

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
EDUCATION, PSYCHOLOGY
AND COUNSELLING
(IJEPC)

<https://gaexcellence.com/ijepc>



FROM PHRASE MEMORISATION TO COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE: A GENRE-BASED MODEL FOR SMCP TRAINING

Nurul Nadia Ansar Ahmad Khan ^{1*}, Normaizura Mat Rom ²

¹ Centre for Core Studies, Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra (KIAS), Malaysia

 nadia@kias.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-8567-3944>

² Centre for Liberal Studies/Education, Akademi Laut Malaysia, Malaysia

 normaizura@alam.edu.my

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-8895-4908>

*Corresponding Author

Article Info:

Article history:

Received date: 29.01.2026

Revised date: 15.02.2026

Accepted date: 22.04.2026

Published date: 09.06.2026

To cite this document:

Khan, N. N. A. A., & Mat Rom, N. (2026). From Phrase Memorisation to Communicative Competence: A Genre-Based Model for SMCP Training. *International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counselling*, 11(63), 180-194.

Abstract:

The International Maritime Organization (IMO) introduced the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) to standardise communication and enhance safety in multilingual maritime environments. Despite its institutional importance, empirical studies consistently demonstrate a divergence between prescribed SMCP structures and actual communicative practices during shipboard and VHF radio interactions. Seafarers frequently adapt, simplify, or reorganise standard phrases in response to operational constraints, suggesting that current instructional approaches may inadequately prepare learners for real-world communication demands. This paper addresses this gap by reconceptualising SMCP as a genre-based communicative practice rather than a fixed set of linguistic forms. Drawing on genre theory, communicative competence, and the transactional model of communication, the study proposes an integrated pedagogical framework that emphasises both structural awareness and strategic language use. The model outlines a series of pedagogical stages designed to develop learners' ability to interpret, construct, and adapt SMCP in authentic maritime contexts. By shifting the focus from memorisation to communicative performance, this study contributes to the advancement of Maritime English pedagogy and offers practical implications for training institutions aiming to align language instruction with the realities of professional maritime communication.

DOI: 10.35631/IJEPC.1163010

Keywords:

Communicative Competence, ESP, Maritime English, Standard Marine Communication Phrases



© The authors (2026). This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY NC) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. For commercial re-use, please contact ijepec@gaexcellence.com.

Introduction

Effective communication is fundamental to safety, operational efficiency, and coordination in the global maritime industry. Given the multilingual and multicultural composition of ship crews, miscommunication is widely recognized as a contributing factor to maritime incidents and operational risks (Boström, 2020; Ziarati et al., 2009). To mitigate these challenges, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) established English as the working language of the maritime domain and introduced the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP), a standardized system designed to enhance clarity, accuracy, and mutual understanding in shipboard and ship-to-shore communication (IMO, 2001). SMCP provides structured phraseology, message markers, and conventional communication sequences, especially in safety-critical situations such as distress alerts, navigational warnings, and emergency coordination (Pritchard, 2003; Trenkner, Cole, & Pritchard, 2007). Adhering to SMCP aims to improve mutual understanding among seafarers from different linguistic backgrounds, thereby promoting safer maritime operations. Consequently, it has become a key part of Maritime English training and is incorporated into international frameworks such as the Standards of Training, Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) Convention and the IMO Model Course 3.17. These frameworks highlight the importance of standardization in reducing ambiguity and improving communication effectiveness across diverse linguistic backgrounds (IMO, 2015). However, despite their widespread institutional adoption, a growing body of research shows that actual maritime communication often does not strictly follow SMCP conventions. Studies of VHF radio interactions reveal that seafarers frequently modify standard phraseology by omitting, reordering, or simplifying message components, especially under conditions of time pressure, environmental noise, and operational urgency (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010; Johnson, 1994; Boström, 2020). These variations are most noticeable during routine exchanges but also occur during high-pressure situations requiring intense focus.

Such deviations are not necessarily indicative of linguistic deficiency; rather, they often reflect adaptive communication strategies that prioritize clarity and efficiency in dynamic workplace settings. Maritime discourse research shows that seafarers tend to prioritize speed, clarity, and task completion over strict adherence to official forms, especially in the unpredictable maritime environment (Demydenko, 2012; Trenkner et al., 2007). This gap between prescribed standards and actual communication highlights a key limitation of current SMCP teaching methods.

