

UDC 378.147:811.111:656.61

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/978-9934-26-106-0-9>

## INSTRUTIONAL APPROACHES TO TEACHING MARITIME ENGLISH



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**Annotation.** The article is devoted to the considerations about the basic teaching and learning strategies in Maritime English course. The author notes that the major instructional technique in teaching Maritime English is communicative approach as advised by the appropriate model course approved by International Maritime Organization. Knowledge, understanding and proficiency are pointed out as the assessment criteria, although the challenges of our times prompt to use newer strategies to develop students' skills of critical thinking, problem solving, and collaboration. The necessity to use the strategies of active and deeper learning as the strategies to build upon the communicative approach is rightly emphasized.

The absence of universally acknowledged working definitions for active and deeper learning calls for elaborating a certain set of their elements by each faculty motivated to implement them. To help teachers of Maritime English distinguish between them, the differences and similarities of the communicative approach, active and deeper learning are dwelt on.

The research is based on scrutinizing theoretical and methodological advancements of the components characteristic of active and deeper learning, conducting a series of topical workshops, practical implementation in the course books developed by the department teachers of Maritime English and at the lessons as well as on oral surveys of students' attitude to new teaching and learning methods.

Active learning is understood as a student-centered approach promoting higher order thinking skills and reflective skills. In Maritime English, use of cases, sea stories, and extracts from official maritime accident reports which deal with seafarers' actions in their everyday life and work serve as a reliable tool for developing higher order thinking. Reflective exercises are used in the process of writing essays and analyzing certain aspects of students' learning at the lesson.

Deeper learning is presented as a set of competencies comprising blended, inquiry-based that can be efficient on everyday basis and project-based learning mostly applied at the final lessons of each training module.

A correlation of communicative, active and deeper learning approaches, as applied in each training module of Maritime English, is presented.

In conclusion, it is pointed out that Maritime English teachers should try to shift their attention to mastering and implementing more of students' individual learning as a key element of both active and deeper learning strategies.

**Key words:** Maritime English, communicative approach, active learning, deeper learning.

**Introduction.** The latest decades have displayed several new tendencies in higher education connected with ways of teaching and learning. Researchers and teachers in this area are trying to find appropriate solutions for reshaping the way students learn in the world that is quickly changing. With the diversity of students' skills, levels, values, and aspirations, paid greater attention to in our times, there should be some specifically designed approaches to the organization of their learning. The shift from traditional direct teaching to organizing students' own learning is clearly seen, so that teachers need to consider how to stream individual student's learning process instead of developing a lesson plan aimed at a group of students in general. No wonder that among the contemporary educational technologies we can distinguish active learning, deeper learning, individualized learning, differentiated learning, self-regulated learning with communicative approach remaining as the foundation for teaching and learning foreign languages.

Teachers of Maritime English can easily get lost among the abundance of various terms, definitions, approaches, technologies, and strategies that are prescribed to those ways of student learning and, finally, lose interest in commencing their implementation despite the current challenges calling out for the necessity of proper organization of learning environment where students' individual self-study needs teachers' guidance and scaffolding materials as well as newer ways of acquiring required skills. Thus, the necessity to support the teaching staff with understanding the key elements of the newer strategies application in the training process is apparent and challenging.

**The article is aimed** at comparing deeper and active learning strategies to reveal their distinctive and common features for the possibility of their deliberate implementation into teaching Maritime English based on communicative approach.

**Recent studies.** To begin with, both deeper and active learning appeared as hub terms back in the nineties of the previous century – the first within the

William and Flora Hewlett Foundation proclaiming the necessity of building the competencies students need for the twenty-first century success [4], the second as more intuitive understanding of the necessity to use the instructional activities involving students in doing things and thinking about what they are doing [1].

