

## Lecturers' Communication Strategies in Teaching ESP Maritime English

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Communication Strategies, Teaching, ESP, Maritime English

*Received :* 15, July

*Revised :* 05, August

*Accepted:* 22, August

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### ABSTRACT

Effective communication strategies are essential for lecturers teaching Maritime English, as they help students understand technical terms and use English in real-life maritime contexts. These strategies also prepare students to communicate clearly and safely in international maritime settings, supporting both learning and professional readiness. The objective of the research is to find out communication strategies used by the English lecturers in a maritime polytechnic in Indonesia. The descriptive qualitative research was used and the data were collected by using the observation. The findings showed that the English instructors employed literal translation, approximation, repetition, nonlinguistic techniques (such as gestures or mime), and asking for clarification as communication strategies. The interview's findings demonstrated that the communication strategies made it easier for the students to comprehend the material, helped them understand what the teacher was saying, and helped them understand the meaning of words and instructions during the teaching and learning process.

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## INTRODUCTION

In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), particularly Maritime English, effective communication strategies employed by lecturers play a vital role in facilitating learners' language development and professional competence. Given that Maritime English is essential for global communication at sea, lecturers must ensure clarity, relevance, and engagement in delivering technical content (John et al., 2017). Communication strategy helps bridge gaps in students' linguistic proficiency, enhances comprehension of maritime terminology, and fosters an interactive learning environment (Masithoh et al., 2018).

Therefore, lecturers often need to simplify complex language, use visual aids, incorporate real-life maritime scenarios, and encourage student participation through questioning, paraphrasing, code-switching, and feedback techniques (Hirai et al., 2013). These strategies help students grasp not just the vocabulary but also the communicative functions necessary for maritime operations such as giving orders, reporting, and responding in emergencies. Moreover, adapting communication to students' English proficiency and cultural backgrounds ensures more inclusive and effective teaching. Then, in Indonesia, where many maritime students learn English as a foreign language, lecturers' communication strategies are vital in ESP Maritime English classes (Sari & Sari, 2022). These strategies—such as simplifying language, using real-life maritime examples, and encouraging interaction—help students understand technical terms and communicate effectively at sea. They also support student confidence and ensure readiness for global maritime communication, where clarity and safety are essential.

In sum, lecturers' communication strategies are essential for achieving ESP teaching goals: they support student understanding, boost confidence, and prepare learners to use English accurately and effectively in international maritime contexts where safety and clarity are paramount. So, this study intends to investigate communication strategies used by the English lecturers in teaching ESP maritime English in Indonesia

## THEORETICAL REVIEW

### *Communication Strategies*

Communication strategies are defined as techniques used by language learners or speakers to overcome difficulties in communication and ensure the successful delivery of their message. These strategies are particularly important when speakers face limitations in vocabulary, grammar, or pronunciation, especially in second or foreign language contexts. According to Dörnyei & Scott (1997) expanded the concept by including both problem-solving strategies (like approximation, circumlocution, and appeals for help) and achievement strategies (like code-switching and restructuring), recognizing their role not only in avoiding breakdowns but in maintaining communication flow. Duck & McMahan (2011) explain that communication strategies are conscious or semi-conscious strategies used to overcome perceived barriers that hinder the achievement of a specific communication goal. Communication and globalization require the ability to speak and understand a foreign language.

Both psycholinguistic and interactional viewpoints can be used to understand the idea of communication strategies as a component of interlanguage. From a psycholinguistic perspective, communication strategies are viewed as deliberate methods that people may deliberately employ to address communication challenges (Shofiya & Basuni, 2023). They divide these tactics into two main categories: potential consciousness and problem-solving. The ability of the learner to handle unforeseen or strange communication situations is referred to as problem-solving. Potential consciousness, on the other hand, contends that these methods are somewhat influenced by the learners' awareness and that their application is shaped by earlier training and learning experiences. However, according to Celce-Murcia, M., Dornyei, Z., & Thurrell, (1995), CSs are frequently categorized into three main groups: avoidance (reducing), achievement (compensatory), and delaying (time-gaining) strategies. Topic avoidance, which is avoiding topics or concepts that present linguistic difficulties, and message abandonment, which is leaving a communication unfinished because of language obstacles, are examples of avoidance strategies. A few examples of accomplishments are circumlocution, approximation, word-coinage, all-purpose word use, non-linguistic means, literal translation, foreignization, code-switching, and appeal or assistance. Stalling means filler or reluctance.

