

NOTES ON THE IMO SMCP

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1. What is Maritime English?

Maritime English is the type of English used by seafarers, which includes the IMO SMCP.

2. What is the IMO SMCP?

“As **navigation and safety communications** from ship to shore and vice versa, ship to ship, and on board ships **must be precise, simple and unambiguous, so as to avoid confusion and error**, there is a need to standardize the language used.”

“The IMO SMCP builds on a basic knowledge of the English language. **It was drafted intentionally in a simplified version of Maritime English to reduce grammatical, lexical and idiomatic varieties to a tolerable minimum, using standardized structures for the sake of its function aspects**, i.e. reducing misunderstanding in safety-related verbal communications, thereby endeavouring to reflect present maritime English language usage on board vessels and in ship-to-shore/ship-to-ship communications.

This means that in phrases offered for use in emergency and other situations developing under considerable pressure of time or psychological stress as well as in navigational warnings, **a block language is applied which uses sparingly or omits the function words *the, a/an, is/are* as done in seafaring practice**. Users, however, may be flexible in this respect.”

- ▶ The IMO SMCP is developed **in order to ensure safety**.
- ▶ Safety is supposed to be ensured **if we can avoid confusion and error in communication**.
- ▶ Confusion and error in communication can be avoided **if a simplified version of Maritime English is used**.
- ▶ The simplified version of Maritime English means **a kind of block language without function words such as *the, a/an, and is/are***.

3. Overview

[A] First, we will show that the grammar of the SMCP remains by and large within the parameters set by the Ministry of Education for junior-high students. This is definitely good news for Japanese seafarers who are supposed to learn the SMCP.

[B] Second, there is bad news, too. The type of simplification applied to the SMCP does not necessarily facilitate easier learning. In particular, I will focus on omission of function words, and will point out that the omission does not seem systematic, causing inconsistencies here and there.

APPENDIX A: **THE COURSE OF STUDY FOR LOWER SECONDARY SCHOOL —English**

● **Grammatical items**

(A) Sentences

- a. Simple, compound and complex sentences
- b. Affirmative and negative declarative sentences
- c. Affirmative and negative imperative sentences
- d. Interrogative sentences that begin with a V or an Aux V such as *can, do, may*, etc., that contain *or*, and that begin with an interrogative such as *how, what, when, where, which, who, whose* and *why*.

(B) Sentence patterns

- a. 'Subject + Verb'
- b. 'Subject + Verb + Complement'
 - (aa) Subject + *be* + {N/ProN/Adj}
 - (bb) Subject + non-*be* + {N/Adj}
- c. 'Subject + Verb + Object'
 - (aa) Subject+verb+{N/ProN/gerund/*to*-infinitive/*how* etc.+*to*-infinitive/a clause beginning with *that*}
 - (bb) Subject + verb + a clause beginning with *what* etc.
- d. 'Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object'
 - (aa) Subject + verb + indirect object + {N/ProN}
 - (bb) Subject + verb + indirect object + *how* etc. + *to*-infinitive
- e. 'Subject + Verb + Object + Complement'
 - (aa) Subject + verb + object + {N/Adj}
- f. Other sentence patterns
 - (aa) *There* + *be* + ~
 - (bb) *It* + *be* + ~ (+ *for* ~) + *to*-infinitive
 - (cc) Subject + *tell, want*, etc. + Object + *to*-infinitive

(C) Pronouns

- a. Personal, demonstrative, interrogative and quantitative pronouns
- b. Basic restrictive uses of the relative pronouns, *that, which* and *who* used in the nominative case and *that* and *which* used in the objective case

(D) Verb tenses etc.: Present, past, present progressive, past progressive, present perfect and future formed with auxiliary verbs etc.

