

THE PECULIARITIES OF USING MARITIME SLANG IN PROFESSIONAL ENGLISH

Yablonska Tetiana Mykolaivna,

Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor,

Professor at the Department of Philology

Odesa National Maritime University

ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6801-8704

Researcher ID: I-532402018

The article deals with the relevance of the use of maritime slang in professional English. First, it is tightly connected with the geographical location of Great Britain. Secondly, the rapid development of the maritime industry of the country contributed to the development of the relevant area of language, namely maritime slang. Thirdly, due to the intensive development of the English seafarers' professional language the above-mentioned slang has taken a strong place in everyday life.

The article defines the peculiarities of using maritime slang in professional English. To achieve the set goal, the following methods of teaching were applied: descriptive (for a general description of slang in English); contextual-interpretive (to identify the original meaning of maritime slang), as well as a method of creating a problem situation with the help of maritime slang in English. The author determines the place and the essence of the notion "slang" in English, identifies the original meaning of maritime slang, considers the thematic classification of maritime slang in English.

It has been proved that slang is often used among particular groups of people. Most of them want to be picturesque, arresting and, of course, different from others. In this case it concerns maritime English speech for many reasons. Seafarers have always liked making their speech more colourful on account of constant danger to life and hard work on board a ship. It is also possible to say with great confidence that seafarers can't imagine their life without jokes because humour on a long voyage is considered to be a prerequisite for the survival of the entire crew. It is also necessary to add that maritime English have long ago become an integral part of everyday life. In turn, such aspects as means of avoiding gross mistakes during the translation of maritime slang will be the perspective of our further research.

Key words: seafarers, professional English, maritime English slang, maritime jargon, maritime industry.

Яблонська Тетяна. Особливості використання морського сленгу у професійній англійській мові

У статті обґрунтовано актуальність використання морського сленгу у професійній англійській мові. По-перше, це тісно пов'язано з географічним положенням Великої Британії. По-друге, бурхливий розвиток морської галузі країни сприяв розвитку відповідного напрямку мови, а саме морського сленгу. По-третє, завдяки інтенсивному розвитку професійної мови англійських мореплавців вищезазначений сленг зайняв міцну позицію в повсякденному житті.

У статті визначено особливості використання морського сленгу в професійній англійській мові. Для досягнення поставленої мети було використано такі методи дослідження, як: описовий (для загальної характеристики сленгу в англійській мові); контекстно-інтерпретаційний (для виявлення початкового значення морського сленгу), а також метод створення проблемної ситуації за допомогою морського сленгу в англійській мові. Автор визначає місце та сутність поняття «сленг» в англійській мові, виявляє первісне значення морського сленгу, розглядає тематичну класифікацію морського сленгу в англійській мові.

Доведено, що сленг часто використовується серед певних груп людей. Більшість з них хочуть бути мальовничими, привабливими і, звісно, не схожими на інших. В такому випадку це стосується морської англійської мови з багатьох причин. Через постійну небезпеку для життя і важку роботу на кораблі морякам завжди подобалося робити своє мовлення більш яскравим. Також можна з упевненістю сказати, що моряки не уявляють свого життя без жартів, адже гумор у далекій подорожі вважається обов'язковою умовою виживання всього екіпажу. Варто додати, що морська англійська мова вже давно стала невід'ємною частиною повсякденного життя сучасної людини. Своєю чергою саме такі аспекти, як засоби уникнення грубих помилок під час перекладу морського сленгу, і будуть перспективою наших подальших досліджень.

Ключові слова: моряки, професійна англійська мова, морський англійський сленг, морський жаргон, морська галузь.

Introduction. Great Britain is an island country. For this reason, the life of the residents of this country has always been closely connected with the sea. The economic development of the country, trade, colonial campaigns, strengthening relations with states, the discovery and development of new lands required Great Britain to have a powerful and modern fleet. Great Britain has always been one of the great maritime powers. Rapid development of the maritime industry entailed the development of the relevant area of language. The professional language of English seafarers developed intensively and this is what led to the emergence of maritime slang.

Seafarers have always been famous for peppering their speech with colourful slang expressions. This is probably explained by the fact that service in the navy is associated with constant danger to life and hard work. That's why seafarers can't imagine their life without jokes because humour on a long voyage is considered to be a prerequisite for the survival of the entire crew. Maritime slang in English has evolved over time into established everyday expressions. Almost everyone uses maritime slang, since many words and phrases from the speech of seafarers have long ago become the integral part of everyday life. We can often observe the opposite phenomenon. Some words and expressions take root among seafarers and acquire a completely different meaning, turning into maritime jargon. The study of maritime slang and understanding the influence of the surrounding world on certain areas of a seafarer's life is facilitated by the thematic classification of maritime slang.

