

Research on the Lexical Characteristics and Translation Strategies of Maritime English

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Abstract: This paper conducts an in-depth study on maritime English, meticulously analyzes its lexical characteristics, and systematically explores the corresponding translation strategies. As the core communication language in the field of international shipping, maritime English plays a crucial role in ensuring the safe and efficient operation of maritime activities with its unique professionalism. The study finds that maritime English vocabulary exhibits several remarkable characteristics, such as a high degree of professionalism, extensive use of abbreviations, and widespread application of sub-professional vocabulary. Based on these characteristics, in translation practice, corresponding strategies and methods should be adopted according to the actual situation, such as accurately matching professional terms, clarifying the meanings of abbreviations according to the context, and deeply understanding the new meanings of sub-professional vocabulary, so as to achieve high-quality translation and ensure effective communication within the maritime field.

Keywords: Maritime English, Lexical Characteristics, Translation Methods.

1. Introduction

With the continuous deepening of globalization, the international shipping industry, as an important pillar of the world economic system, has become increasingly prominent in its strategic position. Maritime English, as the most important communication tool in the field of international shipping, shoulders the great mission of ensuring the safe and efficient operation of maritime activities. From the precise control of the daily navigation of ships, to the close coordination of cargo loading and unloading between ports, and then to the timely response to maritime emergencies, the accurate application of Maritime English permeates every link of maritime activities. With the rapid development of the global shipping industry, the navigation scope of ships is constantly expanding, and maritime technologies are changing rapidly. The exchanges among maritime practitioners from different countries and regions are becoming more and more frequent and complex, which undoubtedly puts forward more stringent requirements for the quality and efficiency of maritime English translation. Once there is a deviation in the translation process, it is very likely to lead to problems such as wrong ship navigation routes, delays in cargo loading and unloading, and even serious maritime safety accidents. Therefore, in-depth and systematic research on the lexical characteristics of Maritime English and the corresponding translation methods not only helps maritime practitioners accurately understand and apply professional knowledge, improve work efficiency, and reduce communication costs, but also has immeasurable practical significance and application value for ensuring the safe, stable and efficient operation of the global shipping industry.

2. Lexical Characteristics of Maritime English

2.1. Remarkable Professionalism

Maritime English deeply integrates various professional knowledge and complex technologies in the maritime field, and professionalism is its most remarkable feature. The

extensive use of professional terms is the core manifestation of this characteristic [1]. In terms of maritime technology, the "gyrocompass" relies on multidisciplinary knowledge such as electro-magnetics and mechanics to achieve precise navigation and is an indispensable key device for ship navigation; the "radar" uses electromagnetic waves to detect targets and monitors the surrounding environment of the ship in real time, providing key information for the ship to avoid obstacles and prevent dangers. From the perspective of ship structure, the "hull" serves as the main structure of the ship, carrying various functions and equipment of the ship; the "keel" is an important longitudinal structure at the bottom of the hull, playing a decisive role in maintaining the stability and navigation direction of the ship. In terms of maritime meteorology, words such as "typhoon" and "tsunami" are important meteorological disaster markers for maritime practitioners to judge navigation safety. These professional terms are difficult to understand for non-maritime professionals because they have clear, specific and precise definitions. Only on the basis of a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of their professional connotations can accurate translation and effective communication be achieved. In actual maritime operations, the accurate application of these professional terms is the core element to ensure the safe navigation of ships, efficient operation, and the smooth completion of various maritime tasks. For example, during the process of a ship berthing in the port, accurate communication between the captain and the pilot using professional terms such as "berth" and "mooring" is the key to ensuring the safe berthing of the ship.

2.2. Extensive Application of Abbreviations

In the actual application scenarios of Maritime English, in order to greatly improve the efficiency and convenience of information transmission, abbreviations are widely used. In terms of ship navigation scheduling, "ETA" (Estimated Time of Arrival) is an important time basis for ports to arrange berths and loading/unloading operations; "ETD" (Estimated Time of Departure) helps shipping companies and freight forwarders reasonably plan subsequent voyages. In terms of

international shipping organizations and conventions, "IMO" (International Maritime Organization), as an important regulatory and coordinating agency in the global shipping industry, the various rules and standards it issues have a profound impact on the development trend of the global shipping industry; "SOLAS" (International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea) formulates a series of strict standards and specifications for ensuring the safety of life at sea, and ships must meet the requirements of SOLAS before they can conduct international voyages. In the fields of ship communication and navigation, "GPS" (Global Positioning System) is a key technology for ship positioning and navigation; "VHF" (Very High Frequency) is used for short-distance communication between ships and between ships and shore stations. These abbreviations frequently appear in various documents, communications and daily exchanges in the maritime field. Maritime practitioners must master the meanings and usage of these abbreviations proficiently to ensure the accurate transmission of information and avoid work mistakes caused by misunderstandings of abbreviations, which may affect the normal operation of maritime activities. For example, in an emergency situation on a ship, if the crew cannot accurately understand and use the abbreviation "Mayday" (the international distress signal for ships, aircraft, etc. in radio communication), it may lead to delays in rescue operations and endanger the lives of people on board.