Traditional teaching methods often prioritize memorization, accuracy, and procedural compliance, treating SMCP as a fixed set of phrases to be reproduced rather than as a functional communicative system (Pritchard, 2003). While these approaches support standardization, they may inadequately prepare learners to navigate interactional complexity, negotiate meaning, and

respond strategically in authentic maritime situations. In English for Specific Purposes (ESP), there has been a growing shift toward viewing language as social action embedded in professional contexts (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Swales, 1990). In particular, genre-based pedagogy emphasizes the relationship among communicative purpose, discourse structure, and situational context. From this perspective, maritime communication—especially VHF radio exchanges—can be understood as a specialized professional genre characterized by conventionalized interaction patterns designed to achieve specific operational goals (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010).

Despite these theoretical developments, there remains a lack of pedagogical models that explicitly integrate genre-based insights with communicative competence in SMCP instruction. Current approaches have not yet fully addressed how learners can be trained to use standardized language flexibly while maintaining clarity, efficiency, and safety in real-world maritime communication (Canale & Swain, 1980; DeFleur et al., 2005). Therefore, this paper aims to reconceptualize SMCP instruction by proposing a genre-integrated pedagogical model that links standardization to practical communication. Specifically, this study seeks to:

- i. reframe SMCP as a genre-based communicative system rather than a collection of isolated phrases;
- ii. integrate genre theory, communicative competence, and transactional communication into a unified instructional framework; and
- iii. propose a staged pedagogical model that supports learners in developing both structural awareness and strategic communicative skills in maritime contexts.

By aligning Maritime English pedagogy more closely with authentic communication practices, this study contributes to the ongoing development of more effective, context-sensitive approaches to SMCP training.

Literature Review

Maritime English and the Pedagogical Significance of SMCP

Maritime English is a specialized branch of English for Specific Purposes that facilitates communication in navigation, engine operations, cargo handling, emergency response, and ship-to-shore coordination. Unlike general English, it is primarily functional and operational, as communication at sea directly relates to safety, efficiency, and regulatory compliance (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Trenkner, 2007). In the modern shipping industry, where multinational crews and cross-border operations are standard, language is not just a tool for interaction but a vital part of professional performance.

Within this domain, the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) play a central role. Developed by the International Maritime Organization, SMCP aims to reduce ambiguity and improve mutual understanding in routine and emergency communications (IMO, 2001). Its strength lies in its standardized phraseology, message markers, and predictable discourse patterns, especially in VHF radio communication and other safety-critical exchanges. For this reason, SMCP has long been integrated into Maritime English instruction and remains closely linked to competence-based international training requirements (Pritchard, 2003). However, the pedagogical importance of SMCP goes beyond teaching fixed phrases. It also highlights a broader educational challenge in Maritime English: how to prepare learners not only to

reproduce standard forms correctly but also to use them appropriately under operational pressure. This issue is particularly vital because maritime communication rarely occurs in ideal classroom conditions. Instead, it takes place in environments shaped by noise, urgency, incomplete information, hierarchical relationships, and multilingual interaction. In this context, SMCP should not be seen solely as a fixed linguistic code but as part of a larger communicative system that must be taught in relation to real-world professional practice.

Prescribed Standards and Actual Maritime Communication

Although SMCP has been widely institutionalized, research consistently shows that actual shipboard communication does not always align with the ideal forms outlined in official guidelines. Studies of maritime discourse and VHF radio communication indicate that seafarers often shorten, reorder, omit, or adapt standard phraseology in real interactions (Johnson, 1994; Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). Recent research confirms that deviations from SMCP are systematic and context-dependent rather than random. For example, Boström (2020) compared ship-to-ship communication with SMCP standards and observed frequent omissions, simplifications, and reordering, especially during routine exchanges. Similar patterns emerge in studies of live maritime discourse, where seafarers prioritize speed, clarity, and task completion over strict adherence to procedures (Demydenko, 2012; Trenkner et al., 2007). Importantly, these deviations should not be viewed solely as communicative failures or linguistic incompetence. Instead, they reflect adaptive strategies used by experienced practitioners under cognitive load, environmental noise, and operational stress. In this sense, real-world maritime communication often involves balancing standardized forms with situational demands, implying that strict phrase-level compliance may not always be practical or desirable (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010; Ziarati et al., 2009).

