

**Needs Analysis for ESP Teachers:
Difficulties encountered by Maritime English Practitioners at
the National Maritime High School (NMHS) of Bou-Ismaïl,
Algeria.**

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Abstract:

Teaching ESP entails awareness of the workplace language requirements. This paper highlights the findings of a study investigating the challenges faced by the ESP teachers at the National Maritime High School of Bou-Ismaïl (NMHS) while dispensing ESP courses with regard to the objectives set by the International Maritime Regulations. To disclose this concern, semi-structured interview was developed to gather data, and pattern-coding was adopted to analyze data qualitatively. As result, a profile of significant Maritime English teachers' difficulties have been identified: a) Lack of teachers' training in Maritime English, b) Lack of collaborative teaching and access to out-of-book teaching aids, c) Students' demotivation.

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Furthermore, tangible solutions to alleviate these challenges were proposed: providing a teacher-training program, joint teaching approach and a syllabus based on authenticity and students' needs.

Key words: ESP teaching issues; NMHS; Maritime English; Needs Analysis

1-Introduction :

English is the Lingua Franca at sea, coined as Maritime English (ME). In other words, ME is a type of ESP being the language of communication in the maritime industry. As for the international seafarers, the mastery of English is of utmost importance for the Algerian mariners, since it is the language of communication at workplace, be it on-board, from ship to ship or from ship to shore. The personnel onboard seagoing vessels may involve multinational workers and may communicate with crew members of the same nationality, multinationals, or foreigners to the ports of entry.

In this purpose, and to prepare the sea workers to this necessity, IMO made available an international Maritime English curriculum, named the 3.17 Model Course, at the disposal of all the Maritime Schools belonging to the member countries, including NMHS of Bou Ismail, the setting of the present study.

Given the globalized context described above, the Maritime English teacher is confronted with considerably complicated and demanding teaching circumstances. He/she is required to prepare the students of all maritime branches (Deck Officers, Engineering officers, Port officers, and Chief Engineer officers) to function effectively in such a workplace that requires accurate English, cope with the multinational/multicultural maritime setting and consequently, avoid incidents- 80% of accidents at sea

are triggered by human error, mainly due to unfortunate communication, according to IMO.

In Algeria, the NMHS is the only school in charge of graduating tertiary level maritime students needing English primarily for their academic and professional careers. Generally, the problem in NMHS and Algerian Universities is that higher priority is given to ESP students' needs, while less importance is accorded to teachers' needs.

Therefore, the purpose of this article is to investigate the most common challenges confronting the ESP teachers at the National Maritime High School of Bou-Ismaïl (NMHS), Algeria. Hence, the paper at hands reports the findings of the study conducted in this regard, and attempt to provide valuable recommendations that can improve the ESP teaching profession in general and specifically, the teaching of Maritime English at ENSM within the framework of English for specific purposes (ESP).

Definition of Terms:

IMO: International Maritime Organization, a UN agency established in 1959 with its headquarters in London responsible for developing and preserving a comprehensive framework of regulations and policies for the shipping industry.

SMCP: Standard Marine Communication Phrases, includes phrases which have been developed to cover the most important safety-related fields of verbal shore-to-ship (and vice-versa), ship-to-ship and on-board communications.

STCW: the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers (STCW), sets the standards of competence for seafarers internationally (www.imo.org).

SOLAS: The international Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) is an international maritime treaty implemented by the International Maritime Organization (IMO).

VHF: Very High Frequency signals and communication messages sent from VHF Radio stations on board of ships or port positioned stations.

2-Theoretical Background:

2-1- ESP Genesis and Needs Analysis Approach:

The concept of ESP Teaching is an ever-changing area, the reason why it is defined differently by many researchers. For Hutchinson and Waters (1987), ESP is an approach and not a product to language teaching. This suggests that ESP is not concerned with the nature of the language, materials or teaching methodology but rather with the learning process to the learner's needs. Accordingly, Stevens (1988), Robinson (1991) and Dudley-Evans & St. Johns (1998) agree with the writers above in maintaining that ESP is a learner-centred approach, a goal-directed one and needs analysis is the main tool for ESP syllabus as well as for course development. For Trenker (2013), Maritime English (ME) is a branch of ESP that fits in EAP, since it is taught to Cadets (new recruits), and falls under EOP, given the fact that it is inculcated to professional mariners for certification.

