



MARITIME ENGLISH IN FOCUS: A RATER-BASED EVALUATION OF ESP COURSEBOOK QUALITY

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ABSTRACT

This study assesses the quality of a Maritime English coursebook used in a leading vocational maritime education program in Indonesia. The evaluation is based on expert opinions and criteria drawn from English for Specific Purposes (ESP) principles. A qualitative descriptive method was used, supported by document analysis. Data were collected from four expert raters using a 48-item Likert scale evaluation sheet. The analysis was done manually, focusing on item trends and using thematic categorization based on ESP indicators. The coursebook is considered relevant to maritime contexts, with strengths in vocabulary use and realistic tasks. However, it shows inconsistency in instructional design and does not fully align with learner-centered approaches expected in ESP materials. The findings are useful for maritime education, ESP material development, vocational curriculum design, and coursebook evaluation in applied linguistics, maritime training centers, and language education programs. This study also presents an expert-based evaluation framework for ESP coursebooks in maritime settings, addressing the lack of research using qualitative analysis based on expert judgment rather than student feedback.

Keywords: *Coursebook, Document Analysis, ESP, Maritime English, Raters.*

1. INTRODUCTION

English is the standard language for operational communication in international maritime activities, especially navigation, cargo handling, and emergency procedures (Ahmmed, 2021; Gabedava & Hu, 2025; Smelikova & Penza, 2023; Vidhiasi & Syihabuddin, 2022). Multinational ship crews use it to ensure safety, accuracy, and professionalism in their daily operations (Ahmmed et al., 2020; Chowdhury et al., 2024; Mikulicic et al., 2023). The International Maritime Organization (IMO) mandates the use of English for all onboard communication, including radio exchanges, bridge team interactions, and compliance with safety protocols (Boström, 2020). This makes maritime English a core subject in vocational maritime institutions and a crucial skill in

global maritime operations (Hellystia & Budiwaty, 2023; Katuuk, 2025).

Many polytechnics and vocational maritime academies teach maritime English as a core component in preparing cadets to meet these demands (Limbong, 2021; Simanjuntak et al., 2024; Volkova, 2021). Coursebooks play an important role in this instructional process by shaping students' language competence. Ideally, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) coursebook should reflect real-world maritime communication and task-based learning with professional vocabulary relevant to shipboard operations (Pangestu & Usman, 2