2.3. Extensive Application of Sub-professional Vocabulary

Sub-professional vocabulary is an important part of the maritime English vocabulary system, which is mainly formed by endowing existing common words with new professional meanings. In the technical description of the maritime field, "work" no longer means "work" in common English, but "work" in the sense of physics, such as "Work is the transfer of energy expressed as the product of a force and the distance through which its point of application moves in the direction of the force."; "energy" changes from "energy" (in the sense of physical or mental strength) to "energy" in physics; "product" changes from "product" to "product" in mathematics; "force" changes from "force" (in the general sense) to "force" in physics. In the description related to ship equipment, the common meaning of "jack" is "jack", but in maritime English, it can also mean "jack flag"; "port" generally means "port", but in ship structure, it refers to "port side". The existence of these sub-professional vocabulary increases the difficulty of learning and translating maritime English, requiring learners and translators to have an in-depth understanding of maritime professional knowledge and accurately grasp the meanings of words in different contexts.

2.4. Nominalization Structure

Nominalization is a common language phenomenon in Maritime English, that is, converting a verb into a noun while retaining its action meaning. In the style of maritime English, it is required to be concise, objective, accurate, rich in information, and emphasize the existence of facts. Therefore, nominalization structures are often used to meet these requirements. For example, "The earth rotates on its axis, which causes the change from day to night." can be transformed into the nominalization structure "The rotation of the earth on its axis causes the change from day to night." In the description of maritime operations, "We control the speed of the ship." can be expressed as "The control of the ship's

speed is necessary." Through the nominalization structure, the action is transformed into a specific thing, making the expression more objective and formal, and at the same time highlighting the object and result of the action.

2.5. Participles Used as Adjectives

In maritime English, it is quite common for participles to be used as adjectives. Present participles have an active meaning, while past participles have a passive meaning. When describing ship equipment, "cutting tool" is equivalent to "a tool which is used to cut something", where "cutting" indicates that the tool has the active function of cutting; "coated electrode" is equivalent to "an electrode which has been coated", and "coated" reflects the passive state of the electrode being coated. In the description of the navigation state of ships, "sailing ship" refers to a ship that is actively sailing; "anchored vessel" refers to a ship that is fixed by an anchor, highlighting the passive state. This way of using participles as adjectives makes the language more concise and clear, and at the same time accurately conveys the active and passive relationships of actions.

2.6. Two-word or Multi-word Compound Adjectives

In maritime English, hyphens are often used to connect two words or multiple words to form compound adjectives to describe the characteristics of things more accurately. In terms of ship equipment, "remote-reading water level indicators", "remote-reading" accurately describes the function of the water level indicator that can read the water level from a distance; "on-and-off-the-road vehicles", "on-and-off-the-road" vividly expresses the characteristic that the vehicle can travel both on the road and off the road. In the description of the maritime environment, "high-pressure air system", "high-pressure" clarifies the pressure state of the air system; "low-temperature storage", "low-temperature" describes the temperature conditions of the storage environment. The use of these compound adjectives makes the language more precise and compact, and can quickly convey complex information.

2.7. Use of Synonyms in Context

In order to avoid repetition, in the same maritime English article, the author sometimes uses different words to refer to the same thing. Among ship-related words, "ship", "vessel" and "craft" can all mean "ship", but there are slight differences in their usage in different contexts. "Ship" usually refers to a larger seagoing ship; "vessel" can be used for ships of various sizes and is more professional; "craft" can refer to small boats or aircraft, etc. In the description of maritime operations, "start", "begin" and "commence" all mean "start", such as "start the engine", "begin the voyage", "commence the loading operation". In terms of maritime equipment, "antenna" and "aerial" both mean "antenna". The use of these synonyms enriches the language expression, and at the same time requires translators and learners to accurately understand the meanings of words according to the context and choose the most appropriate translation.

3. Translation Methods of Maritime English

3.1. Accurate Matching of Professional Terms

Since the professional terms in maritime English have clear

and specific meanings, accurate matching must be ensured during translation. Translators need to have a solid foundation of maritime professional knowledge and be familiar with the definitions and usage of various professional terms [2]. For some internationally common professional terms, the existing standard translations should be directly adopted, such as translating "gyrocompass" as "gyrocompass", "radar" as "radar", "hull" as "hull", etc. For some newly emerged terms or terms that may have different understandings in different regions, accurate judgment and translation should be made in combination with the specific context and professional materials. For example, "monkey island" should be accurately translated as "the deck where the compasses are placed" instead of simply being translated as "the island where the monkeys live", because "ballast water" is the standard term in the maritime field and can more accurately convey its role in adjusting the balance and stability of the ship during navigation.

