Logbook Language Characteristics and Recordation Requirement

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Abstract

With a view of the deficiency irregular phenomena existing in logbook recordation among Chinese crewmembers, this paper analyzed the language characteristics and recording requirement of logbook, expounded how to employ accurate, concise and precise words to record logbook, listed out matters to be paid attention to in the process of recording the logbook and took examples to make an analysis, with expectation to bring advantages for Chinese crewmembers to improve their competency of recording the logbook.

Keywords: Logbook, Language characteristics, Recordation requirement, Eligibility competency

1. Introduction

Logbook, also termed as deck log voyage or ship's log book, is a log of all events which occur in the process of voyage, an original recordation reflecting ship's transportation, production and operation, a legal document necessary for a ship, an important content which may be inspected by port authority on ships importing and exporting the port, and is also a crucial evidence of accumulating information, analyzing and summarizing navigation experience, estimating and disposing marine accident.

In the past few years, with the development of shipping business, more and more Chinese ships have entered the international shipping area, and, at the same time, the number of Chinese crewmembers who have entered the international job market is on the increase. Each year, tens of thousands of Chinese crewmembers are employed by foreign ship owners. Nevertheless, due to the difference of culture background and language environment, quite a large majority of Chinese crewmembers are unable to fully understand the logbook's language characteristics, and are unable to record the logbook according to the requirement of ship owners and management departments, which result in correction within a limited period of time due to deficiency judged when inspected by PSCO (port state control officer). What's more, it seriously and adversely affects ship owner's benefit as a result of irregular recordation of logbook after a ship is encountered with marine accident. Thus, it is extremely critical for crewmembers to understand and master logbook's language characteristics, and record the logbook in a complete and standard way.

2. Logbook's language characteristics

2.1 Use of nautical professional terms

The nautical English has had a complete set of language system through its development for many years, and a great number of professional terms have been produced that are special for nautical English. Some of these professional terms have a certain meaning in common use of English, but have another special meaning in nautical English. For example, "bridge" has the meaning of "bridge over the water" in the common use of English, but have another meaning of "a place where deck officers keep watch" in nautical English. In addition to that, some phrases are set structures in nautical English and have their specific meaning, such as "under keel clearance", "dead reckoning", and "notice to mariner" and so on.

2.2 Abbreviations

A large number of abbreviative words are employed in the process of recording the logbook. Aabbreviative words are very short, but they give expression to certain specific meaning, and can describe the service condition of a ship well and truly, such as "N/F E/R S/B M/E" are all abbreviations in this sentence, with the full name of "Notify engine room to stand by main engine". Furthermore, there are also the following several abbreviations: FFE

(fire-fighting equipment), LSA (life-saving apparatus), A/C (alter course), SOSP (start of sea passage), N/A (not applicable), and F.W.E. (finish with engine), etc. it has to be paid special attention that, quite a lot of abbreviative words and technical terms represent diverse meanings in different occasions, so you have to put it in a context to understand its true meaning. For example, "RPM" is the abbreviation of "revolution of per minute" when it describes the running condition of a main engine, while it has another meaning of "radio pratique message" when concerned with ship entrance port procedure.

2.3 Use of concise sentences

Owing to logbook limited and small space of writing in the logbook, we have to use concise words that will not produce any ambiguous meaning when we fill in the logbook.

2.3.1 Several nouns combined together to make a statement

A number of noun phrases often appear in the logbook that consist of several nouns (noun + noun + noun), such as "ballast water tank", "fuel oil tank" and "fire hose box", etc. However, generally speaking, nouns that are contained in the noun phrases combined by several nouns usually should not exceed three, or else the noun phrases will lead to reading difficulty.

2.3.2 Use of such simple verbs as make, get, have, test, check, etc.

Get bridge painted.

Test all nav. equipment, all good.

Checked all cabin, found nothing.

Rounds made, all well.

2.3.3 Appropriate punctuations and symbols to simplify spelling of words

Appropriate use of punctuations and symbols to the point in the logbook may not only simplify the long sentences, but also can simplify space occupied.