Needs analysis is the preliminary stage of designing courses, syllabuses, materials and the sort of educational activities that take place (Jordan, 1997). It is in itself a process that involves target situation analysis (TSA), present situation analysis (PSA), strategy analysis (SA) and means

analysis (MA) (Jordan, 1997; Dudley- Evans and St. John, 1998). The information obtained from this process is all from the learner and about the learner; it attempts to carry out an effective syllabus design and refine the content and methods of the ESP course. Very little has been done to consider and investigate the teacher's needs. Richards (2001, p.52) advocated that NA can serve many purposes in language learning and teaching:

- To find out what language skills a learner needs in order to perform a particular role, such as sales manager, tour guide or university student;
- To help determine if an existing course adequately addresses the needs of students;
- To identify a change of direction that people in a reference group feel is important;
- To identify a gap between what students are able to do, and what they need to be able to do;
- To collect information about a particular problem experienced.

For the aim of this study, the last purpose may serve the investigation of teachers' problems encountered in preparing and teaching ESP courses at ENSM, Bou Ismail.

2.3. Maritime English Teaching Features:

As in most of the Algerian tertiary level education, English in NMHS is also taught as a mandatory module. Nonetheless, its teaching and learning processes are directed by the international standards set by the guidance of the International Maritime Organization (IMO). This guidance is articulated

through the provisions of STCW95/2010 to which the Algerian Ministry of Public Works and Transport adhered to in 1963. This means that ME teachers are called to be aware that teaching Maritime English in NMHS is not only a national context but also obeys international and globalized outlooks.

Accordingly, the importance of maritime English is vested in its use, as a *Lingua Franca* at sea by mariners from different cultures, where the safety of ships, machinery, ports and seawater is indebted to the human factor, notably in terms of performance and communication effectiveness.

To obviate communication barriers and failures at sea, IMO adopted officially English as the language of work in the maritime industry in 1979 (Trekner, 2007). This organization developed a set of Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP,1997), intended to facilitate to the seafarers conducting berthing operations, calls-responses in emergencies and VHF or satellite communication. Through STCW 1995 amended in 2010, IMO further set tightened requirements on English communication skills of mariners. It instructed the maritime schools and institutes to train METs, improve ME syllabi and focus on teaching specific vocabulary and communication along with the receptive and productive skills that consist of listening, reading, speaking and writing.

Therefore, and considering the demands of the globalized shipping industry, the Maritime English teachers at NMHS should play major roles to

find effective methods to teach EAP and EOP respectively to the Cadets and the professionals. The goal is to prepare them to embrace the national and international demands of seafaring world effectively and safely, as required by IMO conventions.

2.4. The Roles of Maritime English Teacher (MET):

Prior to delving into discussing the roles of an ESP teacher, in our case teachers of ME, the researcher finds it suitable to highlight some patent challenges and barriers confronted while attempting to teach ESP courses. Basturkmen (2010, p. 7) believes that teachers may find themselves dealing with content in a field of study of which they have little or no prior knowledge. They may discover that their learners have more knowledge and experience in the subject matter, but this situation is common to any ESP teaching situation and must not be a reason for reluctance. In other words, as maintained by Kennedy and Bolitho (1990), teachers are not supposed to dive into speciality knowledge and become an expert in it; they rather have to consider three principles: 1) a positive attitude towards the ESP content; 2) knowledge of the fundamental principles of the subject area; 3) an awareness of how much they probably already know.

The absence of pre-course training is another frequent complaint that ESP teachers raise. Swales (1985.p.214) holds it confident that lack of "specialized teacher-training" is one of the most constraining factors to the progress of ESP as a component of ELT. Though some researchers agree that the aim of ELT and ESP is to develop students' communicative skills, ESP is thought more 'real world' oriented. That is to say that teachers need specific

training to ensure effectiveness in inculcating academic skills to prospective professionals.

