



Communicative Competency of Maritime English: Observation and Interview of Indonesian Professional Seafarer Student Officers in the Level 1 Seafarer Training Program

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Introduction: Background and Objectives

Effective communication in Maritime English is crucial for professional seafarers, especially for operational duties on multinational vessels. Over 80% of maritime accidents are linked to ineffective communication, highlighting the urgency of mastering Maritime English.

This study analyzes the communicative competence of Maritime English among student officers in the Level 1 training program at STIP Jakarta. It aims to uncover communication strategies, identify gaps between theory and practice, and assess the internalization of SMCP in learning activities.

Literature Review: Key Concepts

Communicative Competence

Beyond language structures, it's the ability to use language appropriately in social and professional contexts, integrating linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic aspects.

Role of STCW and SMCP

IMO sets global standards for English communication on board, emphasizing effective communication for safety and efficiency. However, implementation gaps persist in training institutions.

Challenges in Indonesian Training

Maritime English learning often focuses on grammar, lacking task-based, real-time communication practice. Limited facilities and exposure to real communication contexts hinder development.

Methodology: Approach and Data Collection

Qualitative Case Study

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method to explore the communicative competence of Maritime English students. This allowed for in-depth exploration of subjective experiences and contextual dynamics in real situations.

Data Collection

Data was gathered through participatory observation during training sessions and simulations, and semi-structured interviews. Observations focused on linguistic, sociolinguistic, and strategic aspects, while interviews explored perceptions and challenges.

Participants

50 Level 1 student officers from STIP Jakarta (25 Nautical - ANT I, 25 Engineering - ATT I) were selected via purposive sampling, considering program background, sailing experience, and readiness for interviews and observations.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke (2006), was used for data analysis. Validity was ensured through source and method triangulation, and member checking. Ethical considerations included informed consent and participant confidentiality.

Results: Competency Dimensions

The study involved 50 student officers from STIP Jakarta. Data was collected through observations of Maritime English classes and communication simulations, as well as in-depth interviews.

Competency Dimension	ANT I (Nautical)	ATT I (Teknical)
Linguistic	Understands basic navigation terms, but not fluent in SMCP commands.	Understands written technical instructions, but inaccurate in pronouncing technical terms.
Sociolinguistics	Good at adjusting language register with other officers.	Literal, less flexible in understanding social context between divisions.
Strategic	Able to clarify and confirm, but still stammers.	Often uses gestures or Indonesian to compensate for vocabulary.

Results: Interview Summaries

No.	Interview Questions	Summary of ANT I Answers (Nautical)	Summary of ATT I Answers (Technical)
1	Experience using English during training?	72% used it during radio communication or briefings.	60% only understand technical documents, rarely verbal communication.
2	Main difficulties speaking Maritime English?	Difficulty choosing right SMCP phrase and pronunciation.	Difficulty understanding technical verbal instructions and responding spontaneously.
3	Confidence in professional situations?	48% not confident, especially with seniors.	64% not confident, often mixing with Indonesian.
4	Sufficiency of communication practice?	Not enough; more simulation needed.	Too theoretical, not in machine context.
5	Most helpful in learning Maritime English?	Hands-on practice in simulators and boat communication videos.	Visualization of tools and hands-on interaction in the machine shop.

Results: Observation Findings

Observations were conducted during 5 class sessions and 3 simulation sessions for each department, focusing on language behavior, verbal response, and SMCP use.

Competency Aspect	Indicator	ANT I Findings (Nautical)	ATT I Findings (Teknika)
Linguistic	Use of technical vocabulary, sentence structure, clarity of articulation	Mastering basic navigation terms, but struggles with SMCP instructions.	Understands technical terms, but many pronunciation errors and incomplete sentences.
Sociolinguistics	Suitability of language style with context, use of greetings, registers	Able to use formal register during briefings, but inconsistent.	Lacks ability to adjust registers in communication between divisions.
Strategic	Clarification, confirmation, paraphrasing when misunderstandings occur	Active in asking for clarification, but still awkward to reconvey.	Often uses gestures or mixed language when not understanding instructions.

Discussion: Gaps and Challenges

The communicative competence of student officers is uneven. Deficiencies in strategic aspects and SMCP use are major challenges for both departments, despite differing communication contexts.

1

Nautical Department (ANT I)

Main weakness is the lack of realistic radio communication training. Verbal communication on the ship's platform requires standard SMCP protocols.

2

Engineering Department (ATT I)

Challenges arise from difficulties in understanding technical and spontaneous verbal instructions, especially during simulations of machine failure or emergencies.

3

Suboptimal Learning Methods

The current learning approach focuses on cognitive aspects (knowledge of terms) rather than performative aspects (language use in real contexts). Task-based learning is minimally applied.



Conclusion: Key Findings

The study concludes that the communicative competence of Maritime English among ANT I and ATT I student officers at STIP Jakarta faces challenges, particularly in strategic and performative dimensions.

Students understand technical and basic SMCP terminology, but struggle with real-context application in radio communication for nautical students and technical oral communication for engineering students.

The dominant theoretical learning approach is insufficient for developing functional communication skills needed in the maritime world. Differences in communication characteristics between majors necessitate a more specific, contextual, and simulative training approach.



Recommendations: Improving Maritime English Training

Integrate Task-Based Learning

Implement scenario-based simulations and active student involvement in realistic English-language practice activities.

Mandatory SMCP Training

Ensure SMCP-based communication training is a mandatory component across all divisions (nautical and engineering) to enhance readiness for multinational work environments.

Instructor Capacity Building

Increase the capacity of Maritime English instructors to support continuous learning success and adapt to industry needs.