

## TYPES OF ENGLISHES AND THE CASE OF MARITIME ENGLISH: SOME INSIGHTS

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### ABSTRACT

The role of English as a world language can be traced back to its formal role as dominant language of the British Empire, whereby Standard British English has diversified into numerous regional and local varieties of ‘new Englishes’. It is generally accepted that its role as an international lingua franca, is due on the one hand to the world-wide domination of North American technology and culture, and on the other hand to the fact that its basic grammar and core vocabulary can be relatively easily acquired by non-native speakers all over the world. Mary Snell Hornby (2000: 14) reports that “this latter factor is coupled with a structural flexibility in the language itself and a general policy of non-purist openness among the English speaking cultural institutions”. Such an aspect led to the development of many regional varieties and has also paved the way for the use of English, not in its pristine form but as a common denominator for communication by non-native speakers around the globe. For instance, in the maritime setting the role of English is crucial since a poor command of it by professionals “may endanger human lives, pollute the marine environment or ruin an important commercial operation” (Bocanegra Valle 2010: 152). The paper is an attempt to make a theoretical overview of the role of English nowadays, analyzing some of its varieties and approaching to Maritime English as a fully-fledged type of ESP, arguing for its unique character since its teaching and learning as well as its research are based on international legal procedures.

**Keywords:** *Englishes, language varieties, lingua franca, globalization, hybridization, Maritime English*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

The use of English globally should not be reduced to interpersonal interaction, as English is also the language used in politics, in business, in the maritime industry, in tourism, in education, in the scientific discourse and in the literary sphere, taking the shape of a ‘multi-canon’, by which we understand a repertoire of cultural pluralism, as Braj Kachru (1994) rightfully suggests: “[T]hat has given English an unprecedented status as a global and cross-cultural code of communication. It is for this power that English is presented as an Aladdin’s lamp for opening the doors to cultural and religious enlightenment, as the language for all seasons, a universal language, a language with no national or regional frontiers and the language on which the sun never sets” (Kachru 1994: 2). Mention needs to be made that the geographical area covered by lingua franca is politically accountable. For instance, Latin was used throughout the Roman Empire, at least, as an official language, not that people willingly adopted it. Seemingly, in David Crystal’s suggestive words “English is in the right place, at the right time” (Crystal 1997: 78). Nowadays, English is the international means of communication being the language of technical advancement. Statistics show that English is spoken as the first language by 400 million people in UK, Ireland, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa, and as a foreign language, with more than a billion learners, being taught in almost every school. It is a well-known fact that International English is a variety of English which set it apart from Standard English. It is a lingua franca which is regarded as an instrumental language, serving as a means of communication between non-native speakers, who additionally acquired it. Furthermore, the use of English at sea is considered a key element of the human factor dimension, Maritime English being a unique

type of ESP because its instruction and research build on IMO’s regulatory frameworks (see also section 4).

### 2. WORLD ENGLISHES

Research on language mentions the 1991 cross-Atlantic disagreement -subsequently labelled the *English Today* issue- between Braj Kachru and Randolph Quirk, opposing liberation linguistics (pluricentric) and deficit linguistics (monocentric) positions, advocating *World Englishes* and *World English* respectively. Kachru (1985) designs a concentric model of the spread of English language, including the *Inner Circle* (where English is spoken as a mother tongue, such as for instance in UK and USA), the *Outer Circle* (English as a second language also called indigenized English or new Englishes, for example in India or Philippines) and the *Expanding Circle* (English as a Foreign Language also called English as an International Language/ English as a contact language, also governed by British and American English norms- for example in China and Russia). In his later work, Kachru (1996: 906) draws attention to “the unprecedented functional range and social penetration globally acquired by English”. David Crystal (2000) reports on new varieties of English (alongside traditional divisions of English into British English, American English, Canadian English, Australian English, New Zealand English, African English, Caribbean English, South Asian English and East Asian English), *Englishes* such as *Franenglish* (mixing French and English), *Romenglish* (Romanian and English), *Singlish* (Singaporean English), yet he emphasizes the centralising force of Standard English. McArthur (2001) adds one more non-institutionalised variety, namely *EuroEnglish*, featuring the English used by Europeans (non-native speakers, see section 2.2. below).