Emphatically, in our universities, low rate interest is given to pre-service/in-service training or even ESP teachers' needs. This situation requires in-depth research and investigation in order to profile the needs of the ESP teachers and establish remedies to the said shortcomings. In other times, teachers relate problems to the low motivation of students or their unawareness of the English language importance in their studies and future employment. Time schedule (generally in the afternoon time) and time volume or the number of hours allotted to English sessions in a year (2 hours a week maximum) are pieces of evidence for the prominence of subject matter modules on the English module. This means that the latter is considered as a second in the rank, as it is the case in NMHS as declared by the METs participating in this research work.

From a realistic point of view, the exceptionality of ESP teaching imposes on the ESP Teacher specific roles. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) prefer to use the term "practitioner" rather than "teacher" because for them ESP work involves teaching and more. For them, the responsibility of the ESP practitioner has involved five roles: A teacher, a course designer, material provider, researcher, collaborator, and evaluator. In line with Harmer's stance (2001), we may conclude that the ESP practitioner's general training includes training in the language and the content area of his/her learners' specialty.

3-Methodology

To verify the extent of the above provisions, the researcher reviewed the documents in the Research Works Database of NMHS, arranged interviews with the Vice Director in Charge of Pedagogy of the school and then with the Head of the Maritime Industry Directorate at the Ministry of Transportation and Public Works. The investigation, hence, revealed that no formal research has been conducted on needs analysis, neither for students nor for ESP teachers' needs. Truly, the respondents agreed that the educational needs and learning objectives are determined by the International 3.17 Model Course for the students, and the MET's training requirements are portrayed in the STCW 1995 (amended in 2010). Both are established by IMO authority for the globalized and unified mariners' standards, howbeit, the following two problems have come to the surface:

- Despite the provisions of STCW 1995, amended in 2010 and entered into force in 2012 (Trenker and Cole, 2016), which specifies ME instructors training and profiling, the needs of ME instructors have never been addressed.
- Lack of teaching documentation, except for the IMO model course 3.17: a curriculum, which consists of general guidelines of lesson plans on which the heads of administration and language department rely to select material content, disregarding learners' needs and preferences. This eventually leads to a mismatch between the ME courses and the students' real needs and thus cause demotivation, disinterest inflicting a decline in the didactic quality;

Departing from this perspective, this study concerns itself with the first problem, in an attempt to profile the challenges and difficulties confronting the ME instructors at NMHS and, finally, provide valuable

recommendations that can improve the ESP teaching profession in general, and specifically, the teaching of Maritime English.

3.1. Research questions:

The study at hand is explorative and descriptive; its central objective was to identify the difficulties met by the METs while teaching ME in NMHS, in relation to teaching basic language skills and vocabulary. To clarify the study, answers were sought to the following research question:

- What are the opinions of the Maritime English teachers about the current ESP curriculum in NMHS: IMO Model course 3.17?
- What are the difficulties faced by the Maritime English teachers related to ME teaching?

The first research question is meant to gather information about the relevance and utility of the international curriculum, furnished by IMO and its contribution to the Maritime English teaching process held by the ESP teachers in NMHS of Bou Ismail.

The second question is intended to investigate the tangible issues and difficulties confronted by the ESP teachers while teaching Maritime English to Cadets and professionals, as well as to compare them to the difficulties mentioned in the literature.

3.2. Participants

The respondents that contributed to the insights of this study comprise three (03) non-native EFL teachers and the Vice Director in Charge of Pedagogy working in NMHS. They have consented to participate voluntarily and wished to receive feedback on the findings. The

qualifications of the METs range from Bachelor to Master degrees. 02 of these teachers were females while 01 was male. 02 teachers were full time and 01 was part-time. Their teaching experience ranged from 01 year to 14 years, yet no one received training prior to joining the course.

3.3. The context of the study

The setting for the present study was the English Language Department at National Maritime High School (NMHS) situated in Tipaza, Algeria, the only tertiary level training and education institution under the auspice of the Ministry of Transportation and infrastructure. NMHS is accredited by IMO and follows the language teaching system provided by the latter called the IMO Model Course 3.17. The purpose of this course is to prepare the Deck Officer Students and the Engineering students to become effective English users at the international standards set by IMO in accordance with the STCW95 convention in which English is the international language of mariners and shore workers. This program is taught in two major phases.

