" shows that they propose the same structural components of the communicative competency as the ones suggested by the Common European framework of reference for languages and almost the same as in the "Project of national educational standard for foreign language". I.e., the peculiar features of professional activity are not actually taken into account. This is explained by the fact that the syllabus is typical for all high educational institutions irrespective of the educational program specialization. Hence, the scientists are assigned the mission to find out the peculiar features professionally-oriented communicative competency structure depending on the peculiarities of the professional activity of future specialists.

The results of the theoretical research done prove that the scientists suggest different points of view as for the professionally-oriented communicative competency structure and its elements. The suggested structure of the communicative competency of seafarers is based on the conceptual ideas of D. Izarenkov [6]. In his works it is argued that the communicative competency is formed as the result of three basic components interaction – linguistic, context and pragmatic. Thus, the study of the communicative competency in terms of the systematic approach and own experience of teaching Maritime English enables the determination of the structural components of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers and work out its structure.

It is argued that the professionally-oriented communicative competency structure should comprise two types of structural elements: the core and the distal ones. The core components are the ones without which it is not possible to carry out professional duties as they are viewed as the basic minimum required list of competencies for seafarers. The distal components are not the crucial ones but still are very important as they determine the effectiveness and the quality of the professional activity provide for the improvement and reinforcement of social interaction on board ship in the multicultural environment.

Considering the fact that foreign language professional communication of a seafarer requires the formation of the whole range of communicative skills needed for the correct utterance design by means of a foreign language with the use of professional terminology, adequate comprehension of the communicative context and the ability to derive the information with the respect to the professional situation and to achieve the communicative aims, objectives and intentions the core components of the professionally-oriented communicative competency structure in the paper are the linguistic, the cognitive and the strategic ones.

*The linguistic* (or language) *component* is the basis of communication competence (speaking, listening, reading and writing) because without the theoretical mastering of the linguistic rules of language system use it is not possible to perform communication. The formation of the linguistic component is characterized by the acknowledgement of language norms (phonology, lexicon, stylistics, etc.) and enables their adequate use in any communicative activity when speaking a specific language. It is believed that the linguistic component should also include the pragmatic and the sociolinguistic elements which are connected not so much with the ability to use the means of language as with the social and psychological skills of a person to develop a behavioral strategy depending on the situation, to achieve communicative aims, to band the crew, thus requiring a bigger amount of knowledge than the knowledge of the language system and the grammar rules.

So, we claim that the linguistic component as one of the core structural elements of the professionally-oriented communicative competency is formed on the basis of the orthoepical, orthographical, lexical and grammatical norms mastering. This is grounded on the necessity for the seafarers to pronounce the words clearly and correctly to avoid misunderstandings and mistakes when communicating via radiotelephony or during interpersonal communication within the multilingual crews. Considering the fact that English is not a native language for the majority of those who work at sea difficulties in understanding may appear due to the incorrect pronunciation, peculiar dialects, accents etc. This may result in misinterpretation of what is heard and, consequently, in wrong decisions and actions taken. Another important aspect of the professional communicative activity of the seafarers is report completion, shipboard record and business correspondence keeping, claim and protest filing and the like. Thus the orthographical element of the linguistic component is one of the crucial skills enabling efficient professionally-oriented written communication.

Grammatical element of the linguistic component provides for the correct utterance design depending on the intentions, aims and professional communicative situation. However, the peculiar feature of standard maritime phraseology is the tendency towards simplification of the grammatical sentence structure, the allowance to omit functional words if they don't have any specific contextual meaning. IMO recommends

to use for communication short, clear and as simple phrases as practicable. This means that during the teaching process it is necessary to concentrate only on the basic (key) aspects of grammar, especially at the first (support) level of education.

Professional language training of students together with the special practical and theoretical teaching demands also for specialized terminology mastering which makes terminological competence one of the crucial elements of the linguistic component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency structure. Future seafarers in the course of professional language training must be taught to fluently use and recognize lexical units used on board ships both in social and professional situations. Well-formed terminological competence of the seafarers enables laconic and unambiguous communication and thus provide for the safety of navigation and life at sea.

