How to Make Teaching Maritime English (More) Interesting?

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Abstract

It is widely acknowledged that student interest and motivation for learning have a considerable influence on second language acquisition (e.g. Baker, 2006; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). This paper focuses on methods of stimulating and enhancing students' interest in learning maritime English, as one of the factors of success in second language development. The students of Nautical Studies and Marine Engineering at the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Rijeka were selected as the target group. The data were collected through survey in the form of a questionnaire. The aim of the research was to identify the elements from teaching general English that affect the level of student interest in learning English for specific purposes, as well as to make suggestions to improve levels of interest in the classroom. The authors found that using role-plays based on authentic situations, digital media and integrated tasks both raise and sustain interest in students during lessons.

Keywords: Maritime English, motivation, second language teaching, learning material.

1 Introduction

English for specific purposes (ESP) focuses on teaching a specific functional variety of a natural language to students who are trained to join a community of people that share a specialized knowledge. ESP is characterized by unambiguous terminology, specific rhetorical elements and structures, complex syntax and lexical density. It serves a specific purpose and involves a particular way of communication, whether written or oral. Maritime English is a particular variety of ESP used by seafarers both at sea and in port and by individuals working in the shipping and shipbuilding industry. It is an umbrella term encompassing five different subvarieties according to the specific purpose they serve within the maritime context: English for navigation and maritime communications, English for maritime commerce, English for maritime law, English for marine engineering, and English for shipbuilding (Bocanegra-Valle, 2013).

Teaching maritime English presents quite a challenge for any teacher. As Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) emphasized, the role of the teacher changes when compared to English for general purposes (EGP), as the teacher needs to have specific knowledge of the subject besides having knowledge of the language. The teachers of maritime English are not mere teachers of terminology, hence the Maritime English course they conduct should involve all the complexities of the variety of English they teach. However, during class, the level of student motivation and interest inevitably drops, so the teacher has to draw upon certain strategies in order to maintain interest, which in turn should enhance learning.

This paper aims not only to establish the type of motivation present in students learning a specific variety of English, maritime English, but also to suggest and evaluate some ways of raising the level of motivation and interest in students, especially during class when their concentration and motivation begins to wane.

2 Theoretical background

The issue of motivation in second language acquisition has been widely acknowledged by many authors and methodologists. Since Gardner (1985), the theory of motivation has developed considerably, identifying various types and degrees of motivation in learning. It has also been observed that motivation differs in students learning EGP and ESP (Guerid, 2015; Johns & Dudley-Evans, 1991). A study conducted by Madrid (2002) about how powerful 18 motivational classroom strategies were, identified the strongest motivational strategies, among which the use of audio-visual resources was dominant, followed by new technologies and group work. Bernaus, Wilson, and Gardner (2009) conducted a study which showed that teacher motivation influences the use of strategies in class and can influence the students' attitudes towards learning, but they also emphasized that the role of the teacher in the process of language learning is much more complex. Teacher motivation is related to the use of motivational strategies – the more motivated the teacher is, the more varied strategies he or she will use.

3 Methodology

To specify the parameters of this course of study, the authors performed a set of procedures, i.e. a qualitative needs analysis (Nunan, 2001) as the first step in the research at the beginning of the academic year 2016/2017. The authors performed a qualitative needs analysis at the courses we were currently teaching to determine the activities and materials we will use. The courses involved were English for marine engineering and English for navigation and maritime communications.

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Based on our experience and reference literature, in case the motivation drops in class, the students need interactive activities where they can actively use the language, a variety of materials which would stimulate all their senses and simulations of real-life situations. Xiao Yishan (2008) conducted a needs analysis for the teaching of English for navigation and maritime communications and he emphasized that any course should be based on an analysis of learner needs. However, the author focused on the target needs analysis, according to Hutchinson and Waters' framework (1989), while in this particular situation, the focus was not so much on "what learners need to know", as this was already prescribed by the course content and structure, but more on the "how they will learn it" and "what they expect from the course" in order to see how learning may be optimized. The authors focused on a qualitative analysis, where the emphasis was more on the process of learning and the learners themselves. Although the needs analysis does not yield absolute results, it may provide some guidelines and focus the course on learning. Another important implication was suggested by Tominac (2008) who conducted a study of TOMEC test (Test of Maritime English Competence) and concluded that the students of Marine Engineering were much better in tasks which involved visual forms, such as drawings, diagrams and pictures, whereas students of Nautical Studies were better in listening comprehension tasks, which reflects the areas in which the students feel comfortable.

