

Navigating the Lived Experiences of English Instructors in a Maritime College

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100800574>

Received: 10 August 2026; Accepted: 24 August 2026; Published: 12 September 2026

ABSTRACT

This qualitative phenomenological study explored the lived experiences of six language instructors teaching English at a specialized maritime institution in Negros Occidental during the Academic Year 2025–2026. Data gathered through semi-structured interviews were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's six-phase thematic analysis framework. The analysis yielded three major themes: Contextualized and Experiential English Instruction; Instructional and Institutional Challenges in Maritime Education; and Personal-Making and Teacher Identity. The findings reveal that maritime English instruction requires a fundamental shift from traditional pedagogy to immersive, hands-on strategies, such as role-playing, simulations, and the integration of nautical vocabulary to prepare future seafarers for high-stakes workplace communication and global safety standards. However, instructors face significant instructional and structural hurdles, including wide disparities in student language proficiency and baseline literacy, condensed curricula with reduced English course offerings, and rigid institutional and industry compliance standards. Despite these constraints, the study highlights deep professional resilience. Instructors continuously adapt their teaching modalities and increasingly view their roles not merely as a career, but as a purpose-driven calling and a transformative vocation. Ultimately, educators derive profound professional fulfillment from student success and personal growth. Based on these insights, the study recommends that administrators enhance faculty support systems, curriculum developers align instructional materials with evolving shipping industry realities, and future researchers expand the inquiry to include multi-institutional perspectives.

Keywords: Maritime English, language instructors, lived experiences, phenomenological study, English instruction, maritime education, teacher identity, instructional challenges, professional resilience, experiential learning

INTRODUCTION

English serves as the primary medium of communication in the global maritime industry. Due to the international nature of maritime operations, effective communication is essential for ensuring safety, operational efficiency, and collaboration among multinational crews. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) recognizes English as the standard language of communication at sea, emphasizing its role in navigation, safety procedures, and emergency response situations. Consequently, maritime educational institutions are responsible for preparing students to communicate effectively within professional maritime environments. (Hyland, 2022; IMO, 2021).

The teaching of English in maritime institutions is commonly situated within the framework of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). According to Hyland (2022), ESP focuses on developing learners' communicative competence based on their specific academic or occupational needs. In maritime education, this includes the acquisition of maritime terminology, navigational language, safety communication procedures, and other forms of professional discourse required in the maritime industry.

Maritime English instructors play a significant role in preparing students for communication demands encountered onboard vessels and within the global maritime workforce.

Unlike instructors in general English classrooms, Maritime English educators are expected to integrate language instruction with professional maritime contexts and industry-specific communication requirements. This responsibility requires instructors to continuously adapt their teaching strategies to ensure the relevance and effectiveness of classroom instruction (Čulić-Viskota, 2024).

Although previous studies have examined Maritime English instruction, maritime communication, and ESP pedagogy, limited research has explored the experiences of Maritime English instructors themselves. Much of the existing literature focuses on student outcomes, curriculum development, and communication standards, while relatively little attention has been given to how instructors experience their roles within maritime education. Understanding these experiences may provide valuable insights into instructional practices, professional development, and the realities of teaching English in specialized maritime institutions.

This study employed a phenomenological approach to explore the lived experiences of language instructors teaching in a specialized maritime institution. Through an examination of their experiences, challenges, instructional practices, and personal reflections, the study sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of Maritime English instruction and the development of professional practice within maritime education.

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Through an examination of their instructional practices, professional challenges, and experiences within the maritime educational environment, the study sought to develop a deeper understanding of Maritime English instruction and its implications for professional practice and institutional development.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed a qualitative phenomenological research design to explore the lived experiences of language instructors teaching in a specialized maritime institution in Negros Occidental. The phenomenological approach was appropriate because the study sought to understand how language instructors perceived, interpreted, and gave meaning to their experiences within the maritime education context. The inquiry focused on the participants' actual experiences, perceptions, challenges, instructional practices, adaptations, and professional reflections rather than on numerical measurement. Phenomenological research seeks to examine the common meanings and essential structures of a phenomenon as experienced by individuals who have directly encountered it (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Neubauer et al., 2019).