So, considering all of the above, it is argued that the linguistic component is one of the core structural elements of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers as it will provide for the correct utterance design by means of a foreign language with the adequate use of professional lexicon. It will also enable the adequate understanding of the communication partner and interpretations of the information delivered. Communicative competency of any professional including the maritime personnel is formed on the basis of the language system mastering by means of developing and improving the skills of its usage in the course of communication activity. The formation and development of the linguistic component must be done continuously during the whole process of education but at the first stage of language training this component must always be in the focus of attention as it is crucial for the further development of future seafarers' communicative skills.

Another core component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency structure of seafarers is *the cognitive one* which comprises the knowledge, skills and abilities required for the successful performance of any specific activity, especially the professional one. The package of the specialized knowledge enables the task performance, decisions making in the course of carrying out certain professional duties and solution finding in challenging professional situations. The cognitive component as a part of professionally-oriented communication of seafarers provides for the availability of the body of professional knowledge, ideas, concepts, facts, etc. required for the efficient and successful professional duties performance. It is also acknowledged as the crucial one for the critical thinking development based on the received knowledge and the one that enables analytical activity for solution finding by means of interpreting and assessing certain facts.

The formation and development of this structural component of the professionally-oriented competency is of utmost importance as it provides for the successful performance of the correct succession of all levels of the professional activity presented in figure 1.: management level presupposes the planning of all shipboard activity, instruction giving and monitoring; operational level presupposes the analysis and assessment of the current working situation, anticipation of possible options of the situation development, alternative plans development and final decision making; support level presupposes the perception of the instructions given, their adequate interpretation and understanding, correct execution).

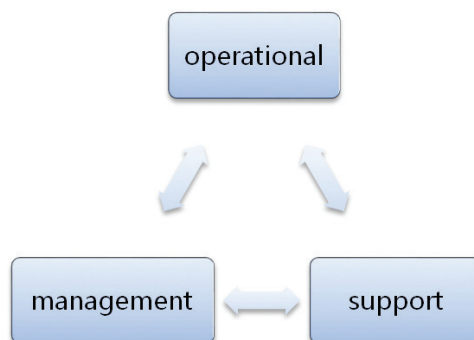


Fig. 1 Levels of professional activity of seafarers

The process of professional communication of seafarers includes different aspects of activity and, thus, requires the knowledge in a variety of spheres: the knowledge of ship arrangement and construction, the knowledge of main ship equipment working principles, the knowledge of cargo characteristics and peculiarities, the knowledge of environmental forces influencing the ship, her movement and her stability as well as many other related spheres. The formation of the cognitive component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of future seafarers implies the reflection in the speech of the world conceptual image which a seafarer has at a certain level of his professional activity, i.e. his ability to operate concepts and to shape his ideas into corresponding words. That is why, the peculiar feature of Maritime English teaching as well as of any other foreign language teaching for specific purposes, is acknowledged the planning of the teaching process in strict compliance with the specific professional requirements of the learner establishing stringent contextual interconnection between a foreign language and other subjects from the course of vocational training.

The formation of the cognitive component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency must be done on the basis of the Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) approach. It means that students starting from the first days of education must be taught professional Maritime English and at the English lessons they must be introduced to their professional environment choosing the content that corresponds to the chosen specialization (navigation, engineering or electrical-engineering) and creating such communicative situations which will enable the process of Maritime English teaching. As it has been shown by own teaching experience, such professional contextualization of the language teaching content greatly increases students' interest to the subject, provides for the strong motivation to studying, promotes the enlargement of professional vocabulary, enables the integration of professional knowledge into the area of foreign language communication. That is why while trying to improve the content of the Maritime English syllabus there were some crucial decisions taken:

- not to include into the content the topics of General English like «Shopping», «Where I live», «Everyday life», «Travelling» etc. and starting from the 1 semester of the 1 year of education to introduce the course of General Maritime English including professionally-oriented topics «Maritime Education», «Career Awareness», «Ship Arrangement», «Bulk cargo carriers» and the like (starting from 2020-2021 academic year);
- to introduce the course of General Maritime English for all faculties and training programs (navigation, engineering and electrical-engineering) during the first 3 semesters of education as at this stage of educational process the cadets are trained

to perform duties as ratings at the first support level of professional activity and, thus, they need to master general communicative skills to define ship parts, types of ships, shipboard equipment, cargo types and their properties, etc.;