The second stage involved the implementation of the selected material. The authors selected the activities that would be used to motivate and activate students, but also that would reduce the level of anxiety students can feel when using a foreign language. The methods used included workshops and digital material, some of which taken over from training institutions and some designed by the authors themselves. The teaching material available encompassed textbooks specialized for teaching maritime and marine engineering English, like Maritime English (Pritchard, 1999), English for the Maritime Industry (Grice, 2012), English for Maritime Studies (Blakey, 1987), MarEngine English Underway (Buczkowska, 2014), An English Textbook for Marine Engineers (Spinčić & Pritchard, 2002), and online interactive activities, like MarEng project. The textbooks are very well organized and designed according to methodological principles and they may serve as a good basis in the class, but as they do not cover the entire content of the mentioned courses, they have to be supplemented with additional material. Online programmes, as de la Maza established (2009), are a useful methodological tool in the classroom, but not as a self-learning tool. Different practitioners have provided their contribution in the area of maritime English teaching, aiming at improving specific skills, like the communicative ability (Kuo, 2008), phonetic skills (Wang & Lin, 2008), translation skills (Raluca Vişan, 2009), or suggesting a learning strategy, like learning from authentic situations (Łozińska, 2009), genre-based approach (Dževerdanović, 2009), but none of them has focused on raising and maintaining the level of motivation, keeping the students focused and interested in the matter during class. This is why the authors drew upon some EGP activities, adjusting them for this purpose and making customized activities for raising motivation in maritime English class.

Finally, the last stage involved evaluation and analysis of the results. The outcome of using the mentioned materials was evaluated firstly from the point of view of the teacher, evaluating the students' needs, expectations and attitudes and taking into consideration that ESP requires a particular methodology that differs from EGP (Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998). Secondly, the outcome of using the mentioned materials was assessed from the point of view of the students by conducting a survey about the implemented strategies to verify whether they achieved the expected impact. For the purposes of the research, a survey was conducted among the students of Marine Engineering and Nautical Studies at the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Rijeka. The subjects were 85 students, 51 first-year students of marine engineering English (48 male and 3 female, average age 19) and 34 second-year students of nautical English (30 male and 4 female, average age 20). The number of subjects was about half of the

total number of students on the course. They had already had some previous knowledge of English at B level gained from high school, but at the courses offered at the Faculty of Maritime Studies they were introduced to the maritime English, that is the variety of English they had not used before. None of the subjects had had any experience at sea.

The survey was composed as a questionnaire with 15 questions (see Appendix) in which the students had to grade their answer on a scale from 1 to 5, depending on how much it applied to them, 1 being the least applicable. As the authors required a customized survey for their research, we compiled the questions ourselves. The survey represented a combination of Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) survey (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) and a survey conducted in Croatia in 2009 in the framework of the project "Tesla u školi" which was aimed at stimulating the use of digital teaching materials in class. The questions were all in Croatian to avoid any possible misunderstandings or confusion.

4 Motivational activities

On the basis of the conducted needs analysis and the research of available relevant literature, the authors have selected several types of materials to stimulate and maintain motivation in their ESP classes. The activities were chosen to cater for various student needs and satisfy various learning styles. The purpose of these activities was firstly to motivate students during class when the level of interest and concentration drops, while at the same time they would learn and use language structures.

Two of the teaching materials selected, the Seagull training course and MarEng programme, were taken over from available online training providers, which offer a library of training courses for seafarers. Original materials were construed using the available e-learning platform Merlin and the online application Puzzlemaker, while online applications like Dvolver and Kahoot! were used to get the students more involved and active in the classroom. Furthermore, communication workshops with native speakers were organized for smaller groups of students.

4.1 Online training courses

In the field of maritime English teaching and training of seafarers, there are some training courses developed with the goal of improving communication skills in this specific work environment, which directly affects the safety and security on board ships.

One of the most famous training platforms, Seagull Maritime, offers a comprehensive library of training and onboard courses for improving seafarer knowledge. The courses are not free of charge, so the Faculty of Maritime Studies provides a partial subscription to some of the courses offered online by Seagull. These were used in class as materials produced by professionals for professionals which makes it relevant and significant to students. The other online learning tool, MarEng, was developed in the framework of Leonardo da Vinci project with the aim of improving the knowledge of English in the maritime industry. It is free-of-charge and can be downloaded and installed on any computer.