### ***English for Specific Purposes (ESP)***

Many English lecturers now find it extremely difficult to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP). In contrast to normal English classes, ESP instruction focuses on a more specialized register that the course is meant to encourage students to become proficient in English and utilize it in specialized fields, such as banking, medicine, aviation, etc (Mauludin, 2021).

Communication strategies play a crucial role in helping speakers navigate challenges that may arise during interaction, especially in multilingual or professional contexts. These strategies refer to conscious or semi-conscious strategies employed to address perceived obstacles that hinder the achievement of specific communication goals. For instance, when language proficiency is limited or when misunderstandings occur, individuals may resort to strategies such as paraphrasing, using gestures, or seeking clarification to ensure the message is effectively conveyed. Understanding and applying these communication strategies in English for specific purposes, not only facilitate smoother communication but also empower individuals to become more confident and effective communicators (Abdullayeva, 2023).

### ***Maritime English***

The maritime industry makes extensive use of Maritime English (ME), a subset of ESP with a unique vocabulary and specialized terminology. From the vocabulary of more technical written genres to simplified and standardized spoken contexts, maritime English encompasses a broad range. Numerous technical terms and expressions associated with the nautical and marine engineering domains are frequently employed in written maritime English. For instance, while explaining the many components of ships, how they move, how

engines are maintained and repaired, etc. Maritime English has a more limited word variety. The terminology is simplified because it usually refers to the ship's operational safety and security. The spoken messages are primarily used in the "here and now" setting. Imperative and performative language are frequently employed in the current setting (Ahmmed, 2017).

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach to explore the communication strategies used by English lecturers in teaching Maritime English at a maritime polytechnic in Indonesia. The focus was to identify the types of strategies lecturers used to facilitate students' comprehension of technical maritime terms and their application in real-life contexts.

The research was conducted at a maritime polytechnic in Indonesia, where English is taught as part of the students' professional preparation. The participants consisted of 5 (five) English lecturers who had experience in teaching Maritime English and were actively involved in classroom instruction during the data collection period. To gather in-depth information, the study utilized two primary data collection methods: classroom observation and semi-structured interviews. The first is classroom observation was conducted to record the natural use of communication strategies during teaching sessions. The observations focused on how lecturers managed communication breakdowns and supported student understanding, particularly when introducing complex or technical vocabulary. Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participating lecturers to gain insight into their awareness and reasoning behind the use of specific communication strategies. The interviews explored the lecturers' perceptions of how these strategies supported student learning and classroom interaction.

The data from observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. The analysis followed the communication strategy typology framework, identifying key strategies such as literal translation, approximation, repetition, nonlinguistic techniques (e.g., gestures or mime), and asking for clarification. Patterns and themes were drawn from observation notes to triangulate the findings and ensure validity.

## **RESULTS**

The classroom observations were conducted with five English lecturers teaching Maritime English at a maritime polytechnic in Indonesia. Each lecturer was observed over two teaching sessions, lasting approximately 90 minutes per session. The observations focused on identifying the types and frequency of communication strategies used by the lecturers during instructional delivery. The following five communication strategies were identified: literal translation, approximation, repetition, nonlinguistic techniques (e.g., gestures or mime), and asking for clarification.

Table 1. Frequency of Communication Strategies Used by Lecturers

Lecture	Literal Translation	Approximation	Repetition	Non-linguistic techniques	Asking for Clarification
L1	8	5	7	6	4
L2	10	4	6	7	5
L3	6	6	5	8	3
L4	9	3	9	5	6
L5	7	5	8	6	5
Total	40	23	35	32	23

Table 1 above shows that the communication strategies used by the lecturers were literal translation (40 times), repetition (35 times), non-linguistic techniques (32 times), approximation (23 times), and asking for clarification (23 times). The first communication strategy is literal translation, which the most frequently used. Lecturers often translated English technical terms into Bahasa Indonesia to help students quickly understand unfamiliar vocabulary, particularly when introducing ship parts, navigational commands, or safety terms. The sample of data observation on literal translation was displayed in table 2.