A preparatory General English Intensive Course is delivered during the first four (04) weeks, as the first phase, followed by the Maritime Specialized Course during the rest of two years of academic studies. After graduating as Merchant Marine Engineer Deck Officers or the Merchant Marine Engineering Officers, the graduates join the sailing workforce as Cadets for 18 months to come back to the mother school for certification in a specific code of communication called Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), taught in EOP approach, that qualifies them as professional to be recruited in national or international merchant marine companies. ESP teachers, therefore, are confronted with EAP and EOP

teaching systems where they commonly face specific administrative and methodological issues.

3.4. Instruments and Data Analysis

Given the number and the status of the respondents, the researcher used a semi-structured interview as the research instrument to conduct this study. Interviews permit to investigate opinions and views of the participants (Dorneyi, 2007).

The interview of this study included five separate sections, with 25 open-ended questions in total. The first sections comprised a set of questions about the general opinions of the teachers concerning the current 3.17 Course. The other four sections dealt with questions targeting the opinions and views of the respondent teachers about the challenges facing them while teaching the four skills, the specific vocabulary and students' motivation. The interviews were held in the teachers' offices, audio-taped and transcribed after seeking their consent.

Pattern coding was employed in the analysis of the data gathered through interviews. The process involved data reduction, selection and simplification. Qualitative data analysis software Nvivo8 (2008) was used to organize data, generate ideas and percepts for coding as the analysis proceeds.

4-Findings

Adopting the explorative and interpretive research paradigms, ESP teachers' difficulties have been investigated in relation to their perceptions.

The results were analyzed according to the themes that emerged from the NVivo 8 analysis. These themes highlighted the teachers' challenges related to the headings below and supported by narratives from the respondents' answers:

1. The current program- 3.17 Model Course;
2. Students' Learning Motivation;
3. teachers' training in Maritime English;
4. Lack of collaborative teaching and access to out-of –book-teaching aids.

4.1. Insights of the METs about the current program- 3.17 Model Course;

Seeking the insights and views of the teachers and the Director in charge of Pedagogy related to the current program adopted by NMHS, answers came to converge on some important codes, namely: the approach, the objectives of the course, the relevance of the content and teaching activities.

a. The approach of the course:

For the overall approach of the course, all the respondents agreed that the Communicative Language Teaching is adopted through the course and, as stated by one of the teachers, it is stated in IMO prelude to the course as well as in the STCW95 convention in the section devoted to English language teaching.

To achieve competent mariners, the communicative approach should be employed in the academic preparation of ME courses. Yet, pedagogical

*communicative resources indicated by IMO should be put under disposal.
(Teacher 'A')*

*Considering the multicultural context of mariners, communicative approach and cultural awareness are the key to get competent seafarers.
(Teacher 'B')*

b. The objectives of the course:

75% of the participants answered that the goal of the course is to form competent seafarers in using English in their work, communicating effectively with native and non-native speakers while conducting calls and transactions and mastering language skills and specific vocabulary. In addition to becoming accurate and fluent mariners, 25 % of them stressed that one of the important objectives is mastering Maritime English in order to ensure the safety of lives, ships, cargoes and sea waters.

*We are here to make sure that the objectives set by IMO are achieved, particularly in helping our cadets to develop their language skills, practice and communicate accurately and fluently before they join the workplace.
(Teacher 'A')*

*In addition to teaching maritime English communication skills, the IMO course aims also at building awareness on safety at sea and shores.
(Teacher 'D').*

c. Relevance of the content to the domain of specialty:

The analysis of the script revealed that teachers have sharp opinions about the relevance of the course. The school teaches EAP to two specialties: Deck officer and engineering officers, and teaches EOP to Chief Engineer

officers and SMCP certification candidates. The course presents real general guidelines tiered into two levels (1 and 2), and never sets how to classify students according to the latter levels. Also, 100% of the teachers complained that most of the specific knowledge included in the program does not specify topic to either of the specialties.