The participants consisted of six language instructors who were teaching English and language-related subjects in the selected specialized maritime institution. Their teaching experience ranged from three years to more than three decades, providing perspectives from instructors with varying levels of professional experience. Despite differences in their teaching backgrounds, all participants shared the responsibility of preparing future seafarers for the communication, language, and professional demands associated with maritime education. The participants were selected through purposive sampling, a non-probability sampling technique in which individuals are deliberately chosen because they possess experiences and characteristics relevant to the phenomenon under investigation (Campbell et al., 2020). The selection of six participants was considered appropriate for this phenomenological inquiry because the participants met specific inclusion criteria and possessed direct, relevant, and varied experiences of teaching English in a specialized maritime institution. The adequacy of the sample was considered in relation to the depth and relevance of the information provided by the participants rather than the number of participants alone. During the data-gathering and analysis process, the researcher monitored the interviews for the emergence of new and substantially different information. The six interviews provided sufficiently rich and recurring descriptions of the phenomenon, with the later interviews largely reinforcing the patterns already identified in the earlier narratives. Thus, the researcher considered the information obtained from the six participants sufficient to address the research objectives and develop the themes presented in the study. To qualify for participation, individuals had to be currently teaching English or language-related subjects in the selected maritime institution, have at least three years of teaching experience in the institution, voluntarily agree to participate, and be capable of providing detailed reflections regarding their

teaching experiences. These criteria ensured that the participants had direct and meaningful experiences relevant to the objectives of the study.

Sample adequacy was considered throughout the data-gathering process. Given the focused nature of the research question, the specificity of the participant group, and the participants' direct experience with Maritime English instruction, the study placed emphasis on information power and the richness of the accounts rather than on achieving a large sample. The researcher reviewed each succeeding interview to determine whether it contributed new perspectives or substantially different meanings to the phenomenon under investigation. As the interviews progressed, recurring patterns and meanings became evident across the participants' accounts, while the later interviews primarily reinforced the emerging categories and themes. On this basis, the six participants were considered sufficient to provide information-rich accounts for the phenomenological analysis.

Data were gathered through semi-structured individual interviews. An interview guide containing open-ended questions was used to explore the participants' experiences in teaching English in a maritime institution, instructional strategies and classroom practices, challenges encountered in teaching, institutional and industry influences, professional identity and motivation, coping and adaptation strategies, and significant experiences and realizations as language instructors. The semi-structured format allowed the researcher to maintain consistency across interviews while providing sufficient flexibility to ask probing and follow-up questions whenever clarification or deeper exploration of participants' responses was necessary. The interview guide was reviewed by the research adviser to ensure its clarity, relevance, and alignment with the research objectives and phenomenological design. With the participants' consent, the interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate documentation of their responses.

The data-gathering process was conducted systematically following the acquisition of formal permission from the appropriate academic authorities and the administrator of the selected maritime institution. Eligible participants were informed about the purpose, scope, and procedures of the study, as well as their rights as research participants. Written informed consent was obtained before the interviews were conducted. Interviews were scheduled at times convenient to the participants and lasted approximately 20 to 60 minutes. Following each interview, the audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and carefully reviewed to verify the accuracy of the transcripts and ensure that the intended meanings of the participants were appropriately represented. Confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process by assigning participant codes rather than using their actual names. The recordings and transcripts were stored in password-protected files, and participants were informed that the information they provided would be used solely for academic purposes and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

To establish the rigor and trustworthiness of the qualitative findings, the study considered the four criteria of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility was strengthened through repeated engagement with the interview data, careful transcription, review of participant narratives, and the use of direct quotations to support the presentation of findings. Dependability was addressed through systematic documentation of the research procedures, coding process, theme development, and analytical decisions, thereby providing a clear record of how the findings were developed. Confirmability was enhanced through reflective examination of the researcher's assumptions and potential biases and by ensuring that interpretations were grounded primarily in the participants' narratives. Transferability was supported by providing sufficient descriptions of the research setting, participants, and maritime educational context, allowing readers and future researchers to determine the applicability of the findings to similar settings.