Table 2. Literal Translation Performed by the Lecturers

Data	Description
<p>L1</p> <p>During a lesson on navigational commands, the lecturer introduced several standard maritime phrases used on the bridge. When explaining the command "Hard to port", the lecturer paused and provided a direct translation:</p> <p><i>"'Hard to port' artinya 'belok penuh ke kiri.' Port itu sisi kiri kapal. Jadi kalau Anda dengar 'hard to port,' artinya kemudi diputar penuh ke kiri."</i>                      ("Hard to port' means 'turn fully to the left.' Port is the left side of the ship. So if you hear 'hard to port,' it means the rudder is turned fully to the left.")</p> <p>Similarly, when introducing the term "helm", the lecturer said:</p>	<p>Throughout the session, the lecturer consistently used literal translation to clarify terminology, especially when students showed signs of confusion or when technical terms were first introduced. This helped students link familiar concepts with new vocabulary and engage more confidently during oral practice.</p>

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*“Helm itu adalah kemudi kapal. Dalam bahasa Indonesia, helm artinya alat pengemudi kapal.”*

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Meanwhile, the second communication strategy used was the repetition. Repeating key terms or instructions helped reinforce student understanding. Lecturers often repeated words slowly or in slightly altered sentences to ensure comprehension. The observation data sample on repetition was displayed in the table 3 below.

Table 3. Repetition Performed by the Lecturers

Data	Description
<p>L2</p> <p>During a session focused on emergency procedures and shipboard communication, the lecturer emphasized the importance of understanding standard safety commands. To ensure comprehension, the lecturer frequently used repetition—both verbatim and with slight rephrasing—to reinforce meaning. For example, while explaining the command “Abandon ship”, the lecturer stated:</p> <p><i>“Abandon ship. Everyone, listen. Abandon ship means leave the ship immediately. I repeat, abandon ship means leave the ship – get off the ship right away.”</i></p> <p>The lecturer then asked students to repeat the command:</p> <p><i>“Class, say it together: abandon ship.”</i></p> <p>Students echoed the command, and the lecturer followed up with a slightly different formulation:</p> <p><i>“That’s right. Abandon ship – evacuate. You must leave the ship. Evacuate immediately.”</i></p> <p>Later, when discussing “Man overboard”, the lecturer emphasized:</p> <p><i>“Man overboard! There’s someone in the water. Man overboard! Again – man overboard! That means someone has fallen into the sea.”</i></p>	<p>Each time a new phrase or command was introduced, the lecturer repeated it two or three times, sometimes slowly, sometimes within a different sentence, to reinforce clarity and retention. Key vocabulary terms were also written on the board and pronounced repeatedly.</p>

Next, the communication strategy used by the lecturers was non-linguistics techniques. Lecturers frequently used gestures, body language, or miming to illustrate commands or terms. For example, when explaining "turn to port," hand gestures were used to simulate direction. The observation data sample on non-linguistics techniques was displayed in the table 4 below.

Table 4. Non-linguistics Techniques Performed by the Lecturers

Data	Description
<p>L3</p> <p>When introducing the phrase “Turn to port,” the lecturer pointed with an extended left arm, using a sweeping motion while saying:  <i>“Turn to port – this way. Port is left.”</i> (Student heads turned left following the gesture.)</p> <p>To demonstrate “Man overboard,” the lecturer pretended to look over the ship’s railing and shouted the phrase while pointing downward and mimicking throwing a lifebuoy. This was followed by a brief role-play scenario with one student simulating the action of raising the alarm and calling the bridge.</p> <p>When teaching “Stop engine,” the lecturer raised both hands sharply in front of their chest and took a firm step backward, visually reinforcing the meaning of the command.</p> <p>Additionally, the term “Drop anchor” was accompanied by the lecturer miming a heavy chain being released from their hands and making a sound effect to emphasize the action.</p>	<p>The lecturer used a variety of non-verbal cues – gestures, facial expressions, and miming – to support student understanding of standard commands used during ship operation. This strategy was particularly effective in bridging gaps when students struggled with vocabulary or had limited English proficiency.</p>

The fourth strategy was approximation. When precise vocabulary was unavailable, lecturers substituted simpler or similar English terms. For example, instead of saying "bulkhead," a lecturer might say "wall of the ship." The observation data sample on approximation was displayed in the table 5 below.

