

Interactional Scaffolding in Maritime English Classrooms: Supporting First-Year Cadets in Developing Maritime Terminology

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Abstract

In Maritime English classrooms, first-year cadets often encounter difficulties in adjusting from general English vocabulary to specialized maritime terminology. Although they possess basic English proficiency, many cadets are not yet familiar with maritime-specific terms whose meanings differ from everyday usage. Consequently, they must relearn and internalize new lexical items as part of their professional language development. This situation highlights the need for classroom support to facilitate terminology transition in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) contexts. This study aims to examine the types of interactional scaffolding employed by a lecturer in Maritime English classrooms and to explore how such scaffolding supports first-year deck cadets in developing maritime terminology. This research adopted a descriptive qualitative design involving one lecturer and first-year deck cadets at PIP Makassar. Data were collected through classroom video recordings and semi-structured interviews. The findings reveal that the lecturer employed various scaffolding strategies, including contextual framing, elicitation, repetition, clarification, and guided correction. These strategies were effective in assisting cadets to recognize differences between general English and maritime terminology and to gradually replace familiar vocabulary with appropriate maritime terms. The scaffolding process encouraged active participation and supported the development of lexical awareness in specialized maritime contexts. Interview findings further indicate that cadets perceived scaffolding strategies as supportive and helpful in enhancing their confidence and independent terminology use. The study concludes that interactional scaffolding plays a significant role in facilitating maritime terminology development in early-stage Maritime English classrooms.

Keywords : *interactional scaffolding, Maritime English, maritime terminology, ESP vocabulary, lexical development*

Introduction

Maritime English constitutes a crucial component of language training in maritime education, particularly for first-year cadets who are at the initial stage of professional formation. At this stage, cadets are introduced to maritime-specific terminology that differs significantly from the general English vocabulary they previously learned. While cadets may possess basic English proficiency, they often struggle to adjust to specialized lexical items whose meanings are context-bound within maritime operations. Words such as *left*, *right*, or *kitchen*, which are familiar in general English, correspond to *port*, *starboard*, and *galley* in maritime contexts. This lexical shift requires more than vocabulary expansion; it demands conceptual restructuring and contextual adaptation. Consequently, many cadets tend to substitute maritime terminology with general English expressions during classroom interaction, indicating the need for systematic pedagogical support to facilitate terminology transition in Maritime English classrooms.

Previous studies in Maritime English have emphasized the importance of vocabulary development in early maritime education. Abduh, Hasnur, and Siska (2022) demonstrated that structured Maritime English vocabulary modules significantly improved cadets' lexical learning outcomes, highlighting the importance of organized instructional materials. Furthermore, Palayukan (2023) examined negotiation of meaning in Indonesian Maritime English classrooms and identified interactional strategies such as repetition, elaboration, simplification, and comprehension checks that support vocabulary teaching among EFL learners. These studies underscore the role of interactional processes in facilitating lexical development in maritime contexts.

However, it is important to distinguish between negotiation of meaning and interactional scaffolding. Negotiation of meaning primarily refers to interactional adjustments made to resolve communication difficulties or clarify misunderstandings during discourse. In contrast, interactional scaffolding encompasses broader pedagogical support that systematically guides learners toward independent performance. While

negotiation may occur reactively in response to lexical confusion, scaffolding functions as structured mediation that gradually supports learners in internalizing new conceptual and terminological knowledge. Moreover, while previous research has largely addressed vocabulary teaching in general terms, limited attention has been paid to how interactional scaffolding facilitates the systematic transition from general English vocabulary to maritime-specific terminology, particularly among first-year cadets at the early stage of professional education.

Despite growing interest in Maritime English pedagogy, the micro-level classroom processes through which specialized maritime terminology is negotiated, reconstructed, and internalized remain underexplored. Existing research tends to focus on instructional materials, strategy identification, or measurable vocabulary outcomes, leaving the interactional dimension of terminology transition insufficiently examined. Therefore, this study extends previous findings by investigating how interactional scaffolding operates within authentic Maritime English classroom discourse to support first-year deck cadets in developing maritime terminology. By focusing on real-time classroom interaction and lexical specialization processes, this study contributes to ESP pedagogy and vocabulary acquisition research in vocational maritime education.

Based on this identified gap, the present study seeks to examine how interactional scaffolding supports the development of maritime terminology among first-year cadets in Maritime English classrooms. Specifically, this study addresses the following research questions: (1) What types of interactional scaffolding are employed by the lecturer during classroom interaction? (2) How does such scaffolding facilitate first-year deck cadets' transition from general English vocabulary to maritime-specific terminology? and (3) How do first-year cadets perceive the lecturer's interactional scaffolding in supporting maritime terminology development? The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the interactional mediation of terminology transition at the early stage of maritime education, an area that has received limited empirical attention. By examining scaffolding practices within authentic classroom discourse, this study extends research on vocabulary development beyond general EFL contexts into specialized Maritime English instruction.