The interview data were analyzed using thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2021) six-phase framework. The analysis began with familiarization with the data through repeated reading of the interview transcripts to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the participants' experiences. Initial codes were then generated from meaningful statements and significant expressions within the narratives. Related codes were grouped into broader categories, and potential themes were subsequently identified by examining recurring patterns and relationships across the data. The emerging themes were reviewed against the complete data set to determine their coherence and consistency. The themes were then refined, defined, and named before the final interpretation was developed. The analysis resulted in three major themes: Contextualized and Experiential English Instruction; Instructional and Institutional Challenges in Maritime Education; and Personal-Making and

Teacher Identity. The analysis also considered the participants' narratives holistically before identifying significant statements, essential meanings, codes, categories, and themes. The developed themes were continuously compared with the original narratives to ensure that the interpretations remained grounded in the participants lived experiences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Profile of the Participants

Participant	Position	Teaching Experience
1	Language Instructor	More than 3 years
2	Language Instructor	More than 10 years
3	Language Instructor	3 years
4	Language Instructor	Almost 4 years
5	Language Instructor	33 years
6	Language Instructor	11 years

The study involved six Language Instructors who were currently teaching English and language-related subjects in a specialized maritime institution. Their teaching experience ranged from three years to thirty-three years, providing diverse perspectives regarding English instruction within the maritime educational context. Participant 3 had three years of teaching experience, Participant 1 had more than three years, Participant 4 had almost four years, Participant 2 had more than ten years, Participant 6 had eleven years, and Participant 5 had the longest teaching experience at thirty-three years.

The varied professional experiences of the participants contributed rich and diverse descriptions of the phenomenon being investigated.

To protect confidentiality, participants were identified only through numerical codes, and potentially identifying personal information was excluded from the profile.

Theme 1: Contextualized And Experiential English Instruction

The first major theme that emerged from the participants' narratives is Contextualized and Experiential English Instruction. The participants consistently described English teaching in a maritime institution as a specialized practice that goes beyond traditional language instruction. Their experiences revealed that English lessons are deliberately connected to maritime communication, workplace demands, and authentic professional situations. Four subthemes emerged under this major theme: Maritime Contextualization, Authentic Communication Practice, Experiential Learning, and Student-Centered Instruction.

Subtheme 1.1 Maritime Contextualization

One recurring experience among the participants was the integration of maritime concepts, terminologies, and workplace situations into English instruction.

Participant 1 shared:

"I align my lessons with maritime subjects by incorporating terminologies, procedures and scenarios for navigation, engineering and safety training... I really take my time to study what is happening inside the ship, what safety issues they are experiencing, how they operate their navigation systems and what is really happening under the engine room."

Participant 3 likewise explained:

"Most of the time, it's vocabulary building through the context. Like introducing maritime terms, examples, starboard side, bulkhead, like that. Or using them in sentences and scenarios rather than isolated lists."

Participant 6 added:

"I contextualize lessons by incorporating maritime terms and real-life scenarios. I design activities that simulate situations that they might encounter on board."

The participants described maritime contextualization as a vital component of instruction. Language lessons were consistently linked to maritime operations, communication protocols, and shipboard practices. Through contextualization, instructors helped students understand the practical application of English within maritime professions. The participants believed that learning becomes more meaningful when students can connect classroom concepts to future workplace realities.

The findings support Hyland's (2022) assertion that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) instruction should be grounded in the communication demands of learners' future professional environments. Likewise, the International Maritime Organization (2021) emphasizes the importance of contextualized communication training that reflects authentic maritime operations and safety requirements.