Table 5. Approximation Performed by the Lecturers

Data	Description
<p>L4</p> <p>During a session on the names and functions of ship compartments and engine room equipment, the lecturer often used approximation to simplify unfamiliar or highly technical English vocabulary for students.</p> <p>When introducing the term “bulkhead,” the lecturer paused and said:  <i>“This is called a bulkhead. It’s like a wall – a strong wall inside the ship that separates compartments. So, think of it as the ‘ship’s wall.’”</i></p> <p>Later, while explaining “hatch cover,” the lecturer substituted the term with a more familiar comparison:</p>	<p>Throughout the session, when students looked confused or hesitated, the lecturer often paraphrased complex terms using simpler synonyms or everyday comparisons, helping bridge the gap between technical vocabulary and students’ existing language knowledge.</p>

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*"Hatch cover is like a big door or lid on the deck. It closes the cargo hold. You can say it's the 'deck's door.'"*

Another example was the term "companionway."

The lecturer explained:

*"Companionway means stairs or ladder on a ship. Just remember it's the ship's stairway – stairs to go up or down."*

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The last strategy was asking for clarification. Lecturers prompted students to indicate whether they understood by asking questions like "Do you understand?" or "Can you repeat what I said?" This helped gauge student comprehension and encouraged active engagement. The observation data sample on asking for clarification was displayed in the table 6 below.

Table 6. Asking for Clarification Performed by the Lecturers

Data	Description
<p>L5</p> <p>During a lesson focused on emergency commands and safety instructions, the lecturer regularly used clarification checks to ensure students understood the meaning and function of the terms being taught. After explaining the command "Abandon ship," the lecturer looked at the class and asked:</p> <p><i>"Do you understand what abandon ship means? Can anyone explain it in your own words?"</i></p> <p>When only one student responded, the lecturer encouraged others:</p> <p><i>"Don't worry, just try. What should you do if you hear 'abandon ship'?"</i></p> <p>Later in the session, after introducing "fire in the engine room," the lecturer asked:</p> <p><i>"Is it clear? Fire – where? Can someone repeat the full sentence?"</i></p> <p>Students responded hesitantly at first, but the lecturer smiled and nodded encouragingly, saying:</p> <p><i>"Good. Now you try. Say it again – what do you say if there's a fire in the engine room?"</i></p> <p>Throughout the session, the lecturer frequently paused and asked "Can you repeat what I just said?", "Do you get the meaning?", "Yes or no?", "Is that clear?"</p>	<p>The clarification prompts such as "Can you repeat what I just said?", "Do you get the meaning?", "Yes or no?", "Is that clear?" often led to brief follow-up discussions or repetitions by students, reinforcing understanding.</p>

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## DISCUSSION

All five lecturers consistently employed communication strategies to scaffold students' understanding of Maritime English. The use of literal translation and repetition was dominant, indicating a strong focus on ensuring clarity of meaning related to the ESP terminologies (Abdullayeva, 2023). Nonlinguistic techniques were also widely used, reflecting the practical and physical nature of maritime terminology (Samad, 2018). The strategies observed align with the needs of vocational learners who benefit from multimodal and simplified language support during instruction.