(E) Comparative forms of adjectives and adverbs

(F) Basic *to*-infinitives

(G) Basic gerunds

(H) Adjectival use of present and past participles

(I) Present and past tenses of passive voices

APPENDIX B: 中学校学習指導要領 英語

● 文法事項

(A) 文

- a. 単文, 重文及び複文
- b. 肯定及び否定の平叙文
- c. 肯定及び否定の命令文
- d. 疑問文のうち, 動詞で始まるもの, *can, do, may* などの助動詞で始まるもの, *or* を含むもの及び *how, what, when, where, which, who, whose, why* の疑問詞で始まるもの

(B) 文型

- a. [主語＋動詞]の文型
- b. [主語＋動詞＋補語]の文型のうち,
 - (aa) 主語＋*be* 動詞＋{名詞/代名詞/形容詞}
 - (bb) 主語＋*be* 動詞以外の動詞＋{名詞/形容詞}
- c. [主語＋動詞＋目的語] の文型のうち
 - (aa) 主語＋動詞＋ {名詞/代名詞/動名詞/*to* 不定詞/*how* (など) *to* 不定詞/*that* で始まる節}
 - (bb) 主語＋動詞＋*what* などで始まる節
- d. [主語＋動詞＋間接目的語＋直接目語] の文型のうち,
 - (aa) 主語＋動詞＋間接目的語＋{名詞/代名詞}
 - (bb) 主語＋動詞＋間接目的語＋*how* (など) *to* 不定詞
- e. [主語＋動詞＋目的語＋補語] の文型のうち,
 - (aa) 主語＋動詞＋目的語＋{名詞/形容詞}
- f. その他の文型のうち,
 - (aa) *There*＋*be* 動詞＋～
 - (bb) *It*＋*be* 動詞＋～ (+*for*～) ＋*to* 不定詞
 - (cc) 主語＋*tell, want* など＋目的語＋*to* 不定詞

(C) 代名詞

- a. 人称, 指示, 疑問, 数量を表すもの
- b. 関係代名詞のうち, 主格の *that, which, who* 及び目的格の *that, which* の制限的用法の基本的なもの

(D) 動詞の時制など

現在形, 過去形, 現在進行形, 過去進行形, 現在完了形及び助動詞などを用いた未来表現

(E) 形容詞及び副詞の比較変化

(F) *to* 不定詞のうち基本的なもの

(G) 動名詞のうち基本的なもの

(H) 現在分詞及び過去分詞の形容詞としての用法

(I) 受け身のうち現在形及び過去形

3. Some Virtues of the IMO SMCP

3.1. Sentence Patterns Found in the IMO SMCP

[1] 5 Basic Sentence Patterns

I. S+V

Can **you proceed**?

I can **beach** in position P.

The tide is **rising/falling**.

Avoid this area - no possibility for **vessels** to **turn**.

II. S+V+C

The name of my vessel is V .

I am aground.

I ask **you** kindly to **remain calm**.

III. S + V + O

I require assistance.

Start pumping.

MV V agrees to be overtaken.

Do not **forget to take your lifejackets and blankets with you**.

IV. S + V + IO + DO

Ask the survivor(s) the following information.

Instruct the crew how to connect reefer plugs.

V. S + V + O + C

If **you see anybody fall overboard**, act as follows.

Keep these goods dry.

Let the spillage evaporate.

Have a heaving line ready at the pilot ladder.

Have the lookouts manned and report.

(**Let go the tags**.)

(**Make fast the tags forward**.)

[2] Other Sentence Patterns

There + be-V + ~

Is there danger of explosion?

S + tell, want, etc. + O + to-infinitive

ADVICE. (**Advise you**) stand by on VHF Channel six nine."

Advise you to recover your fishing gear.

For safety reasons I **request all crew members to** go to their assembly stations.

Thickness of ice **is expected to** increase in your position.

4. Some Problematic Features of the IMO SMCP

4.1. Registers

4.1.1. Definition of Registers

A **register** is a style of language, imposed by a social context, with a specific format of words, phrases, constructions, and discourse structures.

A **truncated register** (or a **block language**) is a style of language whose specific format is characterized by the need of **brevity**.

