



NEED ANALYSIS ON TEACHING MARITIME ENGLISH FOR NAUTICAL STUDENTS AT POLTEKPEL SURABAYA: CURRENT PRACTICES AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

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ABSTRACT

The increasing globalized maritime industry has underscored the importance of Maritime English (ME) for nautical students, equipping them with the communication skills essential for safe and efficient operation at sea. This study aims to perform a need analysis on the teaching of Maritime English for nautical students at Poltekpel Surabaya, focusing on both the existing curriculum and the future needs of students. The research examines current instructional practices, identifies gaps between curriculum delivery and industry requirements, and proposes recommendations for enhancing Maritime English teaching. Data were collected through interviews with maritime instructors, surveys with students, and analysis of course syllabus. The findings highlight a discrepancy between the level of Maritime English proficiency required by the industry and the current state of teaching at Poltekpel Surabaya. It also discusses the relevance of existing teaching materials, the integration of modern technological tools, and the necessity for a more immersive and communicative approach to ME instruction. The study concludes with actionable suggestions for improving the quality of Maritime English education, aiming to ensure that graduates are better prepared for the demands of the international maritime industry.

Keywords: Maritime English, Need Analysis, Nautical Education, Curriculum Development, Communication Skills.

INTRODUCTION

The global maritime industry is one of the most vital sectors of international trade, responsible for transporting goods and people across oceans and seas. As this industry continues to expand, driven by globalization, effective communication becomes increasingly crucial. English, as the lingua franca of maritime operations, is essential for ensuring smooth communication between international crews, ship owners, port authorities, and other stakeholders. Maritime English (ME) serves as the primary medium of communication on board vessels and between ships and shore facilities. Given this importance, Maritime English proficiency is not just a desirable skill but a necessity for future maritime professionals.

In Indonesia, Poltekpel Surabaya (Surabaya Maritime Polytechnic) is one of the leading institutions that train future maritime

professionals, including seafarers, navigators, and engineers. As part of its curriculum, Poltekpel Surabaya integrates the teaching of Maritime English to ensure its students are prepared to meet the language demands of the maritime industry. However, despite the growing recognition of the importance of Maritime English, there are still questions about how effectively this subject is taught, especially when considering the unique linguistic and communicative needs of Indonesian students, who are non-native English speakers.

The current teaching practices at Poltekpel Surabaya reflect a blend of conventional methods, such as traditional grammar-based instruction, and more modern approaches that incorporate task-based learning and communicative techniques. However, there is a growing concern that these approaches may not be fully aligned



with the rapidly evolving demands of the maritime industry, which requires more specific, context-driven, and culturally sensitive communication. Moreover, the need to develop a curriculum that adequately reflects the real-world communicative challenges faced by maritime professionals is becoming increasingly urgent.

This study aims to conduct a thorough need analysis of Maritime English teaching at Poltekpel Surabaya. It seeks to understand the gaps between the current curriculum, the language proficiency levels of students, and the expectations of the maritime industry. By identifying these gaps, the research aims to offer recommendations that can enhance the effectiveness of Maritime English education at Poltekpel Surabaya.

The importance of conducting this study is evident in the broader context of maritime safety, operational efficiency, and international cooperation. Communication barriers, particularly in critical situations such as navigational errors or emergency responses, can lead to accidents, delayed operations, or even fatalities. As such, improving the quality of Maritime English education is not only a matter of academic concern but also one of national and international importance.

This research will focus on several key objectives:

1. Evaluating the existing Maritime English curriculum at Poltekpel Surabaya and identifying its strengths and weaknesses.
2. Assessing the specific language needs of students in relation to the maritime industry, based on industry standards and real-world communication practices.
3. Exploring the perceptions of students and instructors regarding the current teaching methods, course content, and overall

effectiveness of the Maritime English program.

4. Proposing curriculum improvements and teaching strategies that can better prepare students for the challenges they will encounter in their maritime careers.