The findings are consistent with the International Maritime Organization (2021), which identifies communication competence as a critical requirement for maritime safety and operational effectiveness. Similarly, Čulić-Viskotski (2024) emphasized that Maritime English instruction should expose learners to realistic communication situations that reflect professional practice.

Subtheme 1.3 Experiential Learning

Experiential learning emerged as an important instructional approach among the participants.

Participant 2 explained:

"I commonly use student-centered strategies such as role-playing, simulations, collaborative activities and experiential learning."

Participant 4 stated:

"When they say Mayday, it's not only a lesson but I let them do dramatization and roleplay."

Participant 6 shared:

"I design activities that simulate situations students may encounter onboard ships."

Experiential learning was described as an effective strategy for allowing students to actively engage in maritime-related communication situations. Through role-playing activities, simulations, dramatizations, and problem-based learning experiences, students gained practical exposure to workplace scenarios.

The participants viewed these strategies as effective in strengthening communication competence and preparing students for professional responsibilities.

The findings support Čulić-Viskotski (2024), who highlighted the value of experiential learning in Maritime English instruction. Simulations and practical communication activities provide opportunities for learners to apply language skills in realistic professional contexts while strengthening confidence and workplace readiness.

Subtheme 1.4 Student-Centered Instruction

Another prominent subtheme involved the use of student-centered instructional strategies.

Participant 2 stated:

"Learning should come from the students. The role of the students is very important in my classroom."

Participant 3 explained:

"I use active learning and differentiated instruction."

Participant 6 shared:

"Interactive and student-centered strategies include group work, role-playing and task-based activities. These strategies help students actively participate."

The participants emphasized the importance of actively engaging students in learning. Rather than relying solely on teacher-directed instruction, they encouraged collaborative learning, peer mentoring, role-playing, and task-based activities.

These approaches enabled students to participate more actively in classroom discussions and communication activities while taking greater responsibility for their own learning.

The findings reflect Hyland's (2022) view that ESP instruction should provide learners with meaningful opportunities for active participation in communication tasks. Student-centered approaches enhance engagement, interaction, and the practical application of language skills within authentic professional settings.

Collectively, the subthemes reveal that English instruction within the maritime institution is deeply rooted in contextualized and experiential pedagogical practices. Maritime contextualization, authentic communication practice, experiential learning, and student-centered instruction work together to support the development of communication competence among future maritime professionals. The participants described instructional approaches that connect classroom learning with real-world maritime communication, enabling students to develop language skills that are meaningful, practical, and professionally relevant. These findings demonstrate that English instruction within the maritime institution extends beyond traditional language teaching and serves as preparation for future workplace communication and professional performance.

Theme 2: Instructional And Institutional Challenges In Maritime Education

The second major theme that emerged from the participants' narratives is Instructional and Institutional Challenges in Maritime Education. While the participants described their teaching experiences as meaningful and rewarding, they also revealed numerous challenges encountered within the maritime educational environment.

These challenges were associated with learners' varying language abilities, educational backgrounds, curriculum limitations, and institutional expectations. Through thematic analysis, five subthemes emerged under this major theme: Learner Diversity, Communication Difficulty, Diverse Learning Backgrounds, Curriculum Constraints, and Institutional Expectations and Professional Accountability.

Subtheme 2.1 Learner Diversity

A recurring challenge among the participants was the diversity of learners in terms of English proficiency, confidence, comprehension skills, and classroom participation.

Participant 3 shared:

"One major challenge is the varying levels of students' English proficiency. Some students struggle with confidence and cannot speak well in front of the class, especially when using the English language. It takes extra effort to motivate and engage them."

Similarly, Participant 4 explained:

"Many of our students are not screened thoroughly through entrance examinations, so there are students who still struggle even with reading. If reading is already difficult for them, comprehension becomes even more challenging."