The use of maritime slang has long gone beyond ships and seaports. Now maritime slang is used in all areas of life, as many phrases have firmly penetrated everyday life. Maritime slang is divided into slang of the navy, passenger fleet, trade, fishing and some others. In general, maritime slang can be classified as a professional language, but some of its lexical units denote completely abstract concepts.

For example, the expression "to run the gauntlet" several centuries ago meant corporal punishment, when the offender walked through the gauntlet, receiving blows on the back. Today the given expression has penetrated into everyday life and it means to be subject to harsh criticism. The phrase "copper bottomed"

was explained as "copper bottom". It appeared in those days when ships still had a wooden hull and its underwater part was sheathed with copper plates to protect against holes and shell growth. However, over time, this expression began to be used for everything that inspires trust and confidence. The expression "everything but the captain's night shirt/gown" also appeared also during the time of the sailing fleet. This expression denotes a ship sailing under all possible sails. We can often observe the opposite phenomenon. Some words and expressions from ordinary everyday life turn into maritime slang, acquiring a different meaning. For example, the well-known word "babysitter" is explained as "nanny", but in naval slang it refers to a cover destroyer, which is part of an aircraft carrier strike group and is directly involved in covering the aircraft carrier. When working with maritime slang, an interpreter will often have to deal with unusual expressions, that have no analogues in everyday life. So, analysis of maritime slang and the peculiarities of its use in professional English will be the main aspect of our research.

The purpose and the tasks of the research. Due to the stated above, the purpose of this research is important and relevant. It is connected with the determination of the main features of the translation of maritime slang in its context. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to accomplish several tasks of the research:

- 1) to determine the place and the essence of slang in English;
- 2) to identify the original meaning of maritime slang;
- 3) to consider the thematic classification of maritime slang in English.

Materials and methods. Such teaching methods as descriptive (for a general description of slang in English); contextual-interpretive (to identify the original meaning of maritime slang), as well as a method of creating a problem situation with the help of maritime slang in English.

Discussion. As it is known, much have been written on the subject of slang that is contradictory and at the same time very interesting for both students and their lecturers.

Slang is a very important language that includes new and sometimes not polite words and meanings. It is often used among particular groups of people, and is usually not used in serious speech or writing.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines slang as “language of a highly colloquial style, considered as below the level of standard educated speech, and consisting either of new words or of current words employed in some special sense” [1].

The famous English writer G.K. Chesterton gives another definition of slang: “The one stream of poetry which in constantly flowing is slang. Every day some nameless poet weaves fairy tracery of popular language... All slang is metaphor, and all metaphor is poetry” [2, p. 105].

As to the author’s words that “all slang is metaphor”, is true observation, though the second part of the statement “all metaphor is poetry” is difficult to accept especially if we consider the following examples: mug (for face), saucers, blinkers (for eyes), trap (for mouth, e.g. Keep your trap shut), dogs (for feet), to leg (to walk).

Slang lexical units necessarily contain all types of connotations: the emotional component is most often contemptuous, ironic and, consequently, evaluative. Slang words and expressions always have synonyms in the literary language and, thus, are, as it were, second names for objects, more expressive than ordinary ones, for some reason evoking an emotional attitude. Their expressiveness relies on surprise, imagery, wit, and sometimes funny distortion. The expressive colouring of slang words, which in speech reflect various negative phenomena inherent in reality, is especially striking [3, p. 120].

Some examples of British and American slang witness about it. Their meaning also depends upon the definite context [4].

British Slang:

knackered – exhausted, tired – виснажений, втомлений;

codswallop – nonsense – безглуздя, нісенітниця;

a damp squib – disappointment, failure, fiasco – розчарування, поразка, фіаско;

to do one’s nut – to lose temper, to give way to anger (rage, wrath) – втрачати терпіння, давати волю гніву (люті).

American Slang:

awesome – fantastic, incredible – фантастичний, неймовірний;

to be jonesing to do smth – to look forward to, to desire smth – очікувати, бажати чогось (з нетерпінням);

to chill out – to relax – відпочивати, розслабитися;

a creep – unpleasant, strange, eccentric wierdo, erratic, oddfish – неприємний, дивний, ексцентричний, дивак, непостійний.