3.2. Determine the Meanings of Abbreviations According to the Context

There are many abbreviations in maritime English, and the same abbreviation may have different meanings in different contexts. Therefore, translators must determine their accurate meanings according to the context during translation. For common abbreviations such as "ETA", "IMO", "GPS", etc., their standard meanings should be kept in mind; for some less common or easily confused abbreviations, relevant materials should be carefully consulted or professional advice should be sought. For example, "LSA" may mean "Life-Saving Appliances" or "Local Service Area" in different contexts. In maritime English, if it involves the content related to ship safety equipment, it should be translated as "life-saving equipment"; if it is related to communication technology, it may refer to "local service area".

3.3. Understand the New Meanings of Sub-professional Vocabulary

For sub-professional vocabulary, translators should deeply understand their new meanings in the maritime field. First, they should be familiar with the basic meanings of common English words, and then master the special meanings of these words in the maritime context through learning maritime professional knowledge. During translation, they should not simply translate according to the meanings of common English words, but should accurately convey their professional meanings in combination with the context. For example, "draft" has meanings such as "preliminary version" and "proposal" in common English, but in maritime English, it often means "the draft of the ship". Translators must accurately understand and translate its professional meaning in the maritime field.

3.4. Flexibly Handle Nominalization Structures

When translating nominalization structures, they should be flexibly handled according to the expression habits of Chinese. Sometimes the nominalization structure can be directly translated into a noun phrase, such as translating "The rotation of the earth on its axis causes the change from day to night." as "The rotation of the earth on its axis leads to the alternation of day and night."; sometimes the nominalization structure needs to be restored to a verb phrase to be more in line with the expression habits of Chinese, such as translating "The control of the ship's speed is necessary." as "It is necessary to

control the speed of the ship." Translators should choose the most appropriate translation method according to the specific context and expression needs, so that the translation can not only accurately convey the meaning of the original text, but also be smooth and natural.

3.5. Distinguish the Active and Passive Meanings of Participles

When translating structures where participles are used as adjectives, it is necessary to accurately distinguish the active and passive meanings expressed by present participles and past participles. For present participles, the active action or characteristic should be reflected in the translation; for past participles, the passive state should be highlighted. For example, "sailing ship" is translated as "sailing ship", emphasizing the active navigation characteristic of the ship; "anchored vessel" is translated as "anchored ship", highlighting the passive state of the ship being fixed by an anchor. At the same time, attention should be paid to the logical relationship between the participle and the modified noun to ensure the accuracy of the translation.

3.6. Accurately Translate Compound Adjectives

The translation of compound adjectives should accurately convey the meaning they modify. Generally, they are translated in the order of their components, such as "remote-reading water level indicators", "on-and-off-the-road vehicles". For some more complex compound adjectives, their structures and meanings should be carefully analyzed to ensure accurate and clear translation. For example, the translation of "high-speed-high-efficiency marine engine" accurately conveying the speed and efficiency characteristics of the engine and its application field.

3.7. Identify Synonyms

When translating synonyms used in the context of maritime English, their meanings should be accurately identified according to the context, and appropriate Chinese words should be selected for translation. Although these synonyms are similar in meaning, they may have different emphases and usage habits in different contexts. Translators should deeply understand the intention of the original text, and in combination with the expression habits of Chinese, select the most appropriate words [3]. For example, when describing large seagoing ships, "ship" can be translated as "carrier" or "seagoing ship"; "vessel" can be translated as "ship", emphasizing its professionalism; "craft" can be translated as "small boat" when referring to small boats.

4. Conclusion

As the key language in the field of international shipping, maritime English has distinct lexical characteristics, which pose high requirements for translation work. Through in-depth research, it is found that maritime English vocabulary has the characteristics of remarkable professionalism, extensive application of abbreviations, extensive use of sub-professional vocabulary, frequent use of nominalization structures, participles used as adjectives, two-word or multi-word compound adjectives, and the use of synonyms in the context. In response to these characteristics, in the translation process, translators need to adopt methods such as accurate matching of professional terms, determining the meanings of

abbreviations according to the context, understanding the new meanings of sub-professional vocabulary, flexibly handling nominalization structures, distinguishing the active and passive meanings of participles, accurately translating compound adjectives, and identifying synonyms to achieve high-quality translation. Accurate maritime English translation is of great significance for ensuring the safe and efficient operation of maritime activities and promoting the exchanges and cooperation in the international shipping industry. In the future, with the continuous development of maritime technologies and the increasing prosperity of the international shipping industry, the vocabulary and expressions of maritime English will continue to be updated and enriched. This requires translators to continuously learn maritime professional knowledge and improve their translation abilities to meet the needs of industry development. At the same time, the research on the lexical characteristics and translation methods of maritime English also needs to be further deepened to better serve the practice in the field of international shipping.

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