- to start teaching Specialized Maritime English according to the specialty chosen from the 4th semester because after their second year of education cadets should have their first shipboard practice as members of a corresponding shipboard department (Deck department or Engine Room department) and should be ready to perform specialized professional duties at the operational level of professional activity. I.e., by the time they need to acquire adequate specialized knowledge in the specific subject area;

- to implement CLIL approach which means that the English language teaching and studying is done while mastering topics and information in specialized professional subjects starting from the very beginning of the education of high maritime educational establishment;

- to provide for the interdisciplinary links on the basis of cross-curriculum coordination of the English language teaching which will enable the possibility to form the coherent world conceptual image and overcome artificial boundaries between separate knowledge systems. Such integration of professional knowledge into the process of language teaching for specific purposes promotes the reveal of advance cognitive abilities which is important for the communicative skills development as the possibility to activate the professional knowledge created the inner need to express oneself and to speak out as for the professional situation given;

- to provide for the implementation of the context integrated learning principle together with the use of Active Learning Strategies which are aimed at developing cadets' abilities in critical thinking and solution making that is viewed as an important indicator of the cognitive component formation level. Active learning encompasses the wide range of teaching-learning technologies enabling active students' involvement to the teaching-learning process as active participants by means of discussions, problem situation solving, case-study technologies, inquiry-based learning and the like. The main focus of attention is not so much on what students learn as on the way the student learn and how they do it. Such strategies allow for the critical thinking development by means of acquired knowledge application.

So, summarizing of the above-mentioned, it is claimed that the cognitive component is of the crucial ones in the structure of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of future seafarers. It provides for the ability to choose adequate language means in compliance with the communicative situations, to establish proper reference, to correlate mental schemata and the real life phenomenon, to integrate language skills and the abilities to apply professional knowledge to solve problematic professional situations by means of foreign language.

The third core component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers is the strategic one. It is grounded on the assumption that the readiness to take part in the professionally-oriented foreign language communication depends not only on the knowledge of the language system and theoretical concepts and facts related to the area of future professional activity, but also on the ability to use the language according to the certain situation, the aims and intentions of the speakers taking into consideration their communicative and psychological characteristics.

For the senior maritime officers this structural component of the communicative competency presupposes also the ability to influence the crewmembers with the aim of carrying out a specific professional task given as well as to build the crew into a team, to



settle the interpersonal relationship, to create a favourable psychological atmosphere, etc. as a ship is not only a work place but also a constant social environment where crewmembers are forced to live in for 24/7 for long periods of time. So, it is deemed necessary to take this component into account in the course of professionally-oriented communicative competency formation and development because the future professional of any industry and maritime including must be ready to communicate a foreign language in accordance with the specific professional and social conditions and situation being able to effectively interact with other representatives of the industry.

The strategic component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency is assumed to have three basic skill types formed:

- 1) operational and organizational skills which are immediately connected to the professional situation and linguistic abilities of a person. This group of skills includes the ability to choose adequate language means in accordance with the certain situation, to use adequate verbal means, the ability to plan the communication according to the certain professional situation and the ability of a person to develop strategies to reach the communicative goals, to organize the activity of the crew in accordance with the strategy developed by providing clear instructions and to analyze the outcomes of the activity;
- 2) social and perceptual skills which provide for the ability of a person to percept communicative partner, to recognize the communicative situation as well as speakers' manifestations in accordance with their personal and age peculiarities. In this group of the skills one of the most important is considered to be the ability to listen and to understand the communication partner, to anticipate the perlocutionary effect of the utterance that enables the control of the situation and own communication behavior and, thus, will provide for the possibility to develop further communication strategy;
- 3) social and psychological skills which will help to build and regulate interpersonal relationships between the crewmembers. This group of skills encompasses the ability to teambuild, to stimulate and to improve the activity of crewmembers, to motivate their self-development and personal growth. This group of skills is especially important for the senior maritime officers who operate at the managerial level of the professional activity as it enables the efficient carrying out of specific professional duties. Nevertheless it is claimed that to start the the process of formation and development of these skills is necessary from the very beginning of the professional training when students enter the high maritime educational establishment because the process is quite time and labour-consuming process and requires gradual continuous development of the skills described.