- ✓ "/" substitutes for "of, and, or" etc., such as M/E (main engine), S/B (stand by), A/C (alter course), E/R (engine room), and R/U (ring up), etc.
- ✓ "'" represents that the character in-between two characters is omitted, such as ab't = about; var'ly = variously; O'cast = overcast; d'k = deck; St'd = starboard; p'd = passed; Ob'n = observation; st'n = station, etc.
- ✓ "First character + last character" of a word substitute for the word, such as W^r= weather; Y^r = year; B^k = bank; I^d = island; H^r = harbor, etc.
- ✓ "." means that the latter characters of a word are omitted, such as eng. = engine; temp. = temperature; dist. = distance; mod. = moderate (sea); cab. = cable; ast. = astern, etc.
- ✓ "Ψ" substitutes for anchor, which can be suffixed, such as Ψed =anchored; Ψage = anchorage; Ψchain = anchor chain; Ψball = anchor ball, etc.

So long as punctuations are employed in an appropriate way, they can achieve the effect of a conjunction as well, and meanwhile may economize a lot of space for words.

2.4 Use of elliptical sentence

Elliptical sentences are employed frequently when making entry in logbook, which makes the recordation of logbook concise and comprehensive, and furthermore economize the space utilization of logbook. There are mainly the following several kinds of elliptical styles in the logbook.

2.4.1 Omitting definite article

The definite article "the" is always omitted in logbooks. Specially, when the definite article "the" appears at the beginning of a sentence, it should be more proposed to be omitted, such as "L'go star'd Ψ." "Lifeboat painted." "P'd B.W. light buoy".

2.4.2 Omitting the subject

In most cases, there is no need to point out the behavioral executants, so a lot of sentences without the subject appear in the logbook, such as S/B M/E (stand by main engine), carried out anti-pollution drill, inspected FFE & LSA.

2.4.3 Omitting the predicate

The predicate of a sentence is often omitted in the logbook for the purpose of conciseness with the precondition that

the meaning of the sentence will not be influenced.

Such as, Vessel in position, in which the predicate "is" is omitted.

Plt Mr. M on board, in which the predicate "was" is omitted.

All hands to fire control station, in which the predicate "went" is omitted.

2.4.4 Omitting the auxiliary verb that signifies the tense

The omitted auxiliary verbs include has, have, will, should and so on, such as "Master (has) handed over manoeuvring", "The fog (has) set in., etc.

2.4.5 Omitting the subject and the predicate altogether

Subject and predicate can be omitted at the same time in a special situation, such as "half ahead", the whole sentence of the omitted one should be "The main engine is half ahead." Furthermore, in the omitted sentence "Tried to refloat her but in vain", the subject and predicate are omitted at the same time in "in vain".

2.5 Laconic tense

In English, there are several tenses and different tenses give expression to different meanings. The deck officer of a ship records a fact that had occurred or been occurring in his entry of a logbook, without any not any remark or deduction. Thus, there are usually only two tenses in the logbook, that is, the simple past tense and the simple present tense. The incident that had occurred or was occurring is expressed with the simple past tense. For instance, when a ship arrived at or departed from the port, a ship was alongside, and the pilot was on board, etc. However, the incident that is happening should be expressed with the simple present tense, such as, the current state, the action ongoing, etc.

3. Recordation requirement of a logbook

Correct recordation of the logbook should not only be reflected in standardization of the recording language, but also should be manifested in the content of recordation to comply with the requirement. Thus, a deck officer should pay special attention to the following items when making entry of the logbook.

3.1 Standardization of the content of recordation

In normal navigation, all measures or observation results related with navigation of a ship should be recorded, such as, time of constant speed of the main engine, time of turning on/turning off the navigation light, time of ascending/lowering a flag or displaying all signals, ship position and time of altering the navigation course, condition of the compass error and the security inspection, and the weather condition in shifting of duty, etc. When the weather is severe, the times of meteorological observation ought to be recorded too. Condition of mooring/anchoring, items related with security of mooring/anchoring and items related with cargo loading and discharging should be entered in the logbook, such as, time of cargo hold passing the inspection, time of opening and closing the hatches/ start working/ stop working/ completion of work, time and quantity of supplies of fresh water, fuel oil and other materials, operation of ballast water, time of displaying navigation lights and navigation shape, and inspection condition. In the process of mooring alongside, all the following contents should be recorded in the logbook: maneuvering measures of a ship, name of a navigator and boarding and departure time and position, name of a tug and time of leaning and unmooring, time when the first mooring line goes ashore and leans, time of starting to unmoor and time when the last mooring line is unmoored, time of dropping anchor, starting to heavy up anchor and anchor aweigh, name of berth, position of anchor, bottom material of water, length of (port anchor or starboard anchor), navigation light and navigation shape, time of ring stand by/finishing with engine/constant speed, ship position and ship turning around, etc.