The theory of deeper learning lists such structural components as project-based learning, work-based learning, blended learning, inquiry-based learning, connected learning, and personalized learning; that of active learning – involvement of students into listening, reading, writing, discussing, and reflecting on their learning. While deeper learning provides a set of approaches to building the competencies – master core academic content, think critically and solve complex problems, work collaboratively, communicate effectively, learn how to learn, and develop academic mindsets, active learning presupposes engagement of students into solving problems in such higher-order thinking tasks as analysis, assessment and creation.

The developers and followers of both theories have contributed much to the clarification of the initial postulates.

Some of the newest definitions of deeper learning are: “Deeper learning is a term which encompasses all the knowledge, skills, and ways of thinking students need to adopt in order to be prepared and eventually become successful when navigating the rough waters of their future professional and personal lives” [11]. “Deeper learning is what highly effective educators have always done – delivered rich core content in innovative ways that allow students to learn and then apply what they have learned” [5]. Still another definition adds one more outcome: “being empowered through self-directed learning” [12] which is, in its turn, built on the outside-inside learning model intended to function as a guide for students to become expert learners. As it is clearly seen, the advocates of deeper learning define it in completely opposing ways – from a clear-cut set of competencies to a vague notion of rich core content and innovative ways. With the theory of deeper learning, the focus of attention is on the competencies that students need to succeed in, the instructional approaches being listed as resources to be taken and mastered from elsewhere.

Active learning, an umbrella term for learning and teaching methods which put the student in charge of their own learning through meaningful activities, seems to be weasel-worded as well: “active learning is an approach where learners participate in the learning process by building knowledge and understanding; it requires students to think hard and to practise using new knowledge and skills in order to develop long-term recall and a deeper understanding [7]; activities that students do to construct knowledge and understanding and that require

students to do higher order thinking. [2]; active-learning “engages students in the process of learning through activities and/or discussion in class, as opposed to passively listening to an expert. It emphasizes higher-order thinking and often involves group work” [6]; “active learning provides opportunities for meaningful academic activities which has a positive impact on retention” [10]. Generally, most researches view active learning as a process that has student learning at its centre focusing on how students learn, not just on what they learn.

Although both strategies can be perceived as having absolutely different purposes, they actually complement each other in the attempt to answer the question how to organize students’ learning in order to develop the competencies required in our times. Defined in general terms, they actually appeal to teachers to think the strategies over and come to their own perception of the strategies considering the actual state of things and syllabi goals of English for Specific Purposes, (in our case, Maritime English) at specific training institutions.

**Main text.** English teaching goals and syllabi at higher education institutions differ due to their professional orientation: the course of English for Specific Purposes falls into its various groups for medical, agricultural, aviation, maritime and other types of colleges.

**Communicative approach in teaching Maritime English.** The basic convention adopted by International Maritime Organization defines the purpose of learning English as the ability to use it in written and oral forms for reading nautical charts, communicating with the multilingual crew, with other ships and coastal stations, and understanding meteorological information [14]. A special model course recommended for maritime training institutions [8] specifies that teaching Maritime English should be done on the basis of communicative approach. Thus, each Maritime English teacher must know and apply this way of teaching and learning.

It should be noted that communicative approach is of paramount importance in a country of non-native English speakers. In this case, the impact of correctly applied communicative approach can’t be overestimated as it takes students into the world of fluent English, be it General or Maritime English.

According to it, students should be involved in listening, speaking, reading and writing activities on the principles of learning the language through using it in order to communicate; authentic and meaningful communication as the goal of classroom activities; spoken fluency as an important dimension of communication; communication involving the integration of different language skills. Learning is viewed as a process of creative construction that involves trial and error.

Having been implementing the communicative approach for over a decade, we know it works well provided Maritime English teachers are trained to understand

and apply it as well their preparation for each lesson is thoughtful and thorough. Practical realization of the communicative approach has brought us to developing module-based syllabi and lesson-based course books.