I really don't understand why the course is not separated according to the main specialties. This also results into not being able to finish the program during the year. This is without mentioning the minimum time accorded to English teaching in the curriculum. It is only one single session a week. (Teacher 'D')

Teacher 'C' discussed the data in maritime field is continuously changing. He suggested taking part in conferences and seminars would be very beneficial in updating content and knowledge.

d. Teaching activities:

The majority of the participants believed that the activities contained in the program are targeting and straight to the point but not all of them are applicable due to the lack of appropriate teaching aids, the number of students in the classroom and the high disparity between the English levels of the students.

50% of the respondents stressed the importance of using simulators and tailoring activities to the needs of the cadets, a principle of ESP teaching.

4.2. Students' Motivation

Students learning motivation is an important factor in teaching and learning interaction. Two of the teachers admitted that their students are not

motivated at all, whereas the two others declared some of their students are demotivated. The analysis of the interview exposed some reasons for this problem. One of the reasons is that some of the students have a good English level, and the specific knowledge and vocabulary used in teaching EFL seemed very basic and familiar to a point that teaching them is useless. Unlike the EOP students, the EAP students are not aware of the importance of Maritime English in their career and recruitment. They instead favor the modules of specialty. To some extent, some of the students present affective barriers and anxiety while using English in front of their peers. Perhaps, they fear mistakes in speaking.

The majority of my students worry about the mistakes and errors mainly in speaking sessions. They lack courage; some of them are shy and have psychological barriers (Teacher 'A').

One of the teachers acknowledged that it is probably because she is new to the ESP field.

I continuously feel stressed while in front of the students who know more than I do in the maritime domain. I spend hours to prepare my courses and the challenge is the specific vocabulary, let alone the general aspect of the program guidelines (Teacher 'C').

4.3. Lack of teachers' training in Maritime English;

Lack of training seemed to be a serious issue for all the teachers. Given the fact that Maritime English is a restricted language and has very specific jargon, all the teachers voiced their concerns concerning lack of training and onboard opportunities.

I most of the time rely on YouTube videos to understand the lesson before I prepare the teaching content. (Teacher 'A').

I wish I could get the chance to participate in any ESP or Maritime English pre-training before joining the NMHS. (Teacher 'C').

The researcher wonders if the administrators are aware of these concerns while the improvement of teachers' condition would undeniably serve the benefit of the students and consequently the merchant marine economical setting.

4.4. Lack of collaborative teaching and access to out-of –book-teaching aids

All the four teachers stated they never have been worked or coordinated with the content teachers. Half of them, however, thought that there is strong agreement regarding the necessity of collaboration with the subject matter teachers, however, in practice it never took place.

No one can deny the fact that coordinating with the teachers of other maritime modules, both in terms of specific content and in the topic orders. Sometime I teach topics of navigation ahead of content teachers and vice versa occurs in some other times. (Teacher 'A')

One of the four teachers mentioned that the students can be viewed as collaborators.

With some of the students, I take their collaborations as positive and helpful. They help in explaining context of the activities included in the 3.17 course and pay attention to learn the English items. Other students on the

other hand, feel demotivated when they notice that I am not well aware of the context which drives them to become silent learners. This is a negative point for me. (Teacher 'D').

5-Recommendations of the Results

Although some of the common problems such as class size, standardization in ME testing at the international level, and time frame of the English classes are not posed by the participating teachers, yet the challenges revealed in this study are of utmost importance in ESP teaching and learning context. The four problems advocated above are discussed in this section followed by some proposed solutions to alleviate their impact on the quality of maritime English teaching in NMHS.

First and foremost, before addressing impressions on the content, it is worth to note that the ESP teachers are not subject specialist, but they have to be aware that they are not supposed to be so. All they need is to hold positive stance towards teaching the English content and not teaching the subject specific content in English. Also, I view it very important to apply the needs analysis principles in preparing the lessons and tailoring the classroom practices to the real needs of the learners. I agree that the IMO 3.17 is meant for international students and global mariners, yet the language needs of the Algerian students are certainly different from other national students due to their linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Maritime English teachers have to prioritize the speaking and listening skills over the others. They should take a step back and let the learners do the bulk of the activities and talk. Speech accuracy is the one needed in emergencies and port berthing. The use of multimedia means while teaching vocabulary is also suggested to integrate meaning with maritime context and situations. This requires the use of

quality teaching aids such as simulators and language laboratories. In EOP classes, meant for certification in Standard Maritime Communication Phrases (SMCP), teachers should avoid rote learning of the SMCP expressions. Rather, they must provide contextual situations for the phrases, such as of navigation, safety, and cargo handling.

