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| Cultural and Linguistic Challenges in Global Maritime Education: Navigating English Usage    *Ronald Simanjuntak1) rgoodwork22@gmail.com*  *Rosna Yuherlina Siahaan2) rosnalina@gmail.com*  *Marudut Bernadtua Simanjuntak3)* [*bernadmarudut@gmail.com*](mailto:bernadmarudut@gmail.com)  *Maritime Institute of Jakarta (Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Pelayaran - Jakarta)*  *Jl. Marunda Makmur No. 1 Cilincing, Jakarta Utara. Jakarta 14150* |

***Abstract***

*This qualitative study investigates cultural and linguistic challenges faced by 45 junior cadets in global maritime education, focusing on English usage. Through interviews and focus group discussions, diverse English proficiency levels were identified among participants, highlighting the need for tailored language training programs. Communication challenges, particularly in understanding technical terminology and navigating cultural differences, underscore the importance of targeted language instruction and cross-cultural training initiatives. Aligning with International Maritime Organization's Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW), the study emphasizes the significance of linguistic competence and cultural awareness in ensuring safety and efficiency within maritime crews. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating language training initiatives into maritime education curricula and fostering a culture of inclusivity and professionalism within the maritime industry.*

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| *Keywords : Maritime education, Linguistic challenges, Cultural diversity, English proficiency, International standards* |

1. **INTRODUCTION**

Maritime education stands at the crossroads of globalization, where the convergence of cultural and linguistic diversities intersects with the imperative of standardized training and certification (House & Saeed, 2016). As the maritime industry transcends national boundaries, proficiency in English, as the lingua franca of maritime communication, becomes paramount for seafarers worldwide (Thiel, 1996). This necessitates an in-depth exploration of the cultural and linguistic challenges encountered by junior cadets undergoing global maritime education, particularly in relation to their utilization of the English language. Against the backdrop of evolving international standards set forth by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), this research endeavors to unravel the intricacies inherent in navigating the cultural and linguistic dimensions of maritime education. The maritime industry, with its sprawling network of vessels traversing the seas, embodies a microcosm of cultural diversity (Plaza-Hernández et al., 2021). Vessels serve as melting pots where seafarers from diverse cultural backgrounds converge, necessitating effective communication channels to ensure safety, efficiency, and operational success. However, the linguistic diversity among crew members often presents formidable challenges, especially when English proficiency levels vary significantly. As junior cadets embark on their maritime education journey, they are confronted not only with the technical intricacies of marine engineering and navigation but also with the imperative of mastering English as the primary mode of communication at sea (Organization, 2009). This dual challenge underscores the significance of investigating the cultural and linguistic dynamics shaping the educational experiences of junior cadets in the maritime realm.

Moreover, the International Maritime Organization's Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW) establish a global framework aimed at harmonizing maritime education and training standards across nations (Trenkner, 2009). Encompassing a wide array of competencies, including language proficiency, these standards underscore the necessity of equipping seafarers with the requisite skills to operate effectively in a multicultural and multilingual maritime environment. Against this backdrop, understanding the specific challenges faced by junior cadets in meeting English language requirements assumes critical importance in enhancing the efficacy and relevance of maritime education programs. Therefore, this research sets out to elucidate the cultural and linguistic challenges encountered by junior cadets in the context of global maritime education, with a particular focus on their utilization of the English language. By delving into the lived experiences and perceptions of junior cadets from Maritime Institutes, Marine Schools, and Vocational Schools, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the multifaceted nature of linguistic and cultural adaptation within the maritime education landscape. Through a qualitative research approach, characterized by descriptive analysis techniques, this research endeavors to capture the nuances of junior cadets' experiences, shedding light on the strategies employed to surmount linguistic barriers and foster intercultural understanding.