Limitations of Phrase-Based and Memorization-Oriented Instruction

Despite advances in ESP pedagogy, SMCP instruction in many training contexts still tends to emphasize memorization, repetition, and phrase reproduction (Pritchard, 2003). Although this approach promotes standardization and helps learners become familiar with maritime terminology, it has been criticized for treating SMCP as isolated linguistic units rather than practical tools for real-world communication. Relying solely on phrase-based instruction may leave learners to manage interactional aspects such as turn-taking, clarification, repair strategies, and prioritizing information in real-time conversations. In particular, learners primarily trained through memorization may find it challenging to adapt SMCP flexibly in unexpected situations or under stress, which is typical in maritime contexts (Demydenko, 2012).

Recent pedagogical discussions have increasingly highlighted the value of more contextualized and learner-engaged approaches, including simulation, scenario-based tasks, and other forms of communicative training (Rosedi, 2024). These developments suggest that SMCP instruction should move beyond the transmission of standard phrases and instead focus on helping learners use those phrases meaningfully in context. However, what remains insufficiently developed is a pedagogical model that systematically links the structural features of SMCP with the communicative demands of authentic maritime interaction.

Genre-Based Pedagogy in ESP and Maritime Contexts

Genre-based pedagogy provides a robust theoretical framework for addressing the limitations of phrase-focused instruction. In ESP, genre is understood as a socially recognized communicative event defined by shared goals, conventional structures, and disciplinary norms (Swales, 1990). This approach emphasizes not only linguistic forms but also communicative function, audience, and context. In maritime communication, VHF radio exchanges constitute a highly regulated professional genre with identifiable moves and steps, particularly in routine messages and special-purpose communication such as distress alerts and acknowledgments (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). Genre analysis has effectively shown how maritime communication is organized and how meaning is sequentially constructed to achieve operational goals.

From a pedagogical perspective, genre awareness helps learners recognize interactional patterns, anticipate communicative expectations, and understand why confident linguistic choices are made in specific contexts. Research in ESP has shown that genre-based instruction can improve learners' ability to transfer language knowledge to authentic professional tasks, making it especially suitable for high-stakes occupational settings such as maritime communication (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Swales, 2004).

Communicative Competence in High-Stakes Professional Communication

While understanding genre helps learners grasp discourse structures, successful maritime communication also depends on communicative competence. Canale and Swain's (1980) framework identifies this competence as comprising grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse, and strategic elements. In maritime settings, strategic competence is essential, as seafarers must manage misunderstandings, resolve communication issues, and emphasize vital information within operational constraints. High-stakes professional communication, such as VHF radio interactions during emergencies, requires quick linguistic decisions while ensuring clarity and adherence to procedures. The transactional model emphasizes the interactive, reciprocal nature of such exchanges, in which meaning is constantly negotiated through feedback and role-taking (DeFleur et al., 2005). Together, these perspectives indicate that effective SMCP instruction should combine genre knowledge with communicative and strategic skills, enabling learners to use standardized language correctly while adapting to real-world communication challenges.

The reviewed literature reveals a conflict between the push for standardization in SMCP and the practical communication needs of maritime professionals. While SMCP provides a crucial safety communication framework, studies show that seafarers frequently deviate from these standards in practice. Traditional teaching methods have focused mainly on memorization, often neglecting the importance of communicative flexibility and genre understanding. This discrepancy underscores the need for a teaching approach that views SMCP as a practical, communicative genre, blending standardization with effective communication skills. Despite growing awareness of this issue, there remains a shortage of instructional models that explicitly integrate genre analysis into SMCP instruction. To address this gap, this paper introduces a genre-based pedagogical model designed to improve Maritime English education by aligning it more closely with real-world communication practices.

Taken together, the literature points to a persistent tension in Maritime English pedagogy. On the one hand, SMCP is essential because it provides a standardized linguistic framework for reducing ambiguity in safety-critical environments. On the other hand, research on authentic

maritime communication demonstrates that actual practice is more flexible, adaptive, and interactional than a purely phrase-based model would suggest. This tension reveals a pedagogical problem: training has often privileged memorization and procedural compliance, whereas real communication at sea requires discourse awareness, strategic judgement, and contextual responsiveness.

Existing scholarship has helped illuminate important aspects of this problem. Studies of maritime discourse have shown how communication deviates from prescribed forms in practice. Work in ESP and genre theory has demonstrated the value of analyzing discourse in relation to communicative purpose and professional context. Research on communicative competence has further highlighted the importance of strategic and discourse-related abilities in high-risk communication. However, these strands of scholarship have often remained conceptually parallel rather than pedagogically integrated.