Participant 6 also stated:

“The students came from different municipalities, cities, and provinces, with varying educational backgrounds. Since this is a technical maritime school, students’ English proficiency levels are very different, which made teaching more challenging.”

The participants consistently described learner diversity as a major challenge in English instruction. Students differed significantly in language proficiency, communication skills, confidence levels, and academic preparedness. These differences affected participation, comprehension, and classroom engagement. Consequently, instructors were required to continuously modify their teaching approaches and provide additional support to accommodate the diverse needs of learners.

The experiences of the participants support Ghafar (2022), who explained that ESP instructors often encounter students with varying levels of language proficiency and academic readiness. Such diversity requires educators to adopt flexible instructional approaches and differentiated learning activities to ensure that the needs of all learners are addressed.

Subtheme 2.2 Communication Difficulty

The participants further described communication-related difficulties as one of the barriers to effective teaching and learning.

Participant 4 shared:

“It is very challenging because they have limited vocabulary when it comes to maritime terms, especially when our lesson centers on some Standard Marine Communication Phrases. It’s hard for them to understand the deepest part of the term.”

Participant 5 likewise explained:

“Many students already consider English a boring subject even though they still struggle with it. Their interest level is low, and participation is often limited.

There are also students who cannot confidently express themselves during interviews or oral recitations.”

Participant 2 emphasized:

“It is very challenging to help students realize that communication skills are essential and lifelong skills for their future careers.”

Communication difficulties were evident in students’ limited vocabulary, weak comprehension skills, lack of confidence in oral communication, and low participation in classroom activities. Participants noted that these challenges often affected students’ ability to express themselves effectively and engage in language-learning experiences. As a result, instructors were required to develop strategies that would strengthen communication competence while sustaining students’ interest and motivation.

The findings support Ghafar (2022), who identified vocabulary limitations, communication barriers, and low language proficiency as common challenges encountered in English for Specific Purposes instruction. These difficulties become more pronounced when language instruction is integrated with highly specialized terminologies such as those used within maritime communication.

Subtheme 2.3 Diverse Learning Backgrounds

Another challenge identified by the participants was the significant variation in students’ educational and socio-cultural backgrounds.

Participant 2 shared:

“Some students came from strong educational backgrounds while others came from municipalities where they still struggle to understand simple English words. The differences are very noticeable inside the classroom.”

Participant 6 similarly explained:

“The students came from different municipalities, cities, and provinces, with varying educational backgrounds.”

The participants described how students entered the institution with varying educational experiences and levels of exposure to English. Differences in prior learning experiences influenced students' communication abilities, confidence, comprehension, and classroom participation. These disparities created additional instructional demands because teachers needed to accommodate students with significantly different learning needs within the same classroom.

According to Ghafar (2022), learner diversity extends beyond language proficiency and includes differences in educational background, learning experiences, and academic preparedness. Such differences often require ESP instructors to adapt their instructional practices to ensure that learning opportunities remain accessible to all students.

Subtheme 2.4 Curriculum Constraints

The participants also discussed curriculum-related challenges that affected the implementation of English instruction.

Participant 4 explained:

“Before, there were four English subjects, but now there is only one remaining subject, so all the lessons are compressed into a single course. Because of that, the lessons become very heavy, and the time allotted to achieve all the objectives is not enough.”

The participant further stated:

“Assessment is also difficult because there is not enough time to conduct one-on-one activities or skills-based tasks.”

Curriculum constraints emerged as a significant concern among the participants. The reduction of English courses resulted in limited instructional time, compressed content, and fewer opportunities for language practice and assessment. Participants believed that these limitations affected their ability to fully develop students' communication skills and achieve all intended learning outcomes.

The findings are consistent with Ghafar (2022), who identified curriculum design, instructional time allocation, and assessment requirements as frequent challenges in specialized language instruction. Limited instructional time often creates pressure for educators who must balance content coverage with language development goals.