Furthermore, by situating this inquiry within the broader discourse on international maritime education and the evolving mandates of the IMO's STCW convention, this research seeks to contribute to ongoing efforts aimed at enhancing pedagogical approaches and support mechanisms within the maritime education domain (Brenker et al., 2017; Edirisinghe et al., 2016). By offering a nuanced understanding of the cultural and linguistic dynamics at play, this research endeavors to inform policy formulation, curriculum development, and instructional practices tailored to the diverse needs of junior cadets embarking on their maritime careers.

The exploration of cultural and linguistic challenges in global maritime education represents a critical endeavor in the quest for enhanced safety, efficiency, and professionalism within the maritime industry. By unraveling the complexities inherent in linguistic diversity and cultural adaptation, this research strives to pave the way for more inclusive and effective educational practices that empower junior cadets to navigate the seas with confidence and competence.

1. **METHOD**

This study employs a qualitative research approach to explore the cultural and linguistic challenges encountered by junior cadets in the realm of global maritime education, with a specific focus on English language usage. Qualitative research is deemed appropriate for this investigation as it allows for an in-depth exploration of participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors within their natural contexts, thereby yielding rich and nuanced insights into the research phenomenon. The study involves 45 junior cadets selected from Maritime Institutes, Marine Schools, and Vocational Schools, all of whom are undergoing training in line with international maritime education standards, particularly those outlined by the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW). The inclusion of junior cadets from diverse educational backgrounds and training programs ensures a comprehensive understanding of the cultural and linguistic challenges prevalent within the global maritime education landscape.

Data collection methods include semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, both of which afford participants the opportunity to articulate their experiences, perceptions, and insights regarding the research topic (Haryono, 2020; Rachmawati, 2017). Semi-structured interviews provide a flexible yet systematic approach to data collection, allowing for probing and clarification of participants' responses. Focus group discussions, on the other hand, facilitate dynamic interactions among participants, enabling the exploration of shared experiences and divergent viewpoints within a group setting. Interviews and focus group discussions are guided by a predetermined set of open-ended questions designed to elicit participants' perspectives on various aspects of cultural and linguistic challenges in maritime education (de Água et al., 2020; Dyagileva et al., 2020). Key areas of inquiry include participants' experiences with English language proficiency, their perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime settings, and the strategies employed to navigate linguistic and cultural barriers. Additionally, participants are encouraged to reflect on their educational experiences, training methodologies, and support mechanisms available to them within their respective institutions.

Data analysis is conducted concurrently with data collection, following the principles of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis involves the systematic identification, coding, and interpretation of patterns, themes, and meanings inherent in the qualitative data (Padgett, 2016). Transcribed interviews and focus group discussions are subjected to iterative cycles of coding and categorization, guided by the research objectives and theoretical frameworks. The initial phase of data analysis involves familiarization with the data through repeated readings and immersion in the transcripts. This is followed by the generation of initial codes, wherein segments of data relevant to the research questions are systematically labeled and categorized. Through a process of constant comparison, codes are refined and organized into overarching themes and sub-themes that encapsulate the key findings emerging from the data (Wijaya, 2020).

Furthermore, data triangulation techniques are employed to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the findings. Triangulation involves the comparison of data collected through multiple sources or methods to corroborate and validate emerging themes (Weisberg, 2016). In this study, triangulation is achieved by comparing insights gleaned from interviews with those derived from focus group discussions, as well as by cross-referencing participants' perspectives with existing literature on maritime education and language proficiency.

1. **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

**3.1. Result**

**3.1.1. Multifaceted landscape of cultural and linguistic**

The findings of the research reveal a multifaceted landscape of cultural and linguistic challenges encountered by junior cadets in the domain of global maritime education. Through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions with 45 participants from Maritime Institutes, Marine Schools, and Vocational Schools, several key themes emerged, shedding light on the nuances of linguistic adaptation, cultural diversity, and educational experiences within the maritime industry.

Linguistic Proficiency Levels One of the primary findings of the research pertains to the varying levels of English language proficiency among junior cadets. Table 1 presents a breakdown of participants' self-reported English proficiency levels.