Method

This study employed a descriptive qualitative design to investigate how interactional scaffolding supports the development of maritime terminology in Maritime English classrooms. The qualitative approach was considered appropriate because the study aimed to explore classroom interaction processes and identify the forms and functions of scaffolding strategies used by the lecturer. Rather than measuring learning outcomes quantitatively, this study focused on examining real-time classroom discourse and understanding how maritime terminology was negotiated and internalized through interaction.

The population consisted of more than 300 first-year deck cadets at PIP Makassar; however, two classes comprising 48 cadets were purposively selected as the research participants. The deck cadets were selected not only because they were at the early stage of maritime education and had recently transitioned from general English learning to specialized maritime terminology, but also because they are expected to assume communication responsibilities on board in their future professional roles. The classrooms observed were the regular Maritime English class focusing on maritime vocabulary related to ship parts, facilities, operational areas, and time expressions.

Data were collected through classroom video recording and semi-structured interview. The classroom sessions were recorded to capture natural interaction between the lecturer and cadets during vocabulary-focused activities. The recordings enabled the researcher to identify instances of interactional scaffolding, including prompting, clarification, repetition, contextual framing, and guided correction. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected cadets to gain insights into their perceptions of how classroom support assisted them in learning maritime terminology. The interview questions focused on their experiences in adjusting from general English vocabulary to maritime-specific terms and their responses to the lecturer's scaffolding strategies.

The collected data were transcribed and analyzed using qualitative content analysis. First, the classroom transcripts were examined to identify and categorize the types of interactional scaffolding employed by the lecturer. Second, the analysis focused on how these scaffolding strategies facilitated the replacement of general English vocabulary with appropriate maritime terminology. The interview data were then analyzed to identify recurring themes related to cadets' lexical awareness and perceived learning support. The analysis was conducted systematically to ensure that the findings accurately reflected the classroom interaction processes and terminology development observed in the study.

Results

Types of Interactional Scaffolding in Maritime English Classrooms

The analysis of classroom video recordings indicates that the lecturer consistently employed multiple forms of interactional scaffolding during Maritime English sessions. The most frequently observed strategies were elicitation and prompting, particularly when cadets used general English vocabulary instead of maritime terminology. Contextual framing was commonly used at the beginning of vocabulary-focused discussions to situate lexical items within professional shipboard contexts. Repetition and guided correction were also regularly applied to reinforce correct pronunciation and terminology use.

Less frequently, the lecturer employed extended clarification, particularly when cadets demonstrated persistent confusion between general English and maritime-specific terms. Overall, the scaffolding strategies were embedded naturally within classroom discourse, occurring spontaneously in response to cadets' lexical choices rather than as pre-planned correction sequences. These interactional exchanges frequently involved clarification requests, confirmation checks, and guided questioning, reflecting processes of negotiation of meaning through which maritime terminology was clarified and reconstructed during classroom interaction.

Interactional Scaffolding in Facilitating Maritime Terminology Development

The findings demonstrate a gradual shift in cadets' lexical choices throughout the observed classroom sessions. In the initial sessions, cadets frequently relied on general English vocabulary such as *kitchen*, *left*, *right*, and *toilet* when referring to shipboard contexts. These instances often triggered elicitation and prompting from the lecturer.

As scaffolding strategies were consistently implemented, instances of general English substitution decreased. Elicitation and prompting were particularly effective in encouraging self-correction. Rather than providing direct answers, the lecturer posed guiding questions that required cadets to reconsider their lexical selection. This process promoted active lexical negotiation and increased awareness of maritime terminology. By the later sessions, cadets demonstrated greater spontaneity in using maritime terms such as *galley*, *port*, *starboard*, and *head* without requiring extensive prompting.

The observable reduction of lexical substitution across sessions suggests progressive internalization of maritime terminology. The analysis indicates that interactional scaffolding functioned as a mediating process that supported cadets in transitioning from partial lexical familiarity to more accurate and autonomous use of specialized maritime terms.

Cadets' Perceptions of Interactional Scaffolding

Interview findings further support the classroom observations. Most cadets reported that guided questioning and prompting helped them remember maritime terminology more effectively than direct correction. Several participants indicated that being encouraged to think before receiving confirmation enhanced their understanding of lexical differences between general English and Maritime English.

Cadets also expressed increased confidence in using maritime terminology during classroom interaction. They perceived repetition and guided correction as supportive rather than intimidating. These perceptions suggest that interactional scaffolding not only facilitated lexical development but also contributed to learner engagement and the gradual development of independent terminology use in Maritime English classrooms.

Discussion

Interactional Scaffolding in Maritime Terminology Development

The findings indicate that interactional scaffolding plays a significant mediational role in facilitating maritime terminology development among first-year deck cadets. As presented in the Results, elicitation and prompting were the most frequently observed strategies when cadets relied on general English vocabulary. The gradual reduction of lexical substitution across classroom sessions suggests progressive internalization of maritime terminology.