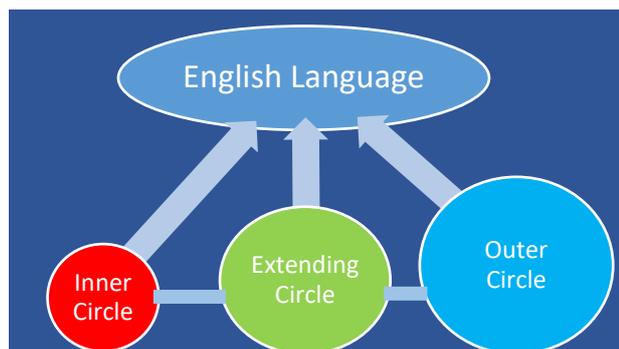


Figure 1. Types of Englishes

Standard English prescribes phonological, grammatical and lexical correctness, it is a virtual language “variously actualised”, a repertoire of lexical and grammatical means to be exploited via “adaptation and nonconformity” either in the oral or in the written mode of communication in multilingual contexts alike (Widdowson 2003: 51). Loyalty to the standard variant is motivated by the fact that it becomes highly efficient when used by speakers of dialects with a lower degree of mutual intelligibility and when it is envisaged as cultural inheritance. The fact that British and / or American dialect of English are viable standards in assessing proficiency may be explained by their being codified in grammar books, dictionaries and online corpora, for instance, Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English, “Grammar for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” by Biber et al. (1999), Collins COBUILD English Dictionary- while there is no exhaustive (nor could it be in our opinion) or sophisticated description of the English used by the majority of its speakers, i.e. lingua franca speakers or non-native speakers. Jennifer Jenkins (2006: 163) puts forward several factors that account for the wide world use of English and for the existence of World Englishes:

- The background to the spread of English (without going into details concerning geopolitical aspects);
- Linguistic evolution resulting in varieties of English
- The sociocultural contexts of English use;
- Intelligibility across varieties (in all the circles identified by Kachru);
- The impact of English on local languages- Englishization as well as the reverse process- nativization;
- Bilingualism and multilingualism policies;
- Functional status of varieties within the English-speaking communities;
- The communicative needs of the language users.

### 2.1 International English

International English often referred to as Global English or English as a Lingua Franca, is a means of international communication, a reduced standardised form of language for supra-cultural communication (cf. Barber apud. Snell-Hornby 2000: 36). In this respect, native speakers fear, that, in the process of becoming common property, their native language is taking the

shape of a hybrid language, often called McLanguage or McEnglish. The fact must be mentioned that the presence of spoken as opposed to written linguistic features in the variety of English as a lingua franca is related to the mix of spoken and written styles used in electronic communication as well as to a general move towards a higher degree of informality in social intercourse. For instance, linguistic research indicates a trend in some European languages towards an increase in the use of informal writing which is generally characteristic of spoken language. This aspect is further reinforced by a growing tendency for an overall more personal and less edited style of writing.