**Table 1: English Language Proficiency Levels**

| **English Proficiency Level** | **Number of Participants** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Fluent | 12 | 26.7% |
| Proficient | 18 | 40.0% |
| Intermediate | 10 | 22.2% |
| Basic | 5 | 11.1% |
| Total | 45 | 100% |

As depicted in Table 1, a significant proportion of participants (66.7%) reported being either fluent or proficient in English, while a smaller percentage indicated intermediate (22.2%) or basic (11.1%) proficiency levels. These findings underscore the diversity of linguistic abilities among junior cadets, with implications for communication effectiveness and operational efficiency onboard vessels.

Challenges in Communication The research findings also elucidate the challenges encountered by junior cadets in communicating effectively in English within the maritime environment. Table 2 delineates the primary communication challenges reported by participants.

**Table 2: Communication Challenges**

| **Communication Challenge** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Understanding technical terminology | 25 | 55.6% |
| Expressing oneself confidently | 18 | 40.0% |
| Accents and pronunciation | 15 | 33.3% |
| Cultural differences in communication | 12 | 26.7% |
| Total | 70 | 155.6% |

As evidenced in Table 2, the most prevalent communication challenge reported by participants is understanding technical terminology, with over half of the respondents (55.6%) citing this as a significant hurdle. This finding underscores the specialized nature of maritime discourse and the need for targeted language training in technical terminology. Additionally, a substantial proportion of participants expressed challenges in expressing themselves confidently (40.0%) and navigating accents and pronunciation differences (33.3%). Furthermore, cultural differences in communication styles were identified as a notable challenge by 26.7% of participants, highlighting the intersectionality of language and culture in maritime communication contexts.

Strategies for Overcoming Linguistic Barriers Despite the myriad challenges encountered, junior cadets employ various strategies to overcome linguistic barriers and enhance their English language proficiency. Table 3 outlines the strategies reported by participants.

**Table 3: Strategies for Overcoming Linguistic Barriers**

| **Strategy** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Engaging in language exchange programs | 28 | 62.2% |
| Seeking assistance from language tutors | 20 | 44.4% |
| Participating in English language courses | 15 | 33.3% |
| Practicing with peers and colleagues | 12 | 26.7% |
| Total | 75 | 166.7% |

As depicted in Table 3, the most commonly employed strategy by participants is engaging in language exchange programs (62.2%), wherein they interact with native English speakers to improve their language skills. Additionally, seeking assistance from language tutors (44.4%) and participating in English language courses (33.3%) emerged as popular strategies among junior cadets. Furthermore, practicing with peers and colleagues was reported by 26.7% of participants, highlighting the importance of collaborative learning and peer support in language acquisition efforts.

Perceptions of Cultural Diversity In addition to linguistic challenges, the research findings offer insights into junior cadets' perceptions of cultural diversity within the maritime industry. Table 4 presents participants' perspectives on the cultural composition of their maritime crews.

**Table 4: Perceptions of Cultural Diversity**

| **Perception of Cultural Diversity** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Diverse mix of nationalities | 35 | 77.8% |
| Limited diversity, primarily one nationality | 8 | 17.8% |
| Homogeneous, predominantly one nationality | 2 | 4.4% |
| Total | 45 | 100% |

As illustrated in Table 4, the majority of participants (77.8%) perceive their maritime crews as comprising a diverse mix of nationalities, reflecting the multicultural nature of the maritime industry. However, a smaller proportion of respondents (17.8%) reported limited diversity, with one nationality predominating within their crews. Additionally, a minority of participants (4.4%) described their crews as homogeneous, predominantly consisting of individuals from a single nationality. These findings underscore the varied experiences of junior cadets with regard to cultural diversity within maritime settings.

The findings of the research elucidate the intricate interplay between linguistic proficiency, cultural diversity, and educational experiences among junior cadets in global maritime education. Despite the prevalence of English language proficiency among participants, challenges in communication persist, particularly in understanding technical terminology and navigating cultural differences in communication styles. However, junior cadets employ a range of strategies to overcome these challenges, including engagement in language exchange programs, seeking assistance from language tutors, and participating in English language courses.

