

Abstract

As shown by the numbers, Spanish is an important language in today's world: 174 States have chosen it as one of IMO's three working languages. Out of 21 States having chosen Spanish as their official language, 19 have access to the Sea and take therefore active part in the international trade. 9 Spanish speaking ports are among the top 100 container ports, and every year more than 13.000 vessels use the Panama Canal.

This Master thesis will, first of all, talk about the evolution of the Spanish language throughout the centuries, the influence the other languages had on it as well as the importance it plays in today's world in general, and more specifically the role of the Spanish language in the maritime industry. As a matter of fact, the competition between the English and Spanish languages will be exposed.

Secondly, we will try to study more in detail the communication problems which may arise between a Spanish speaker and a non-Spanish speaker. For this, we will analyse 144 technical reports where the Spanish language was involved. Likewise, 12 participants, including a Belgian shipping company, of 4 different nationalities will be interviewed on their experience with language barriers in maritime communication.

The analysis of the responses as well as the technical reports will allow us to understand and to expose the communication problems linked to language barriers, and to the Spanish language more precisely. Thus, we will be able to propose possible modifications or improvements in the maritime education system.