All these meanings are certainly based on metaphor, yet they strike one as singularly unpoetical.

Metaphor is an expression which means or describes one thing or idea using words usually used of something else with very similar qualities (in sunshine of her smile) without using the words *as* or *like*.

People use slang for a number of reasons. At first they want to be picturesque, arresting and, secondly, different from others. These are the reasons for using slang as explained by modern linguists. The circle of users of slang is more narrow than that of colloquialisms. Colloquial words can be used in literary speech. As for slang, it is mainly used by the young and uneducated. Yet, slang’s colourful and humorous quality makes it catching, so that a considerable part of slang may become accepted by nearly all the groups of speakers. American youth likes using likes emotionally-coloured and even ironic words in their speech [5, p.100].

E.g. hot – attractive – привабливий;

Break a leg – Good Luck – Хай щастить;

cheesy – cheap or tacky – дешевий.

Regarding the maritime field of training and understanding the influence of the surrounding world on certain areas of a seafarer’s life, the development of these factors is facilitated by the thematic classification of maritime slang. Maritime slang can be subdivided into appropriate thematic groups and subgroups [6].

Let’s consider some of them.

I. Interpersonal relationships:

a) the first subgroup is connected with everyday relationships and interactions between seafarers.

– to fall aboard – in everyday life this expression means to get into a quarrel with someone, to get into a fight, to quarrel. In the navy, this expression meant to board (boarding);

– learn/know the ropes – an expression that in everyday life means to master skills; know how to do a particular job. This expression appeared during the sailing fleet, because sailors needed to know the location and use of each rope (gear) for raising and lowering sails;

– shark bait – man fallen overboard;

– carried away to be overly absorbed in enthusiasm or excitement. Do something to an excessive or extreme degree. We all know how dangerous it is to get carried away in a given situation. This involves losing control of one's actions or becoming overly aroused. In modern usage, the phrase is also used in a negative sense as a warning after success or achievement. Sailors used this phrase to describe something on board a ship that was broken (usually yards, masts or ropes. For example: "A gust of wind, while we were off the Azores, carried away our top-masts and our sails, tearing the latter in shreds as if they had been sheets of paper".

– he would tap the admiral – "he would drink at the admiral's", he would only have a drink, for the sake of a drink he is ready to do anything. The expression is believed to have originated in 1805 after the Battle of Trafalgar. Admiral Horatio Nelson was mortally wounded and placed in a barrel of rum to be buried in London. After arriving in London it turned out that the barrel almost empty, which gave reason to think that the team secretly drank alcohol from there.

b) the second subgroup is connected with relationships between seafarers, depending on rank and position:

– dad – "master"/«captain", commander of the ship;

– Above the salt – naval rank above sailor;

– to get aft (to get to the stern) – to become an officer, to receive a command position (previously, officers lived in the stern of the ship, where sailors were not allowed to enter);

– Officer's country means the area of the ship where officers live. As a rule, sailors were forbidden to be there unless they were on duty or carrying out a specific assignment;

– skipper – ship captain, skipper. The term "skipper" is still used to describe the captain of certain types of vessels, particularly fishing boats and other private or commercial vessels. Nowadays, the word "skipper" is synonymous with the captain of a sports football team. The informality of the term has led to its widespread use among those who do not have naval or professional maritime training. The word comes from the Dutch word for ship *schip*. Hence *schipper* was used to refer to those who command a ship and became anglicized as *scipper*.

II. Seafarers' activities:

a) the subgroup is related to the seafarers' daily activities and life:

– all hands ahoy – all hands on deck;

– quick burn – short smoke break;

– quiet burn – long smoke break;

b) the subgroup is related to dismissal and free time:

– full cargo aboard – "with a full load on board". In colloquial language it is used in relation to an extremely drunk person;

– to drink till all is blue – get drunk as hell/get fucking drunk.

