

Briefing for PWSRCAC Board of Directors – September 2024

INFORMATION ITEM

Sponsor: John Guthrie and the Port Operations Vessel Traffic Systems Committee

Project number and name or topic: 8520 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts

1. **Description of agenda item:** Dr. Nicole Ziegler, Ph.D., will provide the Board with an update on the first two phases of project 8250 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts. The final report for phase 2 will be brought to the Board at a later date for approval, once it is available and has been reviewed by the Port Operations and Vessel Traffic Systems Committee.

Dr. Nicole Ziegler is Associate Professor of Second Language Studies at the University of Hawaii at Manoa in Honolulu, Hawaii. Her research focuses on how people learn second languages, and how technology and task-supported approaches can facilitate language development. She is also interested in the role of language in the commercial shipping industry, focusing specifically on the development of authentic task-based materials based on the linguistic, communicative, and pragmatic needs of this unique context.

2. **Why is this item important to PWSRCAC:** Seeking to identify and address various causes of miscommunication, this project will provide a comprehensive perspective by collecting information on the linguistic, cultural, and pragmatic needs and practices of native and non-native English-speaking mariners in Prince William Sound.

Both linguistic and pragmatic failures have frequently led to miscommunication during highly stressful, technical maneuvers, in which there is often very little time or space to correct initial misunderstandings, such as in the Cosco Busan allision with the San Francisco Bay Bridge. In these situations, confusion or misinterpretation of instructions or warnings is likely to intensify problems and difficulties, thus contributing to the occurrence of an accident. In recognition of the need for improved communication, a simplified and highly technical version of English was developed to serve as the “lingua franca” for mariners of varying linguistic backgrounds and proficiencies; however, communication problems persist.

3. **Previous actions taken by the Board on this item:**

<u>Meeting</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Action</u>
Board	1/27/22	Approval of project to begin in FY2023.
Board	9/22/22	Authorization of a sole source contract with Dr. Ziegler through Sky Island Language Learning Research in an amount not to exceed \$55,000 for Project 8520 – Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts.
Board	3/27/24	Acceptance of Phase 1 white paper titled “Miscommunication in Maritime Contexts” by Dr. Nicole Ziegler.

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4. **Summary of policy, issues, support, or opposition:** A better understanding of maritime English between ship crews and native English speakers is an area of interest to the Council in terms of better addressing the human factors that contribute to accidents.
5. **Committee Recommendation:** None at this time. The POVTS Committee endorsed, and the Board has accepted the Phase 1 report for this project.
6. **Relationship to LRP and Budget:** The work associated with this project (phases 1 and 2) was included in the FY2024 budget under contract 8520.23.01 in an amount not to exceed \$50,000. Approval of a budget modification to move \$25,000 of the committed FY2024 funds to FY2025 to complete phase 2 is on the consent agenda. The FY2025 budget includes an additional \$60,000 for phase 3 of this project.
7. **Action Requested of the Board of Directors:** None, item is for information only.
8. **Attachments:** None.