Module-based syllabi reflect the competences the students should acquire in the learning process to be able to communicate effectively in their day-to-day work on board ships. Module- and lesson-based course books structure guarantees standard network for developing students' knowledge and understanding, for improving their proficiency. As an example, in the module 'Emergencies at Sea' [9], the competencies for each of three module parts and the module in general are: you will be able to 1) characterize different types of emergencies and their causes, 2) describe the sequence of actions in case of emergency alarm, 3) suggest appropriate fire-fighting methods depending on class and location of fire, finalized with the essential competency to speak about shipboard emergencies and actions for their avoidance.

The lesson topics are presented in a narrowly focused way: "Muster list and muster station", "Man overboard", "Portable fire-fighting equipment" etc. To that, lesson materials are sequenced in compliance with the PPP (presentation – practice – production) format for the first-second years of study and with the EASA (engage – activate – study – activate) format for the third-fourth years of study).

Thus, the teachers are clear about the objectives of each syllabus, module, and lesson irrespective of their practical teaching experience, moreover, of teaching Maritime English.

The communicative approach is vividly present in the semester course books of Maritime English elaborated by the faculty, in the teachers' lesson plans, in the way students are engaged in communicative activities at the lessons.

**Table 1** – Communicative approach: components and purposes

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Purposes</b>
Communicative approach	Listening Reading Speaking Writing	Use English in oral and written form

Communicative approach has become a defining methodology on which to build and adapt (model course, p.205) the newest methods of teaching and learning once students have acquired basic skills allowing them to be capable of demonstrating them in real life situations.

**Active learning.** Maritime English teachers recognize the necessity of evolving toward more challenging ways of engaging students into the learning process as new student generations come with fresh ideas of how they should study. Active learning sounds to be an appropriate tool in building on the skills acquired due to teaching and learning communicatively.

Group research and a series of workshops on active learning strategies in higher education have brought us to understanding that no specific definitions of active learning methodology is available. Speculations on the nature of active learning vary from common activities such as applied in communicative teaching to those accentuating on usage at lectures.

By assessing communicative learning outcomes and maritime industry demands, the active learning definition to suit our training needs has emerged as the following: active learning is an approach to involve students in the activities which promote their higher order thinking skills and help reflect on the learning process.

Active learning strategies and communicative approach activities have much in common. They focus on similar components (speaking, reading and writing) and various forms of interaction. As an addition to the communicative approach, active learning emphasizes the importance of developing higher order thinking and stimulating students' self-reflection.

**Table 2** – Communicative approach and active learning: components and purposes

Methodology	Components	Purposes
Communicative approach	Listening Reading Speaking Writing	Use English in oral and written form
Active learning	Reading Speaking Writing Reflection	Promote HOTS Reflect on the content

Whereas the competences constituents – knowledge, understanding and proficiency – are developed efficiently within the communicative approach at the levels of understanding, remembering and applying, the active learning methodology deals with higher order thinking. Common technical texts used to learn various procedures, operations, instruments, equipment etc. on board

ships as well as standard marine communication phrases do not mostly require higher order thinking skills. The possibility for promoting higher order thinking skills comes forward with the cases, sea stories, maritime accident reports where seafarers perform some actions, wrong or right, and students analyze human actions, evaluate the extent of their misdoings, and suggest possible alternative action plans.

Within a module, students are initially engaged in the activities concerning developing their lower order thinking skills in which they acquire new word stock, necessary grammar structures, understand and remember new topical content – mind-mapping, filling in gaps, labeling, completing sentences, asking and answering questions of comprehension type, true-false statements and the like. The percentage of controlled exercises and semi-controlled activities at this stage prevails significantly.

Once students get fluent in conveying and discussing the basic content of the module, they can be plunged into active learning tasks. Active learning is an integral part of the learning process; its strategies are used starting with the second part of the modules once students have achieved fluency in using the topical vocabulary and grammar structures at the lower levels of thinking. This is the reason why the course books have been enriched with cases, real sea stories, and extracts from official maritime accident reports. A serious impediment to implementing activities requiring higher order thinking skills is low level of students' communicative skills.