Furthermore, the research highlights the multicultural nature of maritime crews, with the majority of participants perceiving their crews as comprising a diverse mix of nationalities. This diversity presents both opportunities and challenges for junior cadets, necessitating the development of intercultural competencies to foster effective communication and collaboration onboard vessels. Overall, the findings underscore the importance of targeted language training, cultural sensitivity, and collaborative learning initiatives in preparing junior cadets for the complexities of the maritime industry. The findings of the research offer valuable insights into the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by junior cadets in global maritime education. Despite the prevalence of English language proficiency among participants, communication challenges persist, necessitating targeted interventions to enhance language skills and foster intercultural understanding. By elucidating the nuances of linguistic adaptation, cultural diversity, and educational experiences within the maritime industry, this research contributes to the ongoing discourse on enhancing pedagogical approaches and support mechanisms within global maritime education.

**3.1.2. Analysis of Research, Needs, and Professionalism in Maritime Education**

The second phase of findings delves deeper into the analysis of research, needs, and professionalism within the maritime education landscape, drawing upon the perspectives of junior cadets and aligning with the standards outlined by the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW). Through a comprehensive examination of participants' experiences and perceptions, this section aims to bolster the understanding of cultural and linguistic challenges in maritime education while contextualizing them within the broader framework of international maritime standards.

Alignment with International Maritime Standards Central to the analysis is the alignment of research findings with the standardized requirements set forth by the IMO-STCW convention. Table 5 presents a comparison of key research findings with relevant provisions of the STCW convention, highlighting areas of congruence and potential areas for improvement.

**Table 5: Alignment with IMO-STCW Standards**

| **Research Finding** | **Corresponding STCW Provision** |
| --- | --- |
| Varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets | STCW Code A-II/1, A-II/2, and A-III/1 require seafarers to possess English language proficiency commensurate with their duties onboard vessels. |
| Communication challenges in understanding technical terminology | STCW Code A-II/1 and A-II/2 emphasize the importance of language proficiency in understanding and applying technical terminology relevant to maritime operations. |
| Strategies for overcoming linguistic barriers | STCW Code A-III/1 and A-III/2 encourage seafarers to undertake continuous professional development, including language training, to enhance their skills and competencies. |
| Perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime crews | STCW Code A-II/3 underscores the significance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity among seafarers to promote effective teamwork and collaboration onboard vessels. |

As depicted in Table 5, the research findings align closely with the provisions of the STCW convention, affirming the relevance and applicability of the study within the context of international maritime standards. The identification of varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets underscores the importance of language proficiency requirements outlined in STCW provisions A-II/1, A-II/2, and A-III/1. Similarly, the communication challenges reported by participants resonate with the emphasis placed on language proficiency in understanding technical terminology, as articulated in STCW provisions A-II/1 and A-II/2.

Moreover, the strategies employed by junior cadets to overcome linguistic barriers align with the STCW's emphasis on continuous professional development, including language training, as delineated in provisions A-III/1 and A-III/2. Additionally, participants' perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime crews echo the STCW's recognition of the importance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity among seafarers to promote effective teamwork and collaboration onboard vessels, as stipulated in provision A-II/3.

Analysis of Research and Professionalism in Maritime Education In addition to aligning with international maritime standards, the research findings offer valuable insights into the evolving landscape of maritime education and the professional competencies required within the industry. Table 6 presents an analysis of the research findings vis-à-vis the needs and professionalism of maritime education, highlighting implications for educational practices and training methodologies.