As far as students' motivation is concerned, the teachers should not be sure and conclusive that the reasons are restricted to their level of English proficiency and lack of awareness regarding the importance of English in their career. I suggest that teachers should conduct class observation and action research to spot the factual reasons pertaining to motivation problems. Once done, research should be conducted as to how to attract students' attention.

The use of IT and encouraging the use of phone applications in homework is a strong way of involving the actual generation of students, use their social media addiction and energy as well as foster their autonomy in learning. Teachers also should reflect on their teaching strategies and social interaction with the students. Adult learners are responsible for their learning decision, and care should be accorded to their stance and positions while expressing their needs. Furthermore, ME teachers should diversify the teaching methods and techniques in order to touch on all the learning styles of the learners and avoid monotony that is a motivation killer. Peer and group discussions, role play and drills are effective technique for an eclectic teacher. Resorting to real life resources such as IMO website, magazines from merchant marine companies, maritime newspapers, port documents, IMO university conference publications and maritime news is also powerful in rendering the classroom a sphere of practice of workplace practices.

Teachers also have to involve introvert students and provide real situation activities to simulate real workplace environment.

Teachers' training is a major common need expressed by most of the ESP teachers. Although modules or even specialties are being held in some of the universities, as in the case of the University of Bejaia, the graduated teachers are not specifically prepared to teach in a single specific domain, i.e. English for computing, for mariners or for doctors...etc. That is why the institution that recruits the ESP teacher should provide a theoretical and practical training in specific language and context of its use.

Providing teachers' training appears to be the mission of administrators, which suggests further research to propose recommendations on how and where to conduct such Maritime English teaching courses.

With regard to collaborative teaching and access to out-of –book-teaching aids are two sides of the same coin. Content teachers, mainly of navigation and communication, are well aware of the crucial situations where communication in English is required to be accurate and intelligible as far as safety and cost are concerned. This is one of the reasons why collaboration with content teachers matters. In the same context, it is suitable to check with the special subject teachers about the lesson orders. If a topic is discussed ahead by the content teacher, this would motivate the students to participate in discussing it in the English class. English teachers should attend, in their free time, the practical sessions with the technical teachers such in navigation, safety and emergency communication, machine and engine manipulation and cargo handling operations. This might help in bringing authentic and real life situations into the classroom. The principle

of Krashen's (i+1) should be observed by the teachers in organizing the classroom activities brought from the technical teachers in order to create a smooth transition from a lesson to another and create a relaxed and confident learning environment. Therefore, and considering the multi-roles of the ESP teacher, the content of the ME course must be accorded considerable time for planning, and coordination with the content teachers is very important.

6- **Conclusion:**

The results of this study have discovered ESP teaching issues such as the relevance of the IMO course content, students' motivation, teachers' training in Maritime English, lack of collaborative teaching and access to out-of-book-teaching aids. Though these elements are analyzed qualitatively, yet they represent serious issues to ME teachers in NMHS and have a significant influence on their performance and ESP learning. These factors, in the view of the researcher, require more attention on the part of the teachers and the administrators. ESP teachers have to work on enhancing students' motivation and the NMHS administrators/ministry of transportation and infrastructure should provide teachers pre-training courses. On the other side, students' needs would be addressed more effectively if the ESP teachers collaborate hand in hand with the subject matter teachers to create a real-life learning environment for the students and a clear understanding of the technical content on the part of English teachers. Moreover, authentic teaching aids and resources are highly expressed by the participating teachers in their quest for simulating workplace activities in their English sessions.

Finally, the results reported in this study are subjective and the four uncovered factors are analyzed qualitatively. This might make them not generalizable for being limited to the opinions expressed by the NMHS English teachers. Thus, a qualitative approach might be employed to gain deeper insight into the same issues. Also, students' participation can provide valuable information on ESP teaching in NMHS.

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