Another component of active learning is self-reflection which is completely new to our students of Maritime English as a regular learning tool. The idea to start applying a few reflection techniques was prompted by the new generation of first year students themselves who expressed their wish not only to work on mistakes but also to look back and discuss the level of their participation and performance in certain lesson activities. The highest appreciation by students (72%) goes to such reflection techniques as exit / one-minute paper at the end of the lesson in which they write, in short, their individual answers to a question posed by the teacher or discussion on such questions as What was the most challenging task for you? What task was not necessary and why? What was the most interesting idea you heard at the lesson? What is it you would suggest to learn at the next lesson? Taking part in the reflective analysis, students (58%) feel their impact on the teaching process.

**Deeper learning.** This approach emerged as a response to the challenges of the twenty-first century, as an answer to the question what students need to know and be able to do to thrive in it.

Basically, it's rather a set of competencies and a corresponding list of approaches the deeper learning founders consider relevant for mastering those competencies. Each of the strategies can be used selectively for the implementation purposes as our teaching and learning practice has revealed. Four strategies out of six recommended for deeper learning were chosen to scrutinize in order to understand their distinctive and common features with communicative and active learning: blended, inquiry-based, personalized, and project-based learning strategies.

Blended learning is perceived by us as an approach that utilizes online or offline self-study at home and classroom learning methods. Mostly, students are provided with a text, audio, or video to be thoroughly studied individually at home and to prepare a few questions either to interview group mates or on the most incomprehensible things concerning the content. The latter is a technique of inquiry-based learning that involves students in exploring subjects by asking questions and finding answers or solutions [15].

Project based tasks are arranged at the final lessons of each module; working in small groups, students use and demonstrate a variety of skills specified for deeper learning, among them – communicate effectively, think critically and solve complex problems, work collaboratively.

As for personalized learning, its definitions and components are numerous, varied, and obscure but our consideration is that personalized learning concerns the learning pace and the learning tasks optimized for individual students or small groups of students. To be implemented in the teaching and learning process at a state training institution, personalized learning needs more research and methodological elaborations for possible implementation by faculty members.

Both communicative and active learning strategies may be successfully used when proposing student any strategies outlined as deeper learning components.

**Table 3** – Communicative approach, active and deeper learning: components and purposes

<b>Methodology</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Purposes</b>
1	2	3
Communicative approach	Listening Reading Speaking Writing	Use English in oral and written form
Active learning	Reading Speaking Writing Reflection	Promote HOTS Reflect on the content



Continued table 3

1	2	3
Deeper learning	Project-Based Learning Work-Based Learning Blended Learning Inquiry-Based Learning Connected Learning Personalized Learning	Master core academic content Communicate effectively Think critically and solve complex problems Work collaboratively Learn how to learn Develop academic mindset

The framework of the methodological approaches and strategies applied in the Maritime English course is intended to support the teachers in constructing their lessons on the basis of the approaches required by the maritime industry and recommended for use by current researchers and practitioners in the field of education.

**Table 4 – Modular application of teaching approaches**

		Project-based learning
		Active learning
		Inquiry-based learning
	Blended leaning	
Communicative approach		

The communicative approach serves as practical underpinning of this framework. Active and deeper learning add to it with developing higher order thinking skills, student self-reflection and a set of general strategies necessary in the current teaching and learning processes.

**Conclusions and recommendations.** Practical approaches to teaching Maritime English are to a certain extent regulated by the IMO approved requirements. The assessment of student communicative competencies refers predominantly to knowledge, understanding and proficiency that present lower order thinking skills. To meet the challenges arising at present – developing skills of critical thinking, problem-solving, greater emphasis on the role of students in their individual learning, Maritime English teachers should seek for newer ways of organizing the teaching and learning process, some of them provided by theory and practice of active and deeper learning. As there is no universally acknowledged understanding of the core essence of active and deeper learning, Maritime English faculty members need to define their own elements to customize for enriching their teaching strategies and students learning outcomes.

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