Subtheme 2.5 Institutional Expectations and Professional Accountability

Participants likewise discussed how institutional goals, industry standards, and regulatory requirements influenced their teaching responsibilities.

Participant 1 reflected:

“Industry standards are very high because we are talking about international standards. We are also being audited by different agencies and our own quality assurance team. It affects my teaching because I have to align my lessons with the standards being set by the industry.”

Participant 2 stated:

“The industry sets very high standards for both instructors and students. We undergo quality assurance processes and evaluations regularly.”

Participant 6 explained:

“Teaching in a maritime institution is very challenging because the school is regulated not only by CHED before, but now mainly by MARINA. We must adjust our teaching strategies and lesson plans accordingly.”

Participant 3 likewise shared:

“We are expected to produce quality leaders in the maritime industry, so I feel responsible for doing my best in imparting knowledge and guiding my students.”

The participants viewed institutional expectations and professional accountability as important realities of teaching within maritime education. Regulatory requirements, quality assurance measures, and industry standards required instructors to continuously align their lessons with professional expectations. Although these responsibilities increased instructional demands, participants recognized their importance in preparing students to meet the communication standards required by the maritime industry.

The findings support Čulić-Viskota (2024), who emphasized that Maritime English instructors operate within highly specialized and regulated educational environments. Likewise, the International Maritime Organization (2021) highlights the importance of ensuring that communication instruction aligns with international maritime standards to promote safety, professionalism, and operational competence.

Collectively, the participants' narratives reveal that teaching English in a maritime institution involves multiple instructional and institutional challenges. Learner diversity, communication difficulties, and varied educational backgrounds require instructors to continuously modify instructional strategies and provide additional support for students. Curriculum constraints further limit instructional opportunities, while institutional expectations and industry requirements increase professional responsibilities. Despite these challenges, the participants demonstrated commitment to maintaining quality instruction and preparing students for the communication demands of maritime professions. These findings suggest that English instruction within maritime education extends beyond language teaching and includes broader responsibilities related to professional accountability, educational quality, and workforce preparation.

Theme 3: Professional Personal-Making And Teacher Identity

The third major theme that emerged from the participants' narratives is Professional Personal-Making and Teacher Identity. The participants described how their experiences in a maritime institution influenced the way they viewed themselves as educators and professionals. Their narratives revealed that teaching extended beyond classroom instruction and became a source of meaning, fulfillment, growth, adaptation, and resilience.

Through continuous interactions with students, institutional expectations, and professional challenges, participants developed deeper understandings of their professional roles and identities. Five subthemes emerged under this major theme: Professional Purpose, Meaningful Teaching, Professional Fulfillment, Teacher Adaptability, and Teacher Resilience.

Subtheme 3.1 Professional Purpose

One of the most prominent realizations shared by the participants was the development of a stronger sense of purpose in teaching. Their experiences revealed that teaching had evolved from simply being a source of employment into a meaningful professional calling.

Participant 1 reflected:

“Teaching English is the reason why I am here. Before, I saw it only as a career, but now I see it as a calling and purpose, not just work.”

Similarly, Participant 3 shared:

“Teaching English, of course, before I see myself, this is just a career, but now it's a calling. And of course, this means it is now more on focusing on my purpose. So not just with a pay.”

Participant 1 further explained:

“As long as one student strives, I continue because I know that what I am teaching them is not only for their grades but for their survival and success in the maritime industry.”

The participants described teaching as a profession rooted in purpose and service. Their narratives revealed a transformation in perspective, wherein teaching was no longer viewed solely as employment but as a meaningful vocation that contributes to students' future success and development.

This sense of purpose served as a significant source of motivation and commitment within their professional lives.

The findings support Suarez and McGrath (2022), who explained that professional identity develops when educators connect their work with personal values, commitments, and professional goals. Likewise, Kim (2023) emphasized that teachers in specialized educational settings often experience identity transformation as they gain deeper understanding of their professional roles.