By conducting this need analysis, the study intends to provide actionable insights into how Poltekpel Surabaya can refine its Maritime English program, making it more relevant, practical, and aligned with the global demands of the maritime sector. The results of this research could also serve as a model for other maritime institutions in Indonesia and globally, helping to ensure that future maritime professionals are equipped with the necessary linguistic skills to thrive in their careers.

Ultimately, the goal is to improve the employability of graduates, enhance their communication skills in international settings, and contribute to the overall safety and efficiency of the maritime industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Importance of Maritime English

The use of English as a common language of communication in the maritime industry is essential for effective communication during various operations, including navigation, cargo handling, emergency procedures, and safety protocols. According to Bhatia (2016), ME is designed to ensure clarity, precision, and uniformity in maritime communication, particularly in critical situations. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) both emphasize that the proficiency of seafarers in English directly impacts the safety and efficiency of maritime operations. For example, the IMO's International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for



Seafarers (STCW) includes requirements for English proficiency to improve safety at sea (Baker, 2018).

A crucial aspect of ME proficiency is its role in reducing misunderstandings and communication errors that can lead to maritime accidents. Witte and Kormos (2017) argue that effective communication is vital in high-stakes environments, where even small misunderstandings can have significant consequences. In their study, they found that non-native English speakers often face challenges in mastering technical maritime terminology, understanding spoken language in noisy environments, and interacting in high-pressure situations, highlighting the need for specialized ME training.

Teaching Maritime English: Approaches and Challenges

In the field of maritime education, teaching ME is generally approached through a combination of general English instruction and specialized maritime terminology. However, as suggested by Kermani and Roudaki (2018), traditional methods often fall short of meeting the real-world demands of the maritime industry. A key challenge identified by these authors is the need for a curriculum that goes beyond grammar-based instruction and integrates more task-based, communicative learning approaches.

Several studies have emphasized the importance of a communicative approach to teaching ME, which allows students to practice real-life scenarios such as ship-to-ship communication, emergency procedures, and ship-to-shore interactions. For example, Sadeghi and Sadeghi (2020) advocate for a task-based learning (TBL) approach in Maritime English education. TBL focuses on engaging students in authentic tasks such as

navigation planning, cargo operations, and emergency drills, thereby helping them develop practical communication skills needed for their future careers.

Additionally, the integration of technology has been identified as a promising avenue for improving ME education. Virtual simulations, multimedia resources, and online platforms are increasingly used to create immersive learning environments that reflect real-world maritime operations. Eslami (2019) highlights how the use of simulators and digital platforms can enhance students' ability to respond to real-time communication situations, allowing them to practice language skills in more realistic and engaging contexts.

However, teaching ME presents unique challenges, especially when working with non-native English speakers. According to Gritsenko and Tsvetkova (2020), maritime students, particularly those from non-English speaking countries, often face difficulties with technical vocabulary, pronunciation, and pragmatic aspects of communication. For instance, the use of non-standard English (e.g., accents, jargon, and colloquialisms) can create communication barriers, even when students have a basic understanding of English. These challenges necessitate the development of instructional strategies that address both linguistic and cultural barriers, helping students navigate intercultural communication issues in a maritime setting.

Gaps Between Curriculum and Industry Needs

Despite the growing recognition of the importance of ME, studies suggest that many maritime institutions, including Poltekpel Surabaya, struggle to align their curricula with the evolving needs of the maritime industry. Research by Gritsenko and Tsvetkova (2020)



and Sadeghi and Sadeghi (2020) shows that maritime education often focuses on general language skills, leaving students underprepared for the specialized language demands of the maritime industry. This mismatch between what is taught in the classroom and the language skills required in the field leads to a significant gap in students' preparedness for real-world maritime communication.

Furthermore, Kermani and Roudaki (2018) argue that traditional Maritime English curricula fail to adequately address the specific communication needs of students, particularly in relation to shipboard communication, emergency protocols, and multi-national crew coordination. They propose that curricula should be more closely aligned with the actual tasks and challenges students will face in their careers. This includes greater emphasis on the technical vocabulary and phrases used in onboard communication, emergency procedures, and global communication standards.