3.2 Rational recordation of the position of a ship

In transoceanic navigation, we also make full use of GPS Logbook to record the ship position per hour at the time of using the logbook. Thus, some deck officers merely the ship position in the exchange of shift when they finish a shift and some deck officers even don't record the ship position in the exchange of shift. It should be paid special attention that GPS Logbook is not a legal document in operation of a ship, and recordation of the logbook is regarded as the standard when necessary. Besides, the responsible institutions of ships merely take responsibility for inspecting recordation in the logbook. Therefore, it is improper not to record the ship position just because the ship position per hour has been recorded in the GPS Logbook. Generally speaking, when a ship navigates in a normal way, each shift should at least record two or more ship positions with the ship position in the exchange of shift being included.

3.3 Recordation of several locate methods

It is well known, each locate method has its scope of application, but error is inevitable. Most ships are equipped

with GPS. Although it is simple and convenient to read the ship position from GPS, error is inevitable. Thus, if permitted, the deck officer ought to try to employ several methods to confirm the ship position and make corresponding records in the logbook. For instance, when a ship navigates in a narrow channel and runs along shore, the ship may use a large scale sea chart, but quite a large number of deck officers might still use GPS fix position. However, error of GPS fix position may endanger the navigation security of a ship when the ship navigates along shore and the navigation might not be direct. In order to ensure navigation security, radar fix in an obvious landmark may not be able to diminish error of the fix position, but is relatively direct, and also can check and examine the accuracy of the ship position observed with other methods (such as, observation of the landmark position).

3.4 Accurate recordation of the time

In the process of ship operation, the following time should be made entry in the logbook: the time when a ship arrives at a pilot station, the time of a ring stand by, the time of a pilot boarding/departing a ship, the time of dropping anchor, the time when the first mooring line goes ashore and is fixed, which concerns with the rent expense of a ship and interest of those parties involved in the ship operation. All the above time should be accurately recorded and corrected to the unit of minute. However, the recordation book of the engine telegraph records the process of maneuvering the ship engine, and should be corrected to semi-minute.

3.5 Avoidance of ambiguity

In the process of recording a logbook, quite a lot of sentence constituents are omitted just for conciseness of the language, but sometimes omission of sentence constituents might lead to ambiguity. Therefore, in the process of recording a logbook, those phrases or sentences that might cause ambiguity ought not to be omitted, but should be kept complete, such as, “Loading suspended due to cargo gear failure”. Such similar recordation might possibly cause ambiguity in the logbook, since there are two possibilities of stopping cargo loading caused by mechanical failure. The first possibility of stopping cargo loading is caused by mechanical failure of ship, in which the ship is responsible for loss of time caused therefrom. The second possibility of stopping cargo loading is caused by mechanical failure of port, in which the ship is not responsible for loss of time caused therefrom. Both of the two possibilities may occur and may cause misunderstanding. Thus, such sort of recordation should be specific and definite.

3.6 Accurate wording

The same meaning may have several kinds of expressions in English, with some written expressions and other colloquial style expressions. Recordation of the logbook is a means of writing, so it should apply written language. For example, there are several expressions in English for the expression “Jie Shu” in Chinese, such as, finish, end, over and complete, etc.. The first three expressions are all colloquial, and only “complete” is in a written form. Hence, “Zhuang Huo Jie Shu” should be written as “Loading, completed”, but not “Loading ended” or “Loading over”. In addition, the Chinese word “Gen Ju” has the following expressions in English, “in according to, in accordance with, as per”. Obviously, only “as per” is appropriate in recordation of the logbook.