The key gap, therefore, is not simply the lack of discussion about SMCP, genre, or communicative competence individually. Rather, it is the limited development of a pedagogical framework that systematically brings these perspectives together for Maritime English instruction. There remains a need for an instructional model that treats SMCP as both a structured professional genre and a communicative resource that must be used strategically in authentic interaction. Addressing this gap is important not only for theoretical refinement but also for improving how Maritime English is taught in training institutions. In response to this need, the present study proposes a genre-integrated pedagogical model that connects standard phraseology, discourse structure, and communicative adaptability. By doing so, it aims to move SMCP instruction beyond memorization and toward a more context-sensitive and professionally relevant form of maritime language education.

Integrated Theoretical Framework

The proposed pedagogical model is grounded in integrating three complementary theoretical perspectives: genre theory, communicative competence, and the transactional model of communication. Rather than treating these frameworks as separate analytical lenses, this study synthesizes them into a unified conceptual foundation for understanding SMCP as both a structured linguistic system and a dynamic communicative practice. This integration is essential for addressing the dual nature of maritime communication, which requires adherence to standardized forms while accommodating contextual variability and interactional complexity.

Genre Theory and the Structuring of Maritime Communication

Genre theory offers a foundational framework for examining how communication is organized within professional discourse communities. Swales (1990) defines a genre as a recurring communicative event characterized by shared purposes, conventional structures, and discipline-specific expectations. These features shape not only the linguistic form of communication but also the sequencing of information and the roles of participants in an interaction. In professional settings, genres serve as cognitive and social tools that guide participants in creating and interpreting texts and interactions. Mastering a genre requires understanding not only linguistic features but also how discourse is organized to achieve specific professional objectives (Swales, 2004). From an ESP perspective, genre-based

teaching helps learners recognize communication patterns and apply them effectively in real-world situations (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

In the maritime domain, communication—particularly via VHF radio—exhibits strong genre characteristics. Routine exchanges, navigational coordination, distress alerts, and acknowledgments follow recognizable structural patterns designed to ensure operational clarity and efficiency (Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). Viewing SMCP through a genre-based lens shifts its pedagogical interpretation. Rather than being treated as a collection of isolated phrases, SMCP can be understood as a structured discourse system embedded in professional practice. This perspective helps learners recognize how meaning is constructed across sequences of interaction rather than at the level of individual sentences. Importantly, genre theory also accommodates variation, acknowledging that while conventional patterns guide communication, experienced practitioners may adapt them in response to situational demands. This flexibility is particularly relevant in maritime contexts, where operational conditions often require rapid adjustments in communication.

Communicative Competence in Maritime Contexts

While genre theory explains the structural organization of communication, communicative competence illuminates the skills needed to use language effectively within those structures. In high-stakes professional environments such as maritime operations, effective communication depends not only on linguistic accuracy but also on the ability to manage discourse, interpret context, and respond strategically. Canale and Swain's (1980) framework conceptualizes communicative competence as comprising four interrelated components: grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence. In Maritime English, all four elements are essential, though their relative importance may vary by context. Grammatical competence supports accurate use of SMCP terminology and syntactic structures, while sociolinguistic competence enables appropriate language use across hierarchical and multicultural maritime environments. Discourse competence is particularly relevant to SMCP, as it involves organizing utterances coherently across extended interactions, such as routine VHF exchanges or emergency communication sequences. Strategic competence is especially salient in high-stakes maritime communication. Seafarers must often manage communication breakdowns, request clarification, prioritize critical information, and compensate for linguistic or technical limitations under time pressure. Research in maritime discourse suggests that experienced practitioners rely heavily on strategic competence to ensure intelligibility and task completion, even when deviations from standard phraseology occur (Demydenko, 2012; Boström, 2020). From a pedagogical perspective, communicative competence underscores the need to move beyond surface-level accuracy and to train learners to use SMCP effectively in real operational conditions. This aligns with competence-based training principles embedded in international maritime education frameworks such as the STCW Convention and IMO Model Course 3.17 (IMO, 2015).

From a pedagogical standpoint, communicative competence highlights the need to move beyond accuracy-focused instruction. While adherence to SMCP standards remains important, learners must also be trained to use language flexibly and effectively in real-time interactions. This reinforces the idea that SMCP instruction should incorporate not only linguistic knowledge but also the development of practical communicative skills.

The Transactional Model of Communication

The transactional model of communication offers an additional perspective by conceptualizing communication as a dynamic, reciprocal process rather than a one-way transmission of information. In this model, participants simultaneously function as senders and receivers, continuously interpreting, responding, and adjusting their messages based on feedback and contextual cues (DeFleur et al., 2005; Foulger, 2004).