### 2.2 Eurospeak

As it is generally accepted that International English functions as a basic common denominator for supra-cultural communication, similarly, in the European Union, English is emerging as a kind of Eurolect, Eurojargon or European English, in order to meet the communicative needs of its member states. The idea needs to be pointed out that this phenomenon occurs despite of the EU policy of democratic multilingualism (Schäffner 2000: 3). Researchers in linguistics and translation studies generally speak about the existence of texts written in a new English which are considered to be an expression of a specific cultural identity. As such, moving to a micro-textual level, hybridity of EU language may be pinpointed in one of the most demanding areas of institutional translation, namely the terminology. Newly coined words such as: *comitology*, *conditionality*, *financial envelope*, *flexicurity*, etc. are an expression of a linguistic and cultural productivity of pan-Europeaness. Europeans using English as a lingua franca are rooted in different cultural backgrounds with their own traditions and concepts of what represents their national understanding of globalisation. As a result, when functioning in intercultural communication encounters which requires the use of English as a lingua franca, some other factors are to be taken into consideration such as the awareness of cultural differences in the use of language, otherwise wrong impressions can easily be made in the worst place leading to misunderstandings or national stereotyping which would be lack of pragmatic competence. The features of English as a lingua franca fit the description of the characteristics of register with three controlling variables of *field* (i.e. type of interaction), *tenor* (i.e. role relationship), and *mode* (i.e. symbolic organisation).

## 3. INTERNATIONAL ENGLISH AS LSP: THE CASE OF MARITIME ENGLISH

Thus, since English language is in a continuous process of actualisation, it also manifests itself in the form of variance in a register connected to specific purposes. This aspect is a way to hold International English in place and preserve its global intelligibility.

With respect to Maritime English, the idea should be pointed out that it is a unique type of ESP, “an umbrella term” (Bocanegra-Valle 2013) referring to the variety of English used by seamen when at sea and in port and by

maritime professionals engaged in shipping and shipbuilding operations but also in maritime research. Thus, this specific type of ESP lies in the variety of workplace.

### 3.1. Lexico-grammatical features of English used by Romanian students in the Maritime English classroom – An example of International English usage

Drawing on Seidelhofer's (2004: 220) ELF lexicogrammar, we shall apply recurrent salient features of English as they are used by Romanian students in the Maritime English classroom, however, mention should be made that these features, even though deviant and hybrid, do not seem to hinder communication in the maritime global setting:

- a) Non-use of the third person present tense -s:  
E.g. *The vessel sail in stormy waters.*
- b) Interchangeable use of the relative pronouns *who* and *which*  
E.g. *the ship who; the Captain which*
- c) omission of the definite and indefinite articles where they are obligatory in native speaker English and insertion where they do not occur in native speaker English
- d) increasing redundancy by adding prepositions:  
E.g. *We have to study about...*  
*Can we discuss about...?*  
or by increasing explicitness:  
E.g. *How long time? vs. How long?*
- e) heavy reliance on verbs of high semantic generality:  
E.g. *do, put, make, have, take*
- f) pluralisation of nouns which are considered uncountable by Romanian maritime students:  
E.g. *informations, staffs, advices*  
It is here that we shall add another interesting noun that. i.e. *news* that Romanian students tend to use with a verb in the plural because of the final-s, which they associate with the plural paradigm:  
E.g. *The news are interesting.*
- g) use of That-Clauses instead of infinitive constructions:  
E.g. *I want that we discuss about ships' types.*

From a pedagogically oriented perspective we consider that maritime students need to be internationally-oriented, requiring fluency in English.

## 4. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK IN RELATION TO MARITIME ENGLISH

The idea should be highlighted that three particular IMO instruments are of relevance in respect of Maritime English teaching and learning: the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP 2011), the International Convention on Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW), 1978, as amended, and the Model Course 3.17 on Maritime English. The SMCP has been developed as a result of overcoming the problem of language barriers and miscommunication at sea. The SMCP builds on a restricted and simplified vocabulary for use in several maritime contexts (i.e. routine operations, emergency situations, etc.).

In addition, the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping is an important regulatory instrument whose main aim is the harmonisation and improvement of training and certification standards among global crews. In addition, these standards seek to safeguard safety at sea, promote property at sea and protect the marine environment. Thus, seafarers operating on international vessels are expected to meet these standards and requirements set out in STCW.