4. Case study

Logbook is one of the original and important legal documents that reflects the transportation and production of ship, and should be strictly and carefully recorded according to the fact. Its expression has to be clear, accurate and avoids obscurity. Its wording has to be appropriate, clear and easy to understand. Any ambiguity might lead to misunderstanding and bring about inconvenience and even loss to ship operation. The following is a brief original text of the logbook, which well reflects the language characteristics and recordation requirement of the logbook.

Case of recordation of logbook: Table 1.

The above case contains a large majority of characteristics of logbook, such as, technical terms: log, fix, moderate breeze, slight sea, smooth sea, gentle breeze, and smooth sea, etc; abbreviative words: G (gyro compass), ΔG (gyro-compass error), L (log reading), ΔL (percentage of log correction), T (true bearing), M (magnetic heading), DR (dead reckoning), γ (leeway and drift angle), Loran (long-range navigation), AF (astronomical observation), b (blue), r (rain); abbreviation of symbols: R/O eng. (ring off engines), ob’n (observation), 2/O (second officer), C/O (chief officer), 3/O (third officer), L.H. (light house), I^d (island), etc. As for sentence patterns, most are sentences without subject, such as, Notified E/R to change oil, Obs’d A L.H.083°(G), B L.H.324°(G). Even if some sentences are complete, they are also quite simple, such as, Radar caught C L.Vessel, on 066°(T), 12’.6 off, L18’.2. & A vessel crossed ahd of me, ab’t 6’.0 off. Both of these two sentences are complete simple sentences, yet the word “the” is omitted before the word “radar” in the first sentence, and the second sentence uses the word “me” instead of the phrase “our vessel”. In terms of tense, only the simple past tense and simple present tense are applied in logbook. For instance, the simple present tense is applied in the sentence “N/F E/R to change oil”, while the simple past tense

is used in the sentence “Sunrise, obs’d sunrise azimuth 088° (G)”.

5. Conclusion

Logbook has strong speciality and whether a deck officer is able to record the logbook in standard language and content reflects his eligibility competence. Thus, a deck officer has to firmly bear in mind and be familiar with the language characteristics and recordation requirement of the logbook, make logbook entry in a standard, complete and earnest way and enhance his eligibility competence to make contributions to change China from a big country in shipping to a great power in shipping.

With the development of the shipping industry of China, how to fill in logbook with canonical language and standard format reflects the officer’s competence, so the officer must master expertly logbook’s language characteristics and recordation requirement, keep a record of logbook according to interrelated regulation and requirement, improve one’s own ability, contribute oneself to our country’s

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Table 1.

0030	N/F E/R to change oil, R/O eng.
0148	Obs’d A L.H.083°(G), B L.H.324°(G), ΔG +0°.1, A/C to 148°(T), 147°.9(G), 154.5°(M), ΔC -6°.5, set log, L0’.0, ΔL +1%
0216	Radar caught C L.VSL on 058°(T), 13’.6 off, L 19’.7.
0300	Stellar ob’n fix: Lat.38-17.2N, Long.122-06.7E
0400	GPS fix: Lat. 38-21’.2N, Long. 122-05’.7E, L33’.5. b, moderate breeze, slight sea. (Signed by 2/O)
0535	AF: Lat. 38-06’.3N, Long. 122-16’. 2E, L50’.5.
0552	Sunrise, obs’d sunrise azimuth 088°(G), consulted table & found 088°.1(T), ΔG +0°.1, switched off navigation lights.
0626	A vessel crossed ah’d of me, ab.t 6’.0 off.
0800	GPS fix: Lat. 37-45’. 8N, Long.122-30’.5E, L 74’.0. c, gentle breeze, smooth sea. (Signed by C/O)
0913	Hoggy I^d , brg 045, 20’.2 off, A/C 250°.
1030	DR 45-51.3N 032-21.5W Wind E’ly 4, Current NW 1m/s γ=1°.2
1200	Loran fix: Lat. 37°45’. 8N, Long.122°30’.5E, L74’.0 r, moderate breeze, slight sea. (Signed by 3/O)