Both tools offer listening and reading practice as well as various exercises, like matching, filling in the gaps, grammar exercises, etc. All materials aim to simulate real-life situations and to teach standard marine communication phrases, proscribed by the International Maritime Organization. The use of the materials requires adequate equipment, like computers and headphones. The students work and practise by themselves, at their own pace, which makes the learning process highly individualized. The students can go through the units in class and at home, at any time. Seagull stores their results online

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under their username. The other advantage is the audio-visual nature of the programmes, as well as their user-friendliness. However, as language implies interaction and communication, this aspect is lost in this way of learning, so it is extremely important not to rely solely upon such materials, but to use them in combination with other more interactive strategies.

4.2 E-learning platform

Merlin is an e-learning platform established to perform university courses with the use of e-learning technologies. It is based on Moodle platform designed to provide educators, administrators and learners with a single robust, secure and integrated system to create personalised learning environments. It contains test materials, lectures, presentations, various files, video clips, etc. Students can access it by means of their electronic identity provided by the faculty. The materials on this learning platform are tailor-made by the authors to cater for the needs of a particular group of students. It was chosen precisely because it offers a large variety of activities, which may be used as warm-up activities, follow-up activities, grammar practice, or just for raising the level of concentration after a longer activity or when the students are tired. Furthermore, the activities may be adjusted to the needs of particular students and they may access them at any time. Most importantly, in this case, the process of learning is not performed on learners, but it is what learners do themselves (Ambrose, Bridges, DiPietro, Lovett, & Norman, 2010).

4.3 Online applications

There is a variety of online sources and applications to choose from. The applications used for the purposes of this research were selected to fulfil the specific goal of maintaining and raising the level of motivation during class. They were meant to be introduced at a specific point during the lesson when the students' concentration, and consequently motivation, is falling so they require an activity which would engage their interest and imagination and in which they would practice their language skills without much effort. Of course, such activities require the use of computers in class.

One of such activities offering a well-structured vocabulary practice is the Puzzlemaker. It is a puzzle generation tool for creating customized word searches and other various types of puzzles. As puzzles represent a pastime activity for enjoyment, this can certainly help to maintain motivation in class and relieve the tension related to learning a foreign language. As the authors wanted to engage the students more through interactive activities, pair activities and group work, we selected applications like the Dvolver Moviemaker. In this free online application the students can use their imagination, whether by themselves, in pairs or in groups, and use specific language in specific situations, usually provided by the teacher, to make short conversations in the form of movies. This activity aims to be entertaining, but at the same time to practise specific vocabulary in context. Most importantly, the students do not consider it as actual practice, but as an entertaining break from learning. Another motivation-sustaining online application used in the research was Kahoot!, a free game-based learning platform that makes it fun to learn any subject, in any language, on any device and for all ages. The application supports the integration of photos, videos, words or sentences and can be played on a tablet, a PC or a mobile phone. The activity aims to stimulate the students' motivation and concentration through a competition, while at the same time to practise their vocabulary or grammar skills.

These online applications can be used at any moment in class, as a warm-up or follow-up activity, for revising or practice, or when the teacher feels the motivation in class has dropped for any reason. However, it is time-consuming to create such an activity which still needs to cater for the students' needs, i.e. it must not be too commonplace or obvious, but challenging enough for their level of knowledge.

4.4 Communication workshop

The communication workshop with native speakers was organized in cooperation with the City Library Rijeka and the crew of the American warship Mount Whitney. The students had the opportunity to speak to native speakers who were actually their colleagues as well. The students were divided into several groups and each group could talk to one of the crew members. One of the workshops was structured and the students had specific tasks to do, i.e. to find out specific information about their guests. The other workshop was loosely structured in which the goal was to use the language in a more relaxed environment. This activity does not require any equipment, but it does require a certain amount of engagement by the teacher to organize, coordinate and monitor the course of the workshop. On the other hand, the students can use the language in a real-life situation, they can relax and enjoy a casual conversation while still practising language and being aware of their own knowledge of language.

5 Survey results

In order to evaluate the impact of the mentioned learning materials, a survey was conducted among the students. The goal of the survey was to establish their basic motivation for learning, the students' attitude towards the use of the selected materials in class, their opinion about each of the materials used, and their level of participation in class.