Another important tool in the teaching and learning of seafarers is the IMO Model Course on Maritime English which was developed for IMO by the International Shipping Federation of London and the help of Marlin. The purpose of this Course was to cover the STCW standards of competence to be met by maritime students. The course cover two sections which provide the course frameworks and explains the aims and organization of the two syllabi in respect of language forms and the four communicative skills. In addition, notes on the suggested teaching facilities, a list of textbooks and teaching aids as well as an instructor manual are also included. The idea should be pointed out that this course is based on the contemporary Communicative Approach to language teaching.

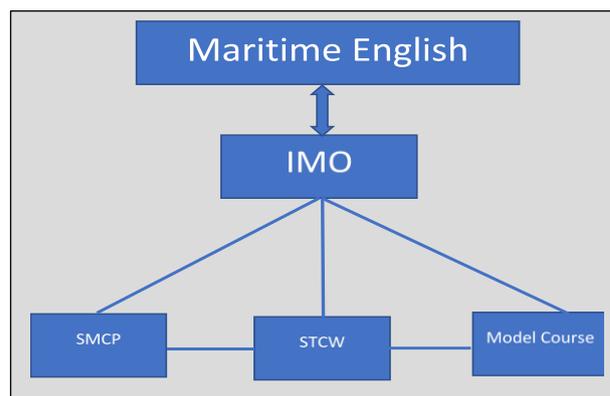


Figure 2. IMO's regulatory framework in relation to ME

Furthermore, in the context of the revision and validation of IMO Model Course 3.17, *Maritime English*, and in order to achieve a balance between language learning quality and ME's legal consistency, Zhang and Cole (2018) argue for a genre-based ESP framework in the ME curriculum design. Having the communicative language approach in view, the authors argue for a code-tailored ME competence which finds expression in maritime-specific genres (e.g. the typical sets of English communicative events that seafarers are involved in while achieving their maritime professional aims). According to the researchers, the curriculum should integrate linguistic systems, professional motivation and behaviours, communicative skills and cultural awareness into the teaching process which "entails a process of learning Maritime English while taking maritime specific action" (id. ibid.). The same authors consider that genre as social action is the key to appraise the two-stage syllabus

mapping, namely, General Maritime English (GME) and Specialized Maritime English (SME).

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Nowadays, English language is viewed as a multi-canon or a repertoire of cultural pluralism. International English is a hybrid language form which reflects the globalized nature of the modern commercial world. The speed of development of this language variety for use in international communication has been assisted by a variety of already existing Englishes. Education, technology, business and research benefit from English as a common language which seems to be the ideal candidate for use in international communication. At the global level and particularly at the European level, we witness a process of language hybridization which manifests itself in the textual form (e.g. texts written in English by non-native speakers).

With respect to Maritime English, we can conclude that it represents a variety of language adopted by the maritime community and used by seafarers in order to achieve effective onboard and outboard communication.

Maritime English instruction has a very important role to play in the global village, being responsible for considering “the social side of shipboard interaction” (Kahveci and Samson 2001: 47) and for providing solutions in order to bridge the gap between cultures and to reduce mistakes that can emerge as a result of multilingual and multicultural environments and communication difficulties. In this respect, IMO has already made an effort by means of implementing legal instruments, recommending training and developing a Model Course. However, we consider that the global challenge for Maritime English instruction and research lies with the implementation of the maritime industry’s requirements into the distinct educational systems at the global level. At the European level, the common target for education at tertiary level resides in the adaptation to the European Space for Higher Education (ERIH). Maritime institutions should provide qualitative training for internationally oriented students/ seafarers who should be equipped with linguistic competence, cultural competence, pragmatic (i.e. using language appropriately in different contexts), and socio pragmatic competence (i.e. knowledge of the norms of language for expressing politeness or for what represents suitable topics of conversation) in order to achieve the know how to get maritime specific things done through English as required by STCW, 1978, as amended. In this respect, a genre-based approach to the maritime curriculum design and maritime language teaching may indeed hold the key in finding “the nature of the beast” and avoiding the Tower of Babel.

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