This perspective is particularly relevant to maritime communication, where interaction is inherently dialogic and depends on coordination between parties. VHF radio exchanges, for instance, involve turn-taking, confirmation, clarification, and repair sequences that collectively contribute to the construction of meaning. Communication is not complete when a message is sent; it is successful only when it is understood, acknowledged, and appropriately acted upon. The transactional model also emphasizes the influence of context on communication. In maritime environments, contextual factors include physical conditions (e.g., weather, noise), technological limitations, hierarchical relationships, and the urgency of operational tasks. These factors shape how messages are produced, interpreted, and responded to. As a result, communication cannot be fully understood without considering the interactional and situational dynamics in which it occurs (Johnson, 1994; Trenkner et al., 2007).

For pedagogy, this model underscores the importance of preparing learners for interactive communication rather than isolated message production. Training should therefore include opportunities for learners to engage in simulated exchanges, respond to feedback, and manage the flow of communication in real time. This aligns with the need to develop not only linguistic knowledge but also interactional competence.

Integration of Theoretical Perspectives

Overall, genre theory, communicative competence, and the transactional model of communication provide a solid theoretical foundation for the proposed pedagogical approach. Genre theory explains the structured nature of SMCP and VHF communication, while communicative competence emphasizes the skills needed to use SMCP effectively. The transactional model highlights the dynamic interaction inherent in maritime communication. Integrating these perspectives reframes SMCP as a genre-based communicative tool rather than merely a fixed set of phrases. This holistic approach supports a teaching method that preserves SMCP's standardization while equipping learners with the flexibility and strategic skills necessary for success in real-world maritime situations.

A Genre-Integrated Pedagogical Model for Teaching SMCP

Building on the integrated theoretical framework outlined above, this study proposes a genre-integrated pedagogical model for teaching Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP). The model is designed to bridge the gap between standardized phraseology and actual communication practices in maritime contexts by reconceptualizing SMCP as a functional, interactional, and context-sensitive communicative system. Unlike traditional instructional approaches that emphasize memorization and procedural accuracy, the proposed model foregrounds the development of discourse awareness, communicative competence, and strategic adaptability. It conceptualizes learning as a progressive process in which learners move from recognizing structured communication patterns to actively engaging in dynamic,

authentic interaction. The model is organized into five interconnected pedagogical phases that are recursive rather than strictly linear. Learners may revisit earlier phases as their understanding deepens, reflecting the iterative nature of language development in professional contexts.

Phase 1: Contextual Orientation and Genre Awareness

The first phase introduces learners to SMCP as a situated professional genre rather than a collection of isolated expressions. Instruction at this stage focuses on helping learners understand the purpose, participants, and operational contexts of maritime communication. Learners are exposed to different types of communicative situations, including routine exchanges, navigational coordination, and emergency communication (e.g., distress alerts, distress acknowledgments, urgency messages), with attention to differences in risk level, message priority, and expected interactional structure (IMO, 2001; Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). By situating SMCP within real maritime scenarios, learners begin to understand why specific message formats exist and how they contribute to safety and efficiency.

This genre awareness aligns with ESP pedagogy, which emphasizes understanding language use in relation to professional practice (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998). This foundational awareness prepares learners to move beyond surface-level phrase recall toward meaningful communicative engagement.

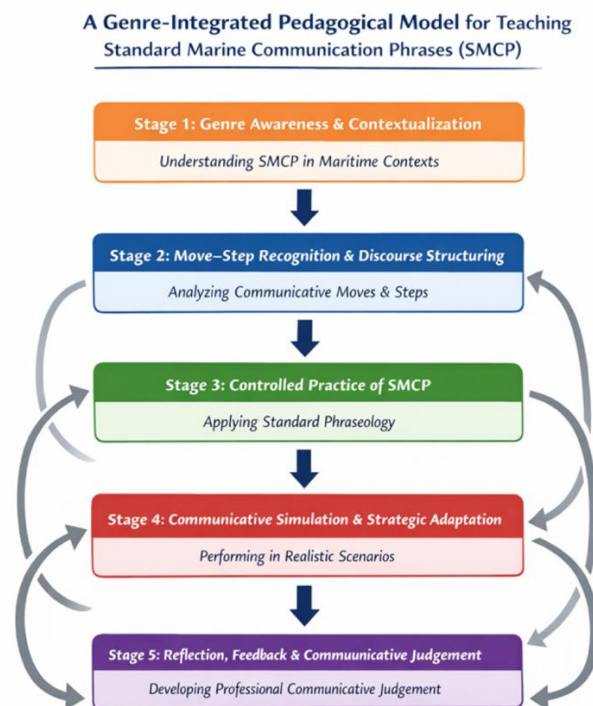


Figure 1: A Genre-Integrated Pedagogical Model for Teaching Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP)