III. The seafarer and the world around him:

a) the subgroup connected with food:

– cake and wine – bread and water (prisoner's ration);

– chow – food, grub;

– hammy cheesy egg topsides – ham-cheese-egg deck (sandwich);

– cockroach – a shot of gin;

– cat beer – milk;

– Chinese wedding cake – rice pudding;

– dark and dirty – whiskey with cola;

– galley – dining room for lower ranks;

– wet – drinking;

b) the subgroup connected with clothes, uniform and outfit:

– fatigue dress – work clothes, robe;

– square mainsail coat – officer's frock coat;

– blazer – officer's frock coat, uniform;

– everything but the captain's night shirt – "everything except the captain's nightgown" – a ship on which all possible sails are set;

c) the subgroup related to state of health and parts of the human body:

– sea puss – a face wrinkled by sea winds;

– digits – fingers;

– under the weather – to be sick, to feel unwell. In the navy this expression can be used to describe seasickness;

– afterbody – "the stern part of the ship/aft part of the ship" – part of the human body from the navel to the heels.

Sometimes it happens that the lexical units of slang reflect the feeling of solidarity inherent in members of a group or even a hostile, mocking attitude towards outsiders. In this case, it is worth mentioning such a point as the relationship between the surface and submarine fleets. In the Royal Navy submariners are considered to be a special, even elite caste. Their slang is strikingly different from the slang of ship sailors. Let's pay

attention to the word “boat”. When submariners talk about her, they mean “submarine”. They don’t talk about her in a classical sense. The submariners’ attitude towards the surface fleet is somewhat dismissive. They call “boat”, “targets”.

The same applies to the word “awash” which is explained as “it is flush with the surface of the water”. This expression for the surface fleet means the most extreme situation when the upper deck of the ship is flush with the water. That is, the ship essentially drowning. For the submarine fleet, this expression is harmless and even familiar, not causing feelings of anxiety or concern. If we take into consideration the expression “chicken of the sea” or “sea chicken” we’ll see that it stands for a nuclear submarine, a member of the crew of a nuclear submarine.

Here are some examples of exercises related to the use of maritime slang in the appropriate context. All these assignments allow future specialists to immerse into the essence of maritime slang expressions and help them develop skills of using them in not only in the appropriate context but also in everyday speech if future seafarers really want to enlarge and enrich their vocabulary in order to be successful in their carrier [7].

Exercise I. Read, translate the given expressions, tell in what situation would you use them and learn them by heart.

(to break the ice, in deep water, keep abreast of)

Exercise II. Translate the given expressions from English into Ukrainian. Explain their meaning and use them in your own situation.

Keelhaul, at loggerheads, old man, duty beauty, batten down the hatches, whistle up the wind, flogging a dead horse.

Exercise III. Read the given phrases attentively and choose the correct explanation for each of them.

- 1) to get adrift
 - 2) old man
 - 3) keep abreast of
 - 4) cut and run
 - 5) carried away
- a) to escape potential danger, to weigh anchor quickly
- b) to get freedom, independence; to run away
- c) to keep up with the times, not to lag behind, to be on the level
- d) captain

e) to be overly engrossed in enthusiasm or excitement

Exercise V. Pay attention to the given slang expressions and explain why you used them in particular situation:

(pickle jar officer, high and dry, to be adrift).

Imagine that you are an experienced Chief Mate. You have made a stunning career and achieved great success in this field of activity. You train the crew and cadets on such aspects like safety, firefighting, search and rescue and various other contingencies. The majority of cadets turned out to be industrious, responsible and tried to develop their practical skills. But a few apprentices couldn’t demonstrate their practical skills in spite of that fact that they reassured everybody on board a ship that they could do everything. What advice do you give to newcomers who think that they know everything? Will you call them pickle jar officers and why? [8].

Do you agree that an expression “to be adrift” on the one hand can be used when we speak about a person who is perplexed by smth or smb, doesn’t know what to do in emergency situation and goes with the flow without trying to change anything. On the other hand, it is used when the vessel is enforced to do the same thing. Ground up your opinion.

Everybody knows that sometimes in maritime carrier occur unpleasant situations. The ship may run aground. So, we can use an expression “high and dry” in this case. Can we speak the same about such a specific category of people, which put their interlocutors in an awkward situation and embarrass them for no reason. Is it necessary to treat them with caution? Express your point of view.

Exercise VI. Work in pairs. Make out short dialogues on the given topics.

1. One member of the crew is in doldrums because of changeable climate in the Atlantic region and can’t overcome with his depressive mood.

2. A famous foreign ship will call at a port in the offing.

3. A conversation between a well-qualified and experienced seafarer and a Naval college cadet.

4. Ways to avoid problems on a ship in emergency situations.

5. Is it necessary for ships to be adrift in stormy conditions?

Exercise VII. Make your own situation with the given phrases.

High and dry, to break the ice, at loggerheads, keelhaul, carried away.