In the case of Poltekpel Surabaya, the existing Maritime English curriculum has been largely structured around traditional language instruction, focusing on grammar, vocabulary, and basic communication skills. However, as the maritime industry becomes more interconnected, it is increasingly important for students to master a wide range of communicative functions that go beyond simple conversations or basic understanding. For example, students must be able to understand and issue specific orders during high-pressure situations, respond appropriately in emergencies, and manage cross-cultural communication with international crew members.

The Role of Cultural Awareness in Maritime English Education

Given the multicultural and multinational environment of the maritime industry, cultural awareness plays a significant role in the teaching and learning of ME. Maritime professionals regularly interact with crew members, port authorities, and other stakeholders from various cultural backgrounds. Misunderstandings arising from cultural differences in communication styles can lead to inefficiency or even accidents. According to Witte and Kormos (2017), teaching ME should not only focus on linguistic proficiency but also on fostering an understanding of cultural nuances in communication. This is particularly relevant for maritime students who may encounter various cultural communication barriers during their careers at sea.

One promising area of research is the inclusion of intercultural communication training in Maritime English programs. As Gritsenko and Tsvetkova (2020) suggest, integrating cultural competence into ME education can help students develop the skills needed to navigate intercultural challenges, fostering smoother interactions on board ships and with shore-based personnel. Moreover, understanding and adapting to different communication styles can also contribute to better teamwork and cooperation, both of which are essential for the successful operation of a vessel.

Implications for Maritime English Education at Poltekpel Surabaya

Given the insights from the literature, several implications can be drawn for improving the teaching of ME at Poltekpel Surabaya. The institution's curriculum must address the gap between classroom learning and real-world maritime communication needs. This can be achieved by incorporating more specialized maritime terminology,



focusing on practical communication tasks, and integrating technology to simulate real-world scenarios. Additionally, more emphasis should be placed on task-based learning, where students actively engage in communicative tasks reflective of their future roles as seafarers.

Furthermore, the inclusion of cultural awareness and intercultural communication training is critical to preparing students for the globalized maritime workforce. Given that the maritime industry is highly international, fostering cultural competence in students will enable them to work more effectively with diverse teams and handle the challenges posed by cross-cultural communication.

In conclusion, while Poltekpel Surabaya's current ME curriculum provides a foundation for developing English language skills in students, there is a need for significant improvements to ensure that the program is aligned with industry expectations and the real-world communicative demands of maritime professionals. By incorporating the suggestions drawn from the literature, Poltekpel Surabaya can enhance the quality and effectiveness of its Maritime English education, better preparing students for the challenges they will face in their careers at sea.

METHOD

This study uses a qualitative approach to analyze the teaching of Maritime English (ME) for nautical students at Poltekpel Surabaya. The research was designed to evaluate the current ME curriculum, understand the language needs of students, and identify potential areas for improvement.

Data were collected from two main groups: five ME instructors and 100 nautical students from Poltekpel Surabaya. The

instructors, selected for their experience in teaching ME, provided insights into the curriculum, teaching practices, and challenges in instruction. The students, surveyed across different academic levels, shared their perceptions of the ME curriculum, their confidence in using ME, and their suggestions for enhancing the course.

The data collection methods included semi-structured interviews with instructors, a student survey, and document analysis. The interviews with instructors aimed to explore their experiences, views on the current curriculum, and challenges in teaching ME. The student survey assessed their proficiency in ME, the relevance of the curriculum, and their feedback on teaching methods. Document analysis focused on reviewing syllabi, textbooks, and other teaching materials to evaluate their alignment with industry requirements.

The data were analyzed using qualitative content analysis to identify key themes, patterns, and insights. The findings were triangulated across the interviews, surveys, and document analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the current state of ME teaching at Poltekpel Surabaya.