From a sociocultural perspective, second language development occurs through mediated interaction within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (Lantolf, Poehner, & Thorne, 2020). The lecturer's use of prompting, clarification, and guided correction functioned as structured assistance that enabled learners to move from partial lexical understanding to accurate maritime terminology use. The progression observed in later sessions where cadets demonstrated more spontaneous use of terms such as *galley*, *port*, and *starboard* reflects a shift from other regulation to increasing self-regulation.

Previous classroom-based research also highlights the pedagogical value of teacher scaffolding strategies in facilitating language learning processes (Rohini, 2020). The results also complement Abduh et al. (2022), who emphasize the importance of maritime vocabulary instruction. However, whereas Abduh et al. highlight structured learning materials, the present study underscores the importance of real-time classroom interaction in supporting terminology acquisition.

Negotiation of Meaning in Maritime English Classrooms

The Results show that scaffolding frequently involved clarification requests and confirmation checks, reflecting negotiation of meaning processes during classroom interaction. These negotiated exchanges were particularly evident when cadets attempted to use general English spatial or facility-related terms.

Excerpt 1: Negotiating Port and Starboard

Lecturer: "If you face forward, what is your left side called on board?"

Cadet: "Left side."

Lecturer: "On a ship, do we say left?"

Cadet: "Starboard?"

Lecturer: "Starboard is right. So left side is ...?"

Cadet: "Port."

Lecturer: "Correct. Port."

This interaction illustrates how clarification and guided questioning enabled lexical reconstruction. Instead of directly correcting the cadet, the lecturer initiated a negotiation sequence that required conceptual adjustment. Palayukan (2023) found that negotiation of meaning in Indonesian Maritime English classrooms enhances lexical precision and communicative clarity. The present findings support this claim by demonstrating that clarification and confirmation sequences contributed to the differentiation between general English vocabulary and maritime-specific terminology.

Excerpt 2: Prompting and Self-Correction

Cadet: "The captain is in the navigation room."

Lecturer: "Navigation room? What do we call it on board?"

Cadet: "Hmm... What is 'jembatan' in English? Bridge."

Lecturer: "Yes, the bridge."

This excerpt reflects lexical prompting that encouraged self-correction. The mechanism resembles the verbal cue strategies identified by Hatifah (2017), who found that recalling and clarifying cues guide learners toward accurate responses in EFL interaction. The present study extends Hatifah's framework by demonstrating that similar interactional cues support lexical specialization within a Maritime English context.

Scaffolding and the Development of Learner Autonomy

Beyond lexical accuracy, the Results indicate increasing learner independence across classroom sessions. As scaffolding decreased, cadets demonstrated greater spontaneity in using maritime terminology. This progression suggests emerging autonomy in lexical selection. Palayukan et al. (2025), in examining autonomous learning in maritime education, emphasizes that effective shipboard communication requires independent lexical control. The present findings complement this perspective by suggesting that autonomy in terminology use develops through scaffolded interaction. The movement from guided questioning to spontaneous lexical production reflects sociocultural development from mediated support to self-regulated performance (Lantolf et al., 2020).

Synthesis with Previous Research

Overall, the findings support rather than contradict previous theoretical perspectives. They reinforce sociocultural mediation theory (Lantolf et al., 2020), confirm the effectiveness of teachers' scaffolding in facilitating language learning processes (Rohini, 2020), align with negotiation of meaning frameworks in maritime classrooms (Palayukan, 2023), extend Hatifah's (2017) verbal cue model into ESP terminology development, and complement research on maritime vocabulary instruction (Abduh et al., 2022). Furthermore, the additional finding reveals the connection between scaffolding and the learner autonomy (Palayukan et al., 2025). By focusing on micro-level classroom interaction, this study contributes updated empirical evidence (2015–2025) to Maritime English pedagogy.

Conclusion

This study concludes that interactional scaffolding significantly supports maritime terminology development among first-year deck cadets in Maritime English classrooms. The findings show that elicitation, prompting, clarification, repetition, and guided correction facilitated the transition from general English vocabulary to maritime-specific terminology. The observed reduction of lexical substitution across sessions indicates progressive internalization and emerging learner autonomy. The study contributes to ESP and Maritime English pedagogy by demonstrating that terminology acquisition is interactionally negotiated through classroom discourse rather than learned through memorization alone. However, the research was limited to one lecturer and one group of cadets in a single institution, and it did not measure long-term retention of terminology. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted within this specific instructional context.

It is recommended that Maritime English lecturers employ interactional scaffolding strategies to promote lexical awareness and independent terminology use. For future research, broader participant samples, longitudinal designs, and integration of quantitative measures are suggested to further examine the sustained impact of scaffolding on maritime terminology development and professional communication competence.

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