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Speaking Formally and Clearly

Welcome to DigiMar videos!

In this video, we will focus on the formality of speech to ensure the delivery of clear and concise information. Remember, maritime routine communications must be conducted using formal language. This means that VTS operators and ship crews should maintain an appropriate tone. By the end of this video, you will be able to distinguish between formal and informal tones of communication.

This video uses examples from real-life scenarios. They may have been kept in their authentic form to support learning, even when they include mistakes or deviate from maritime communication standards.

Let us have a look at an example of informal communication in the following exchange. Motor Vessel Sunrise informs DigiMar VTS that they are entering the routing sector.

VESSEL	VTS
DigiMar VTS, this is Sunrise. Sunrise on Channel one two. Good morning. Over.	
	This is VTS. Good morning, Madam, please go ahead.
Good morning. We are entering the routing sector.	
	OK, Sunrise, you may proceed. Thank you very much and stand by on one two one six. Over.
Thank you, Sir. Channel one six.	
	That's all. Thank you and all the best. Out.

Do you think that some ways of addressing in maritime routine communications should be avoided? Which ones?

Let us rephrase the dialogue and make it sound more formal. The conversation between DigiMar VTS and MV Sunrise starts in a formal tone.

VESSEL	VTS
DigiMar VTS, this is Sunrise. Sunrise on channel one two. Good morning. Over.	
	Sunrise. This is VTS. Over.
Good morning. We are entering the routing sector.	
	VTS. Sunrise. Message understood. Proceed. Stand by on one two one six. Over.



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The

conversation between DigiMar VTS and motor vessel Sunrise also ends in a more formal tone.

VESSEL	VTS
Thank you, Sir. Channel one six.	Sunrise. VTS. That's all. Have a nice voyage. Out.

In this improved exchange no unsuitable overly familiar words when addressing the ship are used (friend, Sir, Madam, captain, mate). Instead, the name of the ship is used. In addition, the excessive use of “thanking”, and using “please” also presents cases of unsuitable formality. Clarity of information is heavily related to an appropriate speech rate (less than 120 words per minute). In addition, making pauses in speech, separating words or groups of words, and emphasizing keywords are also key in proper understanding of the message.

Let us have a look at another example of using a formal tone of communication. For example, DigiMar VTS wishes to inform the ship that it should proceed 2 miles eastbound, stay on anchorage, and wait for the pilot. The message should read as follows:

Sunrise, DigiMar VTS (<i>pause</i>). Information (<i>pause</i>). Proceed 2 miles eastbound (<i>pause</i>), repeat (<i>pause</i>) 2 miles (<i>pause</i>) and drop the anchor on arrival (<i>pause</i>). Stay on the anchorage (<i>pause</i>) and wait for the pilot (<i>pause</i>). Over.
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What have we learned about speech rate and pauses? Grouping information effectively allows listeners to understand details clearly. This approach reduces the reliance on unnecessary fillers such as “um”, “hm”, “uh”, and “er” which can obstruct clear communication and understanding. In addition, you may have noticed that the word **repeat** should be used if important information is conveyed, especially one relating to positions, distances, etc., as in:

Proceed 2 miles eastbound – REPEAT – proceed 2 miles eastbound.

As for the keywords, these are the words representing the most significant part of message. The keywords are usually nouns, verbs but prepositions too, which should be pronounced louder and longer. This means that in our previous example, emphasis should be placed on the words given in capital letters:

PROCEED 2 miles EASTBOUND.

In the VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology published by the International Association of Lighthouse Authorities you will find more suggestions on how to clearly and formally deliver a message on pages 14–17.

We hope that this video has been useful and that it will help you to successfully complete the chatbot exercises available at: <https://digimar.si/category/digital-tools/chatbots/>

Thank you for watching and stay tuned for more DigiMar videos on effective maritime communication!



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