Phase 2: Discourse Structuring and Move-Step Recognition

In the second phase, attention shifts to the internal organization of maritime communication. Drawing on genre analysis, learners are guided to examine how messages are constructed through identifiable moves and steps, each with a specific communicative function (Swales, 1990; Bocanegra-Valle, 2010).

At this stage, learners are guided to recognise:

- Initiation moves (e.g., establishing contact, identifying stations),
- Information exchange moves (e.g., stating position, nature of distress, or routine information),
- Closing moves (e.g., acknowledgments, termination of communication).

Rather than memorizing phrases in isolation, learners are trained to understand how information is sequenced and prioritized in communication. This fosters deeper awareness of how meaning is constructed across extended interaction rather than at the sentence level (Canale & Swain, 1980). Importantly, learners are also exposed to empirical findings showing that some moves or steps may be omitted or compressed in real practice, encouraging critical reflection on the relationship between prescribed standards and actual use.

Phase 3: Controlled Practice and Communicative Scaffolding

Once learners develop structural awareness, the third phase introduces guided communicative practice. At this stage, learners begin to produce SMCP-based communication within structured, supportive learning environments.

Instruction focuses on:

- accuracy of SMCP phraseology,
- correct sequencing of moves and steps,
- clarity and intelligibility of message delivery

Unlike traditional drill-based approaches, practice activities are embedded in meaningful communicative tasks, such as role-plays, scripted dialogues, and controlled simulations. These tasks allow learners to apply linguistic and discourse knowledge while still benefiting from instructional scaffolding. Feedback during this phase emphasizes not only correctness but also clarity, coherence, and communicative effectiveness. This helps learners see SMCP as a tool for achieving communication goals rather than an end in itself (Canale & Swain, 1980). This stage also aligns with the competence-based orientation of Maritime English training frameworks, such as the IMO Model Course 3.17, which emphasizes progressive skill development (IMO, 2015).

Stage 4: Communicative Simulation and Strategic Adaptation

The fourth phase marks a shift from controlled practice to authentic, interactional communication. Learners engage in simulation-based activities that replicate real-world maritime communication scenarios, including time constraints, incomplete information, and environmental challenges, mirroring the realities of VHF radio communication at sea (Johnson, 1994; Trenkner et al., 2007).

At this stage, the focus is on developing strategic competence, including the ability to:

- clarify ambiguous messages,
- manage communication breakdowns,
- prioritize critical information, and
- adapt language under pressure.

Simulations may involve multi-party communication, unexpected events, or problem-solving tasks that require learners to negotiate meaning in real time. This phase closely aligns with the transactional model of communication, as learners must actively interpret and respond to others' messages rather than simply produce pre-learned phrases (DeFleur et al., 2005). Importantly, deviations from standard SMCP forms are addressed critically. Learners are encouraged to reflect on when and why adaptation may occur while still maintaining the core principles of clarity, brevity, and safety (Boström, 2020; Demydenko, 2012).

Phase 5: Reflective Evaluation and Adaptive Communication

The final phase focuses on metacognitive development and reflective learning. Learners evaluate their own communicative performance and analyze how effectively they applied SMCP across different contexts. Reflection activities may include:

- reviewing recorded simulations,
- identifying communication strengths and weaknesses,
- analyzing instances of successful or problematic interaction, and
- discussing alternative communication strategies.

This phase encourages learners to develop adaptive expertise, enabling them to transfer their skills to novel and unpredictable situations. It reinforces the idea that effective maritime communication requires continuous adjustment and learning rather than rigid adherence to fixed forms. This reflective practice aligns with contemporary ESP pedagogy, which values learner autonomy and critical awareness in professional language use (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Summary of the Pedagogical Model

Overall, the proposed model repositions SMCP instruction from a form-focused, memorization-based approach to a context-driven, communicative, and genre-informed pedagogy. By integrating structural awareness, communicative competence, and interactional practice, the model addresses the gap between standardized language training and real-world maritime communication.

Classroom Implementation and Pedagogical Implications

The proposed genre-integrated pedagogical model has direct implications for the design and delivery of Maritime English and SMCP instruction across maritime academies, training centers, and professional development programs.