4.1.2. Examples of truncated registers

- Instructions (e.g., recipes)

a) Wash the spinach well and place ___ in a deep saucepan. Cover and cook ___, without additional water, until ___ tender, about two minutes. Remove ___ to a wooden bowl and chop ___. Return ___ to the pot ... [recipe for Danish spinach ring, *New York Times Cook Book*, p. 40]

- Diary entries

a) ___ Hurt myself when trying to cut the roses.

b) ___ Left the party exhausted.

- Telegrams

a) ___ regret ___ unable to give paper as scheduled.

- newspaper headlines

a) ROYAL DOG ILL (=A royal dog **is** ill.)

b) OPPOSITION CLAIM GOVERNMENT RESPONSIBLE FOR CRISIS (=The opposition claim **that the** government **is** responsible for **the** crisis.)

c) KILLED ON RAILWAY (=Someone **was** killed on railway.)

- The IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases

a) Where is the fire? --- ___ Fire is on deck.

b) MV V ___ in critical condition.

c) Has ___ vessel refloated? --- No, ___ vessel ___ not refloated (yet).

d) Are there dangers to navigation? --- ___ No dangers to navigation.

e) ___ Received your MAYDAY.

4.2. Omission of Function Words in the IMO SMCP

4.2.1. Data

[A] Omission of articles

- 1a) Where is the fire? --- _____ Fire is on deck. [SMCP]
1b) Where is the fire? --- **The** fire is on the deck. [Standard Register]
2a) _____ Person picked up is _____ crewmember of MV X. [SMCP]
2b) **The** person picked up is **a** crewmember of MV X. [Standard Eng]

[B] Omission of the verb *be*

B-a) Copula

- 3a) MV V _____ in critical condition. [SMCP]
3b) MV V **is** in critical condition. [Standard Eng]

B-b) Progressive

- 4a) MV V _____ proceeding to your assistance. [SMCP]
4b) MV V **is** proceeding to your assistance. [Standard Eng]

B-c) Passive

- 5a) No ice _____ located in position P. [SMCP]
5b) No ice **is** located in position P. [Standard Eng]

[C] Omission of the auxiliary *have*

- 6a) Has vessel refloated? --- No, vessel _____ not refloated (yet). [SMCP]
6b) Has vessel refloated? --- No, vessel **has** not refloated (yet). [Standard Eng]

[D] Omission of Subject + Copula (Pronoun + *be*)

H: MV V, are you ready for the helicopter?

- 7a) V: _____ Ready for the helicopter in X minutes. [SMCP]
7b) V: **I am** ready for the helicopter in X minutes. [Standard Eng]

[E] Omission of Subject + Copula (*There* + *be*)

- 8a) Are there dangers to navigation? --- _____ No dangers to navigation. [SMCP]
8b) Are there dangers to navigation? --- **There are** no dangers to navigation. [Standard Eng]

[F] Omission of the Subject Pronoun /

- 9a) _____ Received your MAYDAY. [SMCP]
9b) **I** received your MAYDAY. [Standard Eng]

4.2.2. Some Inconsistencies

[A] Omission of articles

10) Where is **the** fire? --- **The** fire is on the deck.

[B] Omission of the verb *be*

B-a) Copula

11a) MV V **is** in critical condition.

11b) Is your radar in operation. --- Yes, my radar **is** in operation.

B-b) Progressive

12a) MV V **is** proceeding to your assistance.

12b) MV V **is** proceeding for assistance – within X hours.

12c) MV V **is** flooding below water line.

B-c) Passive

13b) What is the latest ice information? --- No ice **is** located in position P.

13b) What kind of assistance is required? --- Medical assistance **is** required.

[C] Omission of the auxiliary *have*

14a) Has vessel refloated? --- No, vessel **has** not refloated (yet).

14b) Has flooding stopped? --- No, flooding **has** not stopped (yet).

[D] Omission of Subject + Copula (Pronoun + *be*)

15a) H: MV V, are you ready for the helicopter?

V: **I am** ready for the helicopter in X minutes.

15b) Be ready to get underway. --- **I am** ready to get underway.