Subtheme 3.2 Meaningful Teaching

Participants consistently described teaching as a meaningful experience that allowed them to influence and support the lives of their students.

Participant 3 reflected:

“I realized that teaching is not just a career but a calling. It is about touching lives and making a difference.”

Participant 6 likewise shared:

“Teaching is like a very magical profession because you will discover a lot of things aside from the students. You can learn about parents, colleagues, and even your abilities as a teacher. It is very fun and it is very meaningful and purposeful at the same time.”

Participant 2 explained:

“I now see English not just as a subject but as something directly connected to safety and success. The best thing I can contribute to my students is helping them communicate properly so they can avoid mistakes and become successful in their future careers.”

The participants viewed teaching as a meaningful profession because it provided opportunities to shape students' lives and prepare them for future responsibilities.

Beyond language instruction, they perceived teaching as a means of influencing students' personal, academic, and professional growth. Their narratives highlighted education as a transformative experience that creates lasting impacts on learners.

The findings align with Creswell and Poth (2018), who explained that meaning emerges through reflection on lived experiences. Similarly, Neubauer et al. (2019) argued that individuals continuously construct meaning through experiences, and these meanings influence how they understand their identities and professional roles. Within educational contexts, meaningful teaching contributes significantly to the formation of professional identity.

Subtheme 3.3 Professional Fulfillment

Professional fulfillment emerged as another important aspect of the participants' experiences as educators.

Participant 1 recalled:

"One time, a student handed me a letter unexpectedly. It was a thanksgiving letter saying that if I had not given him a chance, he might not have continued his studies. That moment motivated me more to do my best as an English educator."

Participant 6 shared:

"I am motivated by seeing my students improve over time. There is a different feeling of fulfillment and pride when you know that you have become part of their success and helped prepare them for their future careers."

Participant 5 likewise reflected:

"Teaching is truly a noble profession. When you see your students graduate and become captains, managers, or successful professionals, you feel very proud because you became part of their growth."

The participants associated fulfillment with witnessing students' achievements, personal development, and professional success. Student appreciation, positive feedback, and evidence of growth reinforced the value of their work as educators. These experiences strengthened their commitment to teaching and provided a sense of satisfaction that extended beyond material rewards.

The findings support Suarez and McGrath (2022), who noted that teachers often derive professional fulfillment from meaningful relationships with students and from recognizing the positive impact of their educational efforts. Such experiences contribute significantly to professional commitment and teacher identity development.

Subtheme 3.4 Teacher Adaptability

Participants described adaptability as an important characteristic developed through years of teaching experience and interaction with diverse learners.

Participant 4 explained:

"Teaching here made me realize the importance of patience, understanding, and continuous learning. I also learned how to adjust to different kinds of students and situations."

Participant 6 stated:

"I have learned to be flexible in adjusting my teaching strategies based on the academic needs of our diverse students. They shaped me into a more reflective and adaptive educator."

Participant 2 likewise shared:

"Every year strengthens my capability to adjust to different kinds of students. So, I see myself as more flexible and more patient compared to when I started."

Adaptability emerged as a crucial professional quality among the participants. Their experiences required continuous adjustment of instructional strategies, learning approaches, and classroom practices in response to diverse learners and changing educational demands. Through these experiences, participants became more flexible, reflective, and responsive educators.

The findings support Kim (2023), who observed that ESP instructors continually adapt their professional identities and teaching practices in response to changing educational contexts and learners' needs. Adaptability enables educators to remain effective despite evolving professional demands.

Subtheme 3.5 Teacher Resilience

The participants also described resilience as an important factor that enabled them to overcome challenges and remain committed to the teaching profession.

Participant 3 reflected:

“During my first year of teaching, I saw teaching as a very challenging profession because of students, parents, and institutional policies. However, what keeps me going are the fulfilling moments given by my students.”

Participant 4 explained:

“I always try to maintain a positive attitude. I look at the brighter side of things because if you focus too much on the negative side, you will only become discouraged.”