Implementing the Model in Maritime English Classrooms

The five-stage model is designed to be adaptable across instructional contexts, including pre-sea training, post-sea professional courses, and refresher programs for certified officers. Rather than replacing existing SMCP syllabi, the model can be integrated into current Maritime English curricula by shifting instructional emphasis from phrase memorization to communicative performance.

In the initial stages, instructors can introduce SMCP through scenario-based contextualization, using authentic or semi-authentic maritime situations to illustrate communicative purpose and risk level. For example, routine message exchanges and distress communications can be contrasted to highlight differences in priority, structure, and interactional expectations (IMO, 2001; Bocanegra-Valle, 2010). Such activities help learners understand why specific phraseology and message sequencing are required, rather than merely what phrases to use. Subsequent stages can be implemented through guided discourse analysis, in which learners analyze transcripts or recordings of VHF radio communication to identify communicative moves and steps. This approach aligns with genre-based pedagogy, which has been shown to support learners' ability to transfer classroom learning to professional practice (Swales, 2004; Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Simulation-Based Learning and Communicative Practice

A key implication of the model is the increased use of simulation-based learning in SMCP instruction. Communicative simulations allow learners to practice SMCP in conditions that mirror real maritime operations, including time pressure, environmental noise, and incomplete information. Research in maritime training shows that such experiential learning environments enhance learner engagement and communicative readiness (Trenkner et al., 2007; Demydenko, 2012). During simulations, instructors are encouraged to assess communicative effectiveness, intelligibility, and task completion rather than focusing solely on strict phrase-level accuracy. This does not diminish the importance of standardization; rather, it reflects the reality that effective maritime communication requires strategic adaptation within regulated frameworks (Boström, 2020). Technological tools such as VHF simulators, computer-based training platforms, and gamified learning environments may further support this stage of the model. Recent studies indicate that technology-enhanced learning can improve learner motivation and contextual understanding in SMCP instruction (Rosedi, 2024).

Assessment and Feedback Practices

The proposed model also has implications for assessment practices in Maritime English training. Traditional assessments have often focused on discrete-item tests of terminology or scripted oral examinations. While these assessments help evaluate foundational knowledge, they may not fully capture learners' ability to communicate effectively in real-world contexts.

In line with competence-based training principles, assessment under the proposed model should incorporate performance-based tasks, such as simulated VHF exchanges, role-plays, and oral scenario-based evaluations. Feedback should address both compliance with SMCP standards and strategic communicative choices, encouraging learners to reflect on the effectiveness of their language use (Canale & Swain, 1980; DeFleur et al., 2005). Reflective activities, such as post-simulation debriefings and guided self-assessment, play an essential

role in developing learners' professional communicative judgment. These practices align with contemporary ESP pedagogy, which emphasizes learner awareness and autonomy in professional language use (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998).

Implications for Instructor Training and Curriculum Design

Implementing a genre-integrated approach to SMCP instruction also requires attention to instructor preparedness. Maritime English instructors need not only familiarity with SMCP phraseology but also an understanding of genre theory, communicative competence, and the interactional dynamics of maritime communication. Professional development programs may include training in discourse analysis and communicative pedagogy. At the curriculum level, the model supports alignment with international frameworks such as the STCW Convention and IMO Model Course 3.17, which emphasize competence-based outcomes and operational relevance (IMO, 2015). By integrating genre awareness and communicative competence into SMCP instruction, curricula can better reflect the communicative demands of modern maritime operations.

Conclusion

This paper calls for a reconsideration of how Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) are taught in Maritime English programs, advocating a shift from predominantly phrase-based, memorization-oriented instruction toward a genre-inclusive, communicative approach. Drawing on genre theory, communicative competence frameworks, and the transactional communication model, it proposes a pedagogical model that better aligns SMCP instruction with the communicative demands of maritime operations.

The literature review reveals an ongoing discrepancy between the standardized language set by the International Maritime Organization and the real-world communication practices observed on VHF radio. Studies show that seafarers often modify, simplify, or reorganize SMCP elements to meet operational needs, manage cognitive load, and address urgency. Rather than viewing these adaptations as failures, this paper considers them as strategic uses of language within a highly regulated professional genre.

To address this gap, the proposed five-stage pedagogical model includes genre awareness, move-step recognition, controlled practice, communicative simulations, and reflective judgment. By viewing SMCP as a functional genre rather than a fixed code, the model upholds standardization goals while equipping learners with the communicative and strategic skills needed for maritime interactions. It emphasizes interaction, feedback, and contextual adaptation, reflecting the transactional nature of VHF radio communication.