**Table 6: Analysis of Research and Professionalism in Maritime Education**

| **Research Finding** | **Implications for Maritime Education and Professionalism** |
| --- | --- |
| Varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets | Emphasizes the importance of tailored language training programs to address diverse proficiency levels and ensure compliance with STCW language proficiency requirements. |
| Communication challenges in understanding technical terminology | Highlights the need for targeted language instruction focused on technical terminology relevant to maritime operations, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application. |
| Strategies for overcoming linguistic barriers | Advocates for the integration of language training initiatives, such as language exchange programs and peer support networks, into maritime education curricula to enhance linguistic competence and intercultural understanding. |
| Perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime crews | Underscores the importance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity among junior cadets through cross-cultural training initiatives and experiential learning opportunities, fostering a culture of inclusivity and collaboration within maritime crews. |

The analysis reveals that addressing the varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets requires a multifaceted approach encompassing tailored language training programs, experiential learning opportunities, and continuous assessment mechanisms to ensure compliance with STCW language proficiency requirements. Moreover, the identification of communication challenges underscores the need for targeted language instruction focused on technical terminology, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application to enhance operational efficiency and safety onboard vessels.

Furthermore, the strategies employed by junior cadets to overcome linguistic barriers highlight the importance of integrating language training initiatives into maritime education curricula, fostering linguistic competence, and intercultural understanding. Additionally, participants' perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime crews underscore the importance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity through cross-cultural training initiatives and experiential learning opportunities, fostering a culture of inclusivity and collaboration within maritime crews.

The second phase of findings provides a comprehensive analysis of research, needs, and professionalism within the maritime education landscape, bolstering the understanding of cultural and linguistic challenges in maritime education while contextualizing them within the broader framework of international maritime standards. By aligning with the provisions of the IMO-STCW convention and elucidating implications for educational practices and training methodologies, this analysis contributes valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on enhancing pedagogical approaches and support mechanisms within global maritime education.

**3.2. Discussion**

The findings of the research shed light on the intricate interplay between cultural and linguistic challenges, educational needs, and professionalism within the global maritime education landscape. Through an in-depth exploration of junior cadets' experiences and perceptions, this discussion aims to elucidate the implications of the research findings for maritime education practices and training methodologies while contextualizing them within the framework of international maritime standards outlined by the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW). Alignment with International Maritime Standards The alignment of research findings with the provisions of the IMO-STCW convention underscores the relevance and applicability of the study within the context of international maritime standards. The identification of varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets resonates with the STCW's emphasis on language proficiency requirements, as delineated in provisions A-II/1, A-II/2, and A-III/1. These provisions underscore the importance of ensuring that seafarers possess the requisite language skills to perform their duties effectively and safely onboard vessels. The research findings affirm the need for tailored language training programs to address diverse proficiency levels among junior cadets, thereby ensuring compliance with STCW language proficiency requirements.

Moreover, the communication challenges reported by participants align closely with the STCW's emphasis on language proficiency in understanding technical terminology, as articulated in provisions A-II/1 and A-II/2. Effective communication is essential for ensuring operational efficiency and safety onboard vessels, particularly in navigating technical complexities and coordinating complex maneuvers. The research findings underscore the importance of targeted language instruction focused on technical terminology, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application to enhance operational proficiency among junior cadets. Furthermore, the strategies employed by junior cadets to overcome linguistic barriers align with the STCW's emphasis on continuous professional development, including language training, as delineated in provisions A-III/1 and A-III/2. These provisions underscore the importance of equipping seafarers with the skills and competencies necessary to adapt to evolving linguistic and operational challenges within the maritime industry. The research findings advocate for the integration of language training initiatives into maritime education curricula, fostering linguistic competence and intercultural understanding among junior cadets.

Analysis of Research and Professionalism in Maritime Education In addition to aligning with international maritime standards, the research findings offer valuable insights into the evolving landscape of maritime education and the professional competencies required within the industry. The identification of varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets highlights the need for tailored language training programs to address diverse proficiency levels and ensure compliance with STCW language proficiency requirements. Moreover, the communication challenges reported by participants underscore the importance of targeted language instruction focused on technical terminology, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application to enhance operational proficiency among junior cadets. Furthermore, the strategies employed by junior cadets to overcome linguistic barriers underscore the importance of integrating language training initiatives into maritime education curricula, fostering linguistic competence and intercultural understanding among junior cadets. Additionally, participants' perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime crews highlight the importance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity through cross-cultural training initiatives and experiential learning opportunities, fostering a culture of inclusivity and collaboration within maritime crews.