Table 1 shows the differences and similarities in some key questions between students of different courses. Only the answers with the highest grade 5 have been singled out in the table, as they are the most numerous. The first two questions referred to the kind of motivation that drives the students. The students of Nautical Studies are highly aware of the importance the English language has in their future work where they have to use it on a daily basis, while significantly fewer students of Marine Engineering (60%) feel the same. However, basically, their motivation is instrumental, i.e. they learn English for pragmatic, practical reasons. The use of relevant literature and manuals is not perceived as their goal for learning the language, especially among the students of Marine Engineering (13.73%). This is probably because they feel that their communicative skills are more important for their job than reading skills. This is also in line with our needs analysis whereby communication and the use of language in context were the primary goals. The fact that still does surprise is the number of students of Marine Engineering who graded this question with the lowest grade, although the use of professional manuals is a large part of their job. However, as they are more visual and kinetic type of learners, they probably do not like learning from manuals and similar reading material.

Another interesting issue is the students' attitude towards the selected material in class, which is mostly positive. The students of Marine Engineering gave fewer answers with the highest grade, but there were a lot of answers graded with the second highest grade 4 (the percentage provided in the brackets in table 1 below), which may indicate a certain amount of scepticism towards this method of learning, probably because they are not used to it. The final question further checks their attitude towards the use of the selected materials and the answers were mostly positive, which corroborates our initial thesis about the use of this kind of material as motivating in class. When they had to assess how interesting the lessons were, the students also gave mostly highest or second highest grade, which is considered positive. On the other hand, they all agreed that learning from textbooks was not motivating for them.

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Table 1: The differences and similarities in opinions between the students of Marine Engineering and the students of Nautical Studies

Question	Students of Marine Engineering	Students of Nautical Studies	
I believe my knowledge of English is important for the progress in my future job.	60.78%	93.75%	
I am learning English to be able to use professional manuals.	13.73%	46.88%	
My opinion about the use of digital material in the process of education is positive.	37.25% (45.10%)	56.25%	
How interesting was the lesson in which digital materials were used?	42.00% (48.00%)	40.63% (37.50%)	
I prefer learning from a textbook.	3.92%	6.25%	
I think that the use of digital teaching materials is appropriate and desirable.	58.82%	46.88%	

Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of answers, regardless of the course the students are taking. As the majority of answers were graded with 4 and 5, they were the ones singled out. We can see that students themselves noticed that their level of participation in class actually rose when these motivational strategies were used. Therefore, they felt more involved, challenged and stimulated, which raised their level of motivation. Entertainment is also an important stimulus in class, which was in this case achieved with Kahoot!. Overall, the students' answers showed that the selected motivational strategies managed to get their attention and stimulate them to participate more, therefore the lessons were more interesting and challenging. The feedback was also positive for the communication workshop, because the students found it enjoyable and desirable.

Table 2: The opinions of the students of Marine Engineering and the students of Nautical Studies about motivational activities

Question	Grade 4	Grade 5
How much did the use of digital material in class mo-	47.06%	31.37%
tivate you to participate more?	47.00%	31.37%
The atmosphere in class when digital materials were	45.10%	49.02%
used was active and motivating.	45.10%	49.02%
Learning with Kahoot! is fun.		100.00%
Learning with Kahoot!, Dvolver and MarEng is chal-	49.02%	31.37%
lenging and stimulating.	47.0270	31.3770
I think that organizing communication workshops	28.13%	62.50%
with native speakers is appropriate and desirable.	20.13%	02.30%
How would you assess your participation in lessons		
when the communication workshop with native speak-	28.13%	43.75%
ers was organized in comparison with classical lessons?		

6 Conclusions

The motivational activities selected according to the needs analysis, conducted by the authors, proved successful in class, which is corroborated by the student survey. These activities, originally created

for EGP, were modified according to the needs of the Maritime English course. The activities used targeted the students' attitudes and level of involvement in class, considering the kind of motivation which underlies their language learning and the learning types. The results of the survey showed that the activities used in class developed a positive attitude towards such learning and stimulated the students' participation in class. The students themselves confirmed that they participated more in classes when such activities were used.

The research may serve as the basis for future studies of the relation between the level of motivation and actual final achievement in class. The issue raised is whether such motivational activities, besides the advantages already mentioned, actually have an impact on the final grade the students achieve in class, because although they may have a momentary influence on students, their long-term effects on students' success should be researched. Furthermore, as teachers adjust their teaching style to the educational context in which they work, it would be interesting to see how much the students' behaviour affects the level of autonomy that the teacher gives to the students and the strategies the teacher will use.

Finally, it may be concluded that teachers themselves have to re-evaluate their work in class and monitor the process of learning constantly, adjusting it to the students and their needs. This is an ongoing process and the activities presented here demonstrate some of the ways of stimulating and enhancing learning of maritime English.