Now it can be seen that the strategic component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency includes the abilities to use utterances in accordance with the communication intentions of the speaker and situational conditions of the communication. It consists of correlation awareness between the communication intentions and utterances that are aimed at reaching them. Having such skills developed enables a professional to deliver on his/her potential and capacity both in routine and emergency situations of professionally-oriented communication.

It is also argued here that the professionally-oriented communicative competency structure of seafarers encompasses also the number of important distal components. They are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Distal components of the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Sociocultural</b></p>	<p>Complex of personal characteristics which are based on the ability to maintain in the ship crew the atmosphere of mutual understanding, friendliness, unity, solidarity, helpfulness, tactfulness, team spirit, adhering to common ethic norms and rules of mutual cultural understanding and tolerance between the representatives of different ethnic (language, religious, cultural) groups in the professional society (crewmembers, port workers, ship owner and company representatives and the like); the knowledge of the norms of the communication behaviors of different nationalities and cultures, speaking etiquette, traditions, communication peculiarities.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Educational</b></p>	<p>Complex of skills and abilities to individually gain, quickly comprehend, critically assess professionally-related information and also the abilities to assess oneself and to continue to study on their own that will enable students to keep improving and increasing their knowledge and skills not only in the course of official education in high maritime educational establishment but also after the graduation.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Discourse</b></p>	<p>The ability of all crewmembers to use means of language for creating the texts of various stylistic types in compliance with the professional and sociocultural context in which the communication takes place; the ability to produce series of interconnected utterances in written or oral form to form coherent texts; the ability to identify and produce texts of different communicative genres which are considered to be professionally significant for a specific specialty (for example, order-blank forms, application forms, reports, claims, ship log books, sea protests, cargo documents and many other specific professionally related discourse types).</p>

## Conclusions

Summing up what has been said the research shows that the professionally-oriented communicative competency of seafarers must be regarded as a complex phenomenon which must be studied from the point of view of a systematic approach as a single integral system that encompasses a specific amount of components. Though some of the components are regarded to be the core ones, when the others, are viewed as distal ones they are all anyway important elements of a single unity and, thus, are interrelated. It means that the process of the formation and development can not be done in isolation but rather should be carried out with the use of the knowledge, skills and abilities from the one area of communicative interaction while forming and developing knowledge, skills and abilities from the others. Such interrelation will provide for the enrichment and expansion of communicative skills complex and will enable the cadets/students to perform efficient professionally-oriented foreign language communication.

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## KOMPETENCJE KOMUNIKACYJNE MARYNARZY ZORIENTOWANE ZAWODOWO

### STRESZCZENIE

Choć system kształcenia i szkolenia morskiego na Ukrainie został już ukształtowany, nadal brakuje absolwentów zdolności do wykonywania określonych obowiązków, zwłaszcza są trudności w posługiwaniu się językiem morskim w trakcie praktyki i pracy zawodowej na statku. Autorzy podkreśla potrzebę rozwoju systemu szkolenia zawodowego, aby zapewnić wzrost jakości i efektywności szkolnictwa wyższego morskiego oraz zagwarantować rozwój kompetencji komunikacyjnych przyszłych marynarzy.

Obecne badanie bada rosnącą potrzebę profesjonalnego kształtowania i rozwoju kompetencji komunikacyjnych podczas nauczania podchorążych / studentów wyższych uczelni morskich w oparciu o wymagania określone przez Międzynarodową Organizację Morską (IMO) do poziomu znajomości języka angielskiego i uznania języka angielskiego jako języka roboczego wielokulturowego środowiska okrętowego.

Z badań wynika, że kompetencje komunikacyjne marynarzy zorientowane zawodowo należy traktować jako zjawisko złożone, które należy badać z punktu widzenia podejścia systemowego jako jednego integralnego systemu obejmującego określoną liczbę elementów.

W badaniu przedstawiono strukturę kompetencji komunikacyjnych zorientowanych zawodowo marynarzy oraz przeanalizowano podstawowe elementy strukturalne kompetencji komunikacyjnych marynarzy zorientowanych zawodowo.

### SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

wyższe wykształcenie zawodowe, umiejętność komunikowania się zorientowana zawodowo, język angielski dla efektywnej komunikacji, kompetencja komunikacyjna