The next strategy which was the use of literal translation, was effective in bridging linguistic gaps, especially for technical and directional terms critical to ship operations (Al-Sofi & Abouabdulqader, 2019). It allowed students to quickly associate English maritime vocabulary with its functional equivalent in Bahasa Indonesia, supporting comprehension and contextual application. Meanwhile, repetition effectively supported student comprehension of essential maritime English commands (Hafita et al., 2024). By repeating instructions using various tones and reworded explanations, the lecturer reinforced understanding, reduced confusion, and promoted verbal confidence. This strategy was particularly useful in reinforcing critical safety-related vocabulary where precision is essential. Then, the use of non-linguistic techniques significantly aided student comprehension, particularly for physically oriented or action-based maritime terminology. Gestures and miming helped convey meaning quickly and clearly, serving as effective visual cues to support verbal explanations (Rzayeva, 2025). In a practical, movement-based field like ship operation, these techniques bridged the gap between language and task-based understanding. Finally, the strategy of asking for clarification served as a valuable tool for monitoring student understanding and promoting engagement. By inviting students to repeat, explain, or confirm meaning, the lecturer created an interactive learning environment. This strategy also helped reduce miscommunication, especially during lessons involving critical safety commands where clear comprehension is essential.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings from classroom observations revealed that English lecturers at the maritime polytechnic consistently employed a range of communication strategies to enhance students' understanding of Maritime English. The five primary strategies identified were literal translation, repetition, non-linguistic techniques, approximation, and asking for clarification. Literal translation was the most frequently used strategy, as it helped students grasp technical maritime terms by linking English vocabulary directly to their first language, Bahasa Indonesia. Repetition supported retention and reinforced comprehension, especially when lecturers emphasized key commands and instructions. Non-linguistic techniques such as gestures and miming served as visual aids that bridged language gaps and helped students connect terminology with real-world actions. Approximation enabled lecturers to simplify complex or unfamiliar terms by substituting them with more familiar or similar English expressions.

Lastly, asking for clarification promoted classroom interaction and encouraged students to confirm their understanding, which contributed to a more engaging and responsive learning environment. Overall, these strategies proved essential in helping students comprehend technical content, respond appropriately to commands, and build confidence in using English for maritime operations.

Finally, based on the findings, several recommendations are proposed to improve the effectiveness of Maritime English instruction. First, English instructors should receive ongoing training and professional development focused on communication strategies, especially those that support vocational and low-proficiency learners. Second, communication strategies should be explicitly integrated into curriculum planning, including syllabus design, lesson planning, and classroom activities, to ensure consistent and structured support for student understanding. Third, the development and use of multimodal teaching materials – such as videos, simulations, and gesture-based exercises – are encouraged to reinforce non-linguistic and visual strategies. Additionally, students should be taught to apply communication strategies themselves, such as asking for clarification or using approximation, to enhance their ability to communicate effectively in real-life maritime contexts. Finally, further research is recommended to examine the long-term impact of these strategies on students' communicative competence and performance, particularly during shipboard training or internships. By implementing these recommendations, Maritime English instruction can become more effective, learner-centered, and aligned with the communication demands of the global maritime industry.

## **FURTHER STUDY**

Future research is recommended to expand the scope and depth of studies related to lecturers' communication strategies in teaching **ESP Maritime English**. Several possible directions include:

### **1. Diverse Methodological Approaches**

Future studies may adopt **mixed-methods** approaches by combining quantitative data (e.g., measuring the effectiveness of communication strategies through learning outcomes) and qualitative data (e.g., in-depth interviews and classroom observations) to provide a more comprehensive understanding.

### **2. Comparative Analysis across Institutions or Countries**

Comparative studies among maritime education institutions in different regions or countries could reveal variations in communication practices and their impact on Maritime English proficiency.

### **3. Integration of Technology in Communication Strategies**

Further research should investigate how the use of technology, such as **Learning Management Systems (LMS)**, **Virtual Reality (VR)**, or **language-based simulators**, can enhance communication effectiveness and ESP Maritime English learning.

### **4. Focus on Students' Perspectives**

Future studies could explore students' perceptions and experiences regarding lecturers' communication strategies, providing insights into how these

strategies influence motivation, participation, and language competency achievement.

#### 5. Incorporation of Intercultural Competence

Considering the international nature of the maritime field, future research may examine the extent to which lecturers' communication strategies integrate **intercultural communicative competence** and how this impacts students' preparedness for global work environments.

#### 6. Longitudinal Evaluation

Long-term studies tracking students' development in Maritime English communication skills from the beginning to the end of their program could provide insights into the sustainability of the strategies employed.

### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The author would like to express sincere gratitude to all lecturers and students who participated in this study for their valuable time, insights, and cooperation. Special thanks are also extended to the faculty members and administrative staff of the Maritime English Department for their support throughout the research process. Lastly, heartfelt appreciation goes to colleagues and family for their continuous encouragement and motivation.

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