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Appendix

The survey conducted among the students of Marine Engineering and Nautical Studies at the Faculty of Maritime Studies in Rijeka

Students of Nautical Studies	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my knowledge of English is important					
for the progress in my future job.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	6.25%	93.75%
I am learning English to be able to use profession-					
al manuals.	0.00%	3.13%	21.88%	28.13%	46.88%
My opinion of using digital material in the process of education is positive.	0.00%	3.13%	21.88%	18.75%	56.25%
How would you assess your participation in les-	0.00%	3.13%	21.00%	10.75%	30.23%
sons when the communication workshop with					
native speakers was organized in comparison with					
classical lessons?	3.13%	0.00%	25.00%	28.13%	43.75%
How much did the use of digital material in class					
motivate you to participate more?	0.00%	0.00%	5.18%	37.51%	57.31%
How interesting was the lesson in which digital					
materials were used?	0.00%	6.25%	15.63%	37.50%	40.63%
How interesting was the lesson in which you had	0.000/	2.120/	12 500/	20.120/	T ()T0/
the opportunity to talk with native speakers?	0.00%	3.13%	12.50%	28.13%	56.25%
I prefer learning from a textbook.	34.38%	40.63%	6.25%	12.50%	6.25%
I prefer learning with the help of digital learning strategies such as Kahoot!, MovieMaker and					
MarEng than learning in the classical way.	0.00%	0.00%	17.85%	42.12%	40.03%
Learning with Kahoot! is fun.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	3.49%	96.51%
Learning with Kahoot!, MovieMaker and					
MarEng is challenging and stimulating.	0.00%	0.00%	14.12%	42.59%	43.29%
The atmosphere in class when digital materials					
were used was active and motivating.	0.00%	0.00%	15.17%	33.25%	51.58%
I think that the use of digital teaching materials is					
appropriate and desirable.	0.00%	0.00%	9.38%	43.75%	46.88%
I think that organizing communication workshops					
with native speakers is appropriate and desirable.	0.00%	3.13%	6.25%	28.13%	62.50%
The atmosphere at the communication workshop	0.0070	3.1370	0.4370	20.1370	04.3070
was active and motivating.	0.00%	0.00%	12.50%	28.13%	59.38%
0	2.50%	3.96%	12.24%	27.89%	53.42%

Students of Marine Engineering	1	2	3	4	5
I believe my knowledge of English is important	0.000/	1.0707	0.000:	0= 1=0	(0 = 00)
for the progress in my future job.	0.00%	1.96%	9.80%	27.45%	60.78%
I am learning English to be able to use professional manuals.	17.65%	17.65%	29.41%	21.57%	13.73%
My opinion about the use of digital material in	17.0570	17.0570	27.4170	21.5770	13.7370
the process of education is positive.	1.96%	0.00%	15.69%	45.10%	37.25%
How would you assess your participation in les-					
sons when digital materials were used in compari-	1.0707	1.0707	17 (50/	50.000 /	27.450/
son with classical lessons?	1.96%	1.96%	17.65%	50.98%	27.45%
How much did the use of digital material in class motivate you to participate more?	1.96%	1.96%	17.65%	47.06%	31.37%
How interesting was the lesson in which digital	10,070	21,70,70	11.0070	.,,,,,,	01,07,0
materials were used?	0.00%	2.00%	8.00%	48.00%	42.00%
How interesting was the lesson in which you had					
the opportunity to talk with native speakers?	0.00%	1.96%	11.76%	54.90%	31.37%
I prefer learning from a textbook.	25.49%	27.45%	31.37%	11.76%	3.92%
I prefer learning with the help of digital learn-					
ing strategies such as Kahoot!, MovieMaker and MarEng than learning in the classical way.	2.00%	0.00%	24.00%	30.00%	44.00%
Learning with Kahoot! is fun.	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%
Learning with Kahoot!, MovieMaker and	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070	0.0070	100.0070
MarEng is challenging and stimulating.	0.00%	1.96%	17.65%	49.02%	31.37%
The atmosphere in class when digital materials					
were used was active and motivating.	0.00%	0.00%	5.88%	45.10%	49.02%
I think that the use of digital teaching materials is	0.000/	0.000/	15 (00)	25 400/	f0.020/
appropriate and desirable.	0.00%	0.00%	15.69%	25.49%	58.82%
I think that organizing communication workshops with native speakers is appropriate and desirable.					
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The atmosphere at the communication workshop					
was active and motivating.	0.00%	1.96%	21.57%	43.14%	33.33%
	3.40%	4.05%	16.38%	36.44%	39.72%