According to the examples of exercises we see that English maritime slang is quite extensive and affects all areas of a seafarer's life. In addition, using these examples of exercises, you can see that maritime slang is a special layer of professional vocabulary that has its own emotionally expressive connotation. In its turn use of slang urges students not only to memorize the active lexical material and to learn it by heart, but also to grasp the meaning of the expression in the process of translation, to use it in various contexts and then discuss it in groups. The study of slang will allow the future specialists in the maritime industry to increase their level of knowledge.

Results. As a result of the study the place and the essence of slang in English was determined. The original meaning of maritime slang was identified. The thematic classification of maritime slang in English was considered. Thus, we can confidently say that maritime slang has some distinct features and differs from slang in the traditional sense. In modern English, many slang expressions are used that have maritime

origins, and many people are not even aware of it. The study maritime slang can help a future specialist in this field of activity in the development of non-standard thinking, since it is often necessary to use your own ingenuity and intelligence in order to translate certain slang expressions.

The specifics of seafarers' communication are determined by spontaneous and hazardous working conditions faced by representatives of this profession. The existence of maritime slang is explained by the fact that the individual feels the need to be in a closed social group limited to professional activities.

Summarizing all the above presented, English maritime slang is very extensive and reflects all aspects of the life and activities of seafarers along with a standardized statutory language. English maritime slang is formed in various ways and is subject to thematic classification. It is obvious that maritime slang has a pronounced emotional, evaluative and expressive connotation. This type of vocabulary has not yet been particularly studied, and therefore such an aspect as a way to avoid gross mistakes in the professional translation of maritime slang in this field of activity will be the prospect of our further research.

Literature:

1. Oxford English Dictionary. Publisher, OUP Oxford, 2010. Length, 2069 p.
2. Chesterton G.K. The Defendant. London. MDCCCCI R. Brimley Johnson 1901. 171 p.
3. Подоляк У.С., Зубрицький Р.Я. Вплив англійської лексики на формування англійського сленгу. Закарпатські філологічні студії. 2021. Вип. 19. Т. 2. С. 120–124. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32782/tps2663-4880/2021.19.2.24>.
4. Молодіжний сленг. URL: <https://englishprime.ua> (дата звернення: 03.06.2023).
5. Лесинська О.М., Голук І.О. Особливості американського молодіжного сленгу. *Науковий вісник МГУ. Серія «Філологічні науки»*. 2021. Вип. 48. Т. 3. С. 99–101. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32841/2409-1154.2021.48-3.24>.
6. Robson Martin. Not Enough Room to Swing a Cat, 1844860736, Bloomsbury, UK. 2008. 176 p.
7. 11 «морських ідіом» англійської мови. URL: <https://englishprofi.com.ua> (дата звернення: 19.05.2022).
8. Англійська для моряків: історія і лексика. URL: <https://greenforest.com.ua> (дата звернення: 12.10.2016).

References:

1. Oxford English Dictionary (2010). Publisher, OUP Oxford. Length 2069 p.
2. Chesterton, G.K. (1901). The Defendant. London. MDCCCCI R. Brimley Johnson. 171 p.
3. Podolyak, U.S., Zubritskyi, R.Ya (2021). Vplyv anglijskoyi leksyky na formuvannya anglijskogo slangu [Influence of the English vocabulary in the formation of the youth slang]. *Zakarpatski filologichni studiyi*. Vyp. 19. Vol. 2. P. 120–124 [in Ukrainian].
4. Molodiznyj slang. Retrieved from: <https://englishprime.ua/> (Last accessed: 03.06.2023) [in Ukrainian].
5. Lesinska, O.M, Holiuk, I.O. (2021). Osoblyvosti amerykanskogo molodizhnogo slangu [The peculiarities of American youth slang]. *Naukovyi Visnyk MGU. Seriya: Filologichni nauky*. Vyp. 48. Vol. 3. P. 99–101 [in Ukrainian].
6. Robson Martin (2008). Not Enough Room to Swing a Cat, 1844860736, Bloomsbury, UK. 176 p.
7. 11 «morskyh idiom» anglijskoyi movy. Retrieved from: <https://englishprofi.com.ua/> (Last accessed: 19.05.2022) [in Ukrainian].
8. Angliyska dlya moryakiv: istoriya i leksyka. Retrieved from: <https://greenforest.com.ua/> (Last accessed: 12.10.2016) [in Ukrainian].