Practically, this model provides maritime English instructors, curriculum developers, and training institutions with guidance on improving SMCP teaching within competence frameworks such as the STCW Convention and IMO Model Course 3.17. By emphasizing simulation, performance-based assessment, and reflection, it supports the development of professional judgment vital to high-stakes maritime environments. As a conceptual paper, it does not offer empirical validation but presents a theoretically grounded framework to guide future research and instruction. Future studies could evaluate the model's effectiveness across different training settings, learner profiles, and operational contexts, and explore integration with emerging technologies such as digital simulators and adaptive learning tools.

In summary, by integrating genre analysis with communicative competence, this paper contributes to ongoing discussions in Maritime English and ESP regarding effective approaches to teaching standardized professional language. The proposed framework aims to strengthen SMCP instruction and ultimately support safer and more efficient maritime communication.

-
- Acknowledgements:** The authors would like to express their sincere gratitude to Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Sultan Ismail Petra (KIAS) for providing academic support and a conducive research environment throughout the development of this conceptual paper. The authors also wish to thank Akademi Laut Malaysia (ALAM), colleagues and peers in the field of Maritime English and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for their scholarly discussions and constructive feedback, which contributed to the refinement and clarity of the proposed pedagogical model.
- Funding Statement:** This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.
- Conflict of Interest Statement:** The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper. All authors have contributed to this work and approved the final version of the manuscript for submission to the International Journal of Education, Psychology and Counselling (IJEPC)
- Ethics Statement:** This study did not involve any human participants, animals, or sensitive data requiring ethical approval. The authors confirm that the research was conducted in accordance with accepted academic integrity and ethical publishing standards.
- Author Contribution Statement:** **Nurul Nadia binti Ansar Ahmad Khan** contributed to the conceptualisation of the study, development of the theoretical framework, design of the genre-integrated pedagogical model, and overall supervision of the manuscript. She also led the drafting of the introduction, literature review, theoretical underpinnings, pedagogical model, and conclusion. **Normaizura binti Mat Rom** contributed to the critical review of literature, refinement of pedagogical and theoretical arguments, and provided scholarly input to strengthen the discussion and pedagogical implications sections. Both authors reviewed, revised, and approved the final version of the manuscript prior to submission.
-

References

- Bocanegra-Valle, A. (2010). Global markets, global challenges: The position of maritime English in today's shipping industry. *English in the European context: The EHEA challenge*, 151, 174.
- Boström, M. (2020). Mind the Gap! A quantitative comparison between ship-to-ship communication and intended communication protocol. *Safety Science*, 123, 104567.
- DeFleur, M. H., Kearney, P., Plax, T. G., & DeFleur, M. L. (Eds). (2005). *Fundamental Of human communication* (3rd ed). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Demydenko, N. (2012). Teaching Maritime English: A Linguistic Approach. *Journal of Shipping and Ocean Engineering*, 2, 249-254.
- Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (1998). *Developments in English for specific purposes*. Cambridge University Press.
- Foulger, D. (2004). Models of the communication process. Brooklyn, New Jersey, 1-13.
- Johnson, B. (1994). English in maritime radiotelephony. *World Englishes*, 13(2), 83-91.
- Pritchard, B. (2003). *Maritime Communications and IMO SMCP 2001*.
- Rosedí, S. R. B. H. M. (2024). The use of gamification in improving student engagement in learning the standard marine communication phrases (SMCP). *KMI International Journal of Maritime Affairs and Fisheries*, 16(1), 1-20.
- Swain, M., & Canale, M. (1982). *The role of grammar in a communicative approach to second language teaching and testing*.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis*. Cambridge University Press.
- Trenkner, P. (2000). Maritime English- An attempt of an imperfect definition in: *Proceedings of 2nd IMLA Workshop on Maritime English in Asia*. WOME (2A), 1-8. China.
- Trenkner, P., & Cole, C.W. (2004). Profiling the Maritime English Instructor. *IAMU Journal* 3: 85-93.
- Trenkner, P., Cole, C.W. & Pritchard, B. (2007). Maritime English instruction- ensuring instructor's competence. *IBERICA*, 14: 123-148.
- Ziarati, R., Ziarati, M., & Çalbaş, B. (2009). Improving Safety at Sea and Ports by Developing Standards for Maritime English. In *Bridge Conference*, Finland.