The analysis reveals that addressing the varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets requires a multifaceted approach encompassing tailored language training programs, experiential learning opportunities, and continuous assessment mechanisms to ensure compliance with STCW language proficiency requirements (Canh, 2014). Moreover, the identification of communication challenges underscores the need for targeted language instruction focused on technical terminology, integrating theoretical knowledge with practical application to enhance operational efficiency and safety onboard vessels. Furthermore, the strategies employed by junior cadets to overcome linguistic barriers highlight the importance of integrating language training initiatives into maritime education curricula, fostering linguistic competence, and intercultural understanding. Additionally, participants' perceptions of cultural diversity within maritime crews underscore the importance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity through cross-cultural training initiatives and experiential learning opportunities, fostering a culture of inclusivity and collaboration within maritime crews (Berg et al., 2013).

The research findings offer valuable insights into the cultural and linguistic challenges, educational needs, and professionalism within the global maritime education landscape. By aligning with international maritime standards and elucidating implications for educational practices and training methodologies, this discussion contributes to the ongoing discourse on enhancing pedagogical approaches and support mechanisms within global maritime education (Nalupa, 2022). Moving forward, it is imperative for maritime education institutions to integrate targeted language training initiatives, foster cultural awareness, and promote intercultural understanding among junior cadets to prepare them effectively for the complexities of the maritime industry.

1. **CONCLUSION**

The research on cultural and linguistic challenges in global maritime education has provided valuable insights into the complexities of preparing junior cadets for successful careers in the maritime industry. Through qualitative analysis and alignment with international maritime standards, the study has illuminated the varied English proficiency levels among junior cadets and the communication challenges they face, particularly in understanding technical terminology and navigating cultural differences. These findings underscore the importance of tailored language training programs, targeted language instruction, and continuous professional development initiatives to enhance linguistic competence and intercultural understanding among junior cadets. Furthermore, the research has highlighted the significance of integrating language training initiatives into maritime education curricula, fostering linguistic proficiency and operational proficiency among aspiring seafarers. By aligning with provisions of the International Maritime Organization's Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping (STCW), the study emphasizes the imperative of ensuring that junior cadets possess the requisite language skills to meet the demands of the maritime industry. Additionally, the identification of cultural diversity within maritime crews underscores the importance of fostering cultural awareness and sensitivity through cross-cultural training initiatives and experiential learning opportunities.

Moving forward, it is essential for maritime education institutions to prioritize the development of language skills, cultural competence, and professional competencies among junior cadets to prepare them effectively for the dynamic and multicultural realities of the maritime industry. This necessitates a holistic approach to maritime education that integrates language training, cultural sensitivity training, and experiential learning opportunities into curricula, fostering a culture of inclusivity, collaboration, and professionalism within maritime crews. Moreover, the research findings have broader implications for enhancing pedagogical approaches and support mechanisms within global maritime education, contributing to ongoing efforts aimed at improving safety, efficiency, and professionalism within the maritime industry. By addressing the cultural and linguistic challenges faced by junior cadets and aligning educational practices with international maritime standards, maritime education institutions can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of the maritime workforce and ensuring the continued success and sustainability of the maritime industry on a global scale. The research underscores the importance of recognizing and addressing cultural and linguistic challenges within global maritime education, emphasizing the need for targeted interventions, continuous professional development, and a commitment to excellence in maritime education and training. By leveraging insights from this research, maritime education institutions can better prepare junior cadets for the demands of the maritime industry, fostering a new generation of skilled, culturally competent, and professionally proficient seafarers poised to navigate the seas with confidence and competence.

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