Participant 2 likewise shared:

“Discouragement is part of the profession. However, I realized that success is not measured only by money but also by the number of people whose lives you have positively influenced.”

Participant 6 added:

“What keeps me going is the fulfilling moments given by our students.”

The participants acknowledged the presence of various challenges, frustrations, and discouragements throughout their teaching journeys. Despite these difficulties, they demonstrated resilience by maintaining positive perspectives, reflecting upon their purpose, and focusing on the positive impact they had on students. Their narratives revealed persistence, optimism, and determination as essential qualities for sustaining professional commitment.

The findings are consistent with Suarez and McGrath (2022), who emphasized that resilience enables teachers to navigate professional challenges, sustain motivation, and maintain commitment despite workplace difficulties. Resilience plays a critical role in supporting professional growth and long-term engagement in the teaching profession.

Collectively, the participants' narratives reveal that Professional Personal-Making and Teacher Identity are shaped through continuous reflection on lived experiences, professional responsibilities, and interactions with students. The subthemes of Professional Purpose, Meaningful Teaching, Professional Fulfillment, Teacher Adaptability, and Teacher Resilience demonstrate how participants derived meaning from their teaching experiences and constructed their professional identities as educators.

Their experiences suggest that teaching in a maritime institution extends beyond instructional responsibilities and becomes a process of personal and professional transformation. Through student interactions, institutional expectations, and responses to challenges, participants developed a deeper sense of purpose, fulfillment, adaptability, and resilience.

These experiences collectively contributed to the development of their identities as English instructors and served as important foundations for their continued professional growth.

The study found that the lived experiences of English instructors in a maritime institution are shaped by the intersection of specialized instructional practices, instructional and institutional challenges, and professional personal-making processes. While participants continuously adapt their teaching strategies to meet the demands of maritime education, they also derive deep meaning, fulfillment, and professional growth from their roles as educators. These experiences collectively define their identity as Maritime English instructors and influence their commitment to preparing future maritime professionals.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were formulated:

English instruction in a maritime institution is characterized by contextualized and experiential teaching practices. English instructors intentionally connect language learning to maritime communication, professional responsibilities, and authentic workplace situations to prepare students for future maritime careers. These practices demonstrate that effective language instruction in maritime education requires relevance, authenticity, and learner engagement.

Teaching English in a maritime institution involves complex instructional and institutional challenges. Instructors must address varying levels of language proficiency, learner diversity, communication difficulties, curriculum limitations, and institutional expectations while ensuring meaningful learning experiences for students.

These challenges highlight the dynamic and multifaceted nature of Maritime English instruction.

The professional identities of English instructors are continuously shaped through their lived experiences within the maritime educational environment. Their interactions with students, responses to challenges, and engagement with professional responsibilities contribute to the development of purpose, fulfillment, adaptability, and resilience.

Professional Personal-Making is an ongoing process through which English instructors derive meaning from their experiences and construct their identities as educators. The process is influenced by instructional practices, professional relationships, institutional expectations, and personal reflections. Through these experiences, instructors develop a stronger sense of commitment to teaching and student development.

Despite the challenges associated with maritime education, English instructors remain committed to preparing future maritime professionals. Their dedication to facilitating communication competence and workplace readiness reflects the significant role they play in supporting students' academic and professional success.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

With utmost gratitude, the researcher praises and thanks Heavenly Father, the Almighty God, for granting her the knowledge, courage, guidance, and innumerable blessings needed to accomplish this research successfully.

The researcher also expresses sincere gratitude to the research adviser and language critic, members of the panel of jurors, colleagues, friends, and family for their guidance, constructive feedback, encouragement, and unwavering support throughout every stage of the study.

The researcher extends heartfelt appreciation to the research participants and partner institutions for their willingness to take part in this study. Their trust, cooperation, and valuable insights served as the foundation for the successful completion of this research.

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