Input paper: [[1]](#footnote-2)VTS53-6.3.1

Input paper for the following Committee(s): check as appropriate Purpose of paper:

**□**ARM **□**ENG **□**PAP **X** Input

**□**ENAV **X**VTS **□**Information

Agenda item[[2]](#footnote-3) 6.3

Technical Domain / Task Number2 …………………………………

Author(s) / Submitter(s) Korean Coast Guard

Development of the Guidelines on the VTS English Competency Test

# Summary

The purpose of this paper is to suggest the development of the Guidelines on VTS English language competency test, according to IALA Guideline G 1132 – VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology.

As the foundation for improving VTSOs' communication capabilities throughout their career lifecycle in terms of training, accreditation, and revalidation, a development of a VTS-specific language testing system with explicit language testing evaluation criteria becomes more critical. With the aim of facilitating the discussion, arrange of suggestions to be considered in the development of Guidelines on the VTS English competency test are made

## Purpose of the document

An input paper for the Guidelines on the VTS English competency test

## Related documents

IALA Recommendation R 1012 - VTS Communication

IALA Guideline G 1132 – VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology

# Background

Since the successful completion of IALA Guideline G 1132 – VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology, the next step can be to apply this into the actual VTS language training and gauge its effectiveness, and it is an issue to be carefully dealt with. Specifically, the development of a VTS-specific English language test reflecting the updated guideline has been requested for provision in the national training context in order to precisely gauge the trainees’ levels of English from their entry to the completion of IALA model courses at different levels. Considering the fact that the VTS English test has not yet been developed for this purpose in the international context, and is in the very early stages of discussion within the IALA VTS Committee, special emphasis must first be paid to the establishment of Guidelines on VTS English competency test in order to provide a suitable guidance on testing –competent authorities, VTSOs, and training institutions. For this purpose, this paper will suggest a variety of elements that should be taken into account when developing the Guideline in compliance with IALAG 1132.

# Discussion

VTS English communication encompasses variety of specific characteristics interms of VHF phraseology, plain language, procedures, and message delivery techniques. Additionally, in the domain of language testing, a variety of factors should be considered, including validity, reliability, and practicality, as well as delivery mode and associated administrative procedures. Interms of developing the guideline in this regard, the following factors needs to becarefully considered.

## The General Framework of the Test

The general framework of the test needs to be specified. This may include the duration of the test, the number of questions, the subject matter of the questions, the period of revalidation, the test mode, and the testing environment. The following recommendations can be made based on the results of the VTS English Competency Test administered in the Republic of Korea for the last two consecutive years and targeting all Korean VTSOs (VTS51-3.2.4):

* The duration of the test is recommended to be no more than 30 minutes, taking into account the human attention span, and the number of test questions should not exceed 10 with increasing in difficulty and complexity;
* A CBT-based test is required that permits immediate collection and electronic storage of testing data;
* The subjects of the questions must be limited to situations in which the IMO SMCP and IALA Phraseology can be applied, with a particular emphasis on evaluating for harmonized VTS communications via the usage of standard message structure and phrases.
* An expiration date for language testing should be specified, taking into account the entire career lifecycle of VTSOs in terms of training, accreditation, and revalidation, not exceeding 5 years when the washback effect is taken into account;
* Minimum standards for language testing administration should be stated, including sound proofing recording room, technical requirements/support, security, invigilation, and oversight.

## Language Evaluation

With the aim of enhancing validity, reliability, and practicality, the pre-requisites for language evaluation should be established, ranging from rating scales, evaluation elements (e.g., use of standard phraseology, delivery techniques), and descriptions of each element at each level, to the qualifications of test designers and assessors. For this, the following suggestions can be made according to IMO Maritime English Model Course 3.17 and IALA Guideline G 1132 – VTS Voice Communications and Phraseology:

* The rating scale can be comprised of six levels. IMO Model course suggests seven levels, beginning with ‘beginner’, followed by ‘false beginner’, ‘elementary’, ‘lower intermediate’, ‘intermediate’, ‘upper intermediate’, and ‘advanced’. Given that the entrance level for VTS Model Course V103/1 is scheduled to be revised in a way to ensure an appropriate professional level of English language capabilities, the two low levels (i.e., beginner and false beginner) can be consolidated into a single ‘beginner’ level;
* The detailed evaluation elements must be in accordance with IALA Guideline G1132in order to ensure consistency of standards across IALA documentation and its implementation worldwide. The major elements that can be reflected in the evaluation criteria are as follows;

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| --- | --- |
| **Evaluation Factors** | **Details** |
| Standard VTS Procedures | - Message structures (p.9)  - Message markers (p.10) |
| Standard Phraseology | -Phonetic alphabet (p.12)  -Phonetic numbers (p.12)  - Position, bearings, course, distance, speed, time, geographical names (p.13-14)  -Standard phrases (p.20-31) |
| Plain language | -General rules for construction and content of messages(p.9)  - Ambiguous terminology (p.16) |
| Delivery techniques | -Tone and volume (p.14)  -Emphasis on keywords (p.15)  -Word grouping and pausing (p.15) |
| Interpretation and monitoring | -Questioning techniques (p.15-16)  -Response(p.16)  -Corrections (p.17)  -Repetition (p.17)  -How to interpret a message (p.17) |

* Test designers and assessors should be comprised of a team of specialists in VTS, navigation, English training, and linguistics(English for Specific Purposes) domains, considering that VTS English training requires a high level of specialised knowledge both in language teaching and VTS operation but specialised expertise in both fields;
* In addition, the establishment of a comprehensive and complete set of VTS language testing development and assessment course needs to be developed and provided by IALA in order to achieve the highest possible standardisation of communicative output globally via testing

# References

1. International Association of Lighthouse Authorities. (2009a) IALA Model Course V-103/1 on Vessel Traffic Services Operator. Paris: IALA.
2. International Association of Lighthouse Authorities. (2009b) IALA Model Course V-103/2 on Vessel Traffic Services Supervisor Training. Paris: IALA.
3. International Association of Lighthouse Authorities. (2009c) IALA Model Course V-103/3 on Vessel Traffic Service On the Job Training. Paris: IALA.
4. International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (2017a) IALA Recommendation 1012 - VTS Communication, Paris: IALA.
5. International Association of Lighthouse Authorities (2017b) IALA Guideline 1132 – VTS VHF Voice Communication, Paris: IALA.
6. International Civil Aviation Organization. (2007) Manual of Radiotelyphony. Montreal: ICAO.
7. International Civil Aviation Organization. (2009) Language Testing Criteria for Global Harmonization: ICAO.
8. International Civil Aviation Organization. (2010) Manual on the Implementation of ICAO Language Proficiency Requirements. Montreal: ICAO.

# Action requested of the Committee

The Committee is requested to:

1. Consider the suggestions of this paper and take appropriate actions.

1. Input document number, to be assigned by the Committee Secretary [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Leave open if uncertain [↑](#footnote-ref-3)