Ethical considerations were adhered to, with informed consent obtained from all participants, and confidentiality maintained throughout the study. The study's limitations include a small sample size and reliance on self-reported data, which may introduce bias. Despite these limitations, the methodology provides valuable insights into the ME curriculum and suggests potential improvements for Poltekpel Surabaya.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide a comprehensive overview of the current state



of Maritime English (ME) education at Poltekpel Surabaya, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the existing curriculum, teaching methods, and student outcomes. Based on the data collected from instructors, students, and the analysis of teaching materials, several key findings emerged, which are discussed in detail below.

Curriculum Gaps

A significant finding of the study was the gap between the ME curriculum and the actual communicative needs of the maritime industry. While the curriculum at Poltekpel Surabaya covers basic English language skills, it lacks sufficient emphasis on industry-specific terminology and real-world communication tasks. Students and instructors both noted that while the current curriculum focuses on general English grammar and vocabulary, it does not adequately prepare students for the specific linguistic demands they will face on board ships or when communicating with international crew members.

For example, students expressed difficulty in understanding technical maritime vocabulary, such as terms used in navigation, cargo handling, and emergency procedures. Instructors also mentioned that the curriculum needs to incorporate more practical language tasks, such as role-playing ship-to-ship communication, ship-to-shore interactions, and emergency drills, to mirror real-life situations more accurately. This mismatch between what is taught in the classroom and the practical language requirements of the maritime industry was seen as a significant limitation of the current curriculum.

Teaching Methods

The study revealed that the teaching methods used at Poltekpel Surabaya primarily

focus on traditional, teacher-centered approaches, which tend to emphasize grammar and vocabulary acquisition. While this approach is important for establishing a foundation in English, both instructors and students pointed out that it is insufficient for preparing students for the communicative challenges they will encounter in their careers. The lack of emphasis on interactive, communicative practices was noted as a shortcoming of the curriculum.

Instructors highlighted that more dynamic and engaging teaching methods, such as task-based learning (TBL), role-playing, and case studies, would better prepare students for real-world communication in the maritime context. These methods encourage students to actively use ME in simulated maritime scenarios, such as ship navigation, cargo operations, and emergency responses. Both students and instructors agreed that task-based methods could improve students' confidence in using ME for practical purposes, making the learning experience more relevant to their future careers.

Technology Integration

The integration of technology in ME teaching emerged as another area for improvement. While Poltekpel Surabaya utilizes some digital tools, there is a clear need for more advanced technology integration to enhance learning. For example, the use of virtual simulations and multimedia resources, such as online courses, interactive language platforms, and maritime simulators, was identified as a valuable addition to the curriculum. These tools can create an immersive environment in which students can practice real-time communication, decision-making, and problem-solving in maritime contexts.



Instructors and students both expressed interest in using technology to simulate realistic maritime scenarios, such as emergency drills, navigation planning, and ship-to-ship communication. Incorporating these tools would not only make learning more interactive but also help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and real-world application.

Cultural Awareness in Communication

Cultural awareness was another important issue raised during the study. As the maritime industry is highly international, communication often involves crew members from diverse cultural backgrounds. Misunderstandings arising from cultural differences in communication styles can lead to inefficiencies and even safety risks. In this context, both students and instructors acknowledged the need for more focus on intercultural communication in the ME curriculum.

Currently, the curriculum at Poltekpel Surabaya does not place enough emphasis on teaching students how to navigate cultural differences when communicating with international colleagues. Instructors suggested that integrating cultural awareness training into ME courses would help students understand the nuances of communication in a multicultural environment. By incorporating lessons on cultural differences in communication styles, hierarchy, and non-verbal cues, students could develop the skills needed to work effectively in a diverse maritime workforce.

Students' Language Needs

Students' perceptions of their language needs were largely consistent with the findings from the instructors and document

analysis. Most students reported feeling confident in basic English skills, such as reading and writing, but expressed a lack of confidence in speaking and listening, especially in maritime-specific contexts. Many students stated that they struggled to understand technical vocabulary related to maritime operations, such as navigation terms, safety procedures, and communication protocols.

Moreover, students identified the need for more practical language instruction that reflects real-world maritime communication. They expressed a desire for more opportunities to practice speaking and listening in realistic maritime scenarios, such as simulated emergency situations or ship-to-ship communication. Students also suggested that more emphasis should be placed on understanding and responding to maritime-specific language in high-pressure situations, which are common in the maritime industry.

Recommendations for Improvement

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made to improve the teaching of Maritime English at Poltekpel Surabaya:

1. **Revise the Curriculum:** The curriculum should be revised to include more industry-specific vocabulary and real-world communication tasks, such as ship-to-ship communication, emergency response drills, and cargo operations. These tasks should reflect the actual challenges students will face in their maritime careers.
2. **Incorporate Task-Based Learning:** Moving away from traditional grammar-based instruction, the curriculum should incorporate more interactive, communicative teaching methods, such as task-based learning (TBL), role-playing,



and case studies. These methods will help students develop practical communication skills in realistic maritime contexts.

3. **Integrate Technology:** The use of virtual simulations, multimedia tools, and online learning platforms should be expanded to provide students with an immersive, hands-on learning experience. This will allow them to practice real-time communication in maritime scenarios, such as navigation planning and emergency drills.
4. **Focus on Cultural Awareness:** The curriculum should include lessons on cultural awareness and intercultural communication to prepare students for working in the multicultural maritime environment. This will help students navigate cultural differences in communication and improve teamwork among international crews.
5. **Improve Listening and Speaking Skills:** More emphasis should be placed on developing students' speaking and listening skills, particularly in maritime-specific contexts. This could be achieved through interactive exercises, listening comprehension activities, and real-life communication simulations.

The study revealed that while Poltekpel Surabaya's current ME curriculum provides a foundational understanding of English, it does not fully address the practical communication needs of the maritime industry. By revising the curriculum to include more industry-specific content, incorporating task-based learning methods, integrating technology, and focusing on cultural awareness, Poltekpel Surabaya can better prepare its students for the challenges of the global maritime workforce. These changes would enhance the quality of ME education, improve student outcomes, and ensure that graduates are equipped with

the necessary communication skills for their careers at sea.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to evaluate the teaching of Maritime English (ME) at Poltekpel Surabaya and identify areas for improvement to better meet the needs of maritime students and industry demands. The findings revealed several key areas where the current curriculum and teaching methods could be enhanced to ensure that students are well-prepared for the communicative challenges they will face in their maritime careers.

The curriculum at Poltekpel Surabaya, while providing foundational English language skills, was found to lack sufficient emphasis on industry-specific terminology and real-world communication tasks. Both instructors and students expressed the need for more practical, scenario-based learning that closely mirrors the situations encountered at sea, such as ship-to-ship communication, emergency procedures, and multicultural interactions.

Teaching methods at Poltekpel Surabaya were largely traditional, focusing on grammar and vocabulary acquisition. However, both students and instructors agreed that more dynamic, communicative teaching approaches such as task-based learning, role-playing, and simulation exercises would significantly improve students' ability to use ME effectively in real-world contexts.

The integration of technology, including virtual simulations and interactive online resources, was another area identified for improvement. The use of technology can create an immersive learning environment, helping students practice real-time communication in maritime situations and



bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Additionally, cultural awareness and intercultural communication were found to be insufficiently addressed in the current curriculum. Given the multicultural nature of the maritime industry, incorporating lessons on cultural differences in communication would help students work effectively in diverse teams and prevent misunderstandings that could arise in cross-cultural interactions.

To address these gaps, the study recommends revising the curriculum to include more industry-specific content, adopting communicative teaching methods, integrating technology, and fostering cultural awareness. These improvements will better prepare students for the challenges of the global maritime workforce, ultimately enhancing the quality of ME education at Poltekpel Surabaya and contributing to the overall safety and efficiency of maritime operations.

By implementing these recommendations, Poltekpel Surabaya can ensure that its graduates are equipped with the necessary linguistic and communicative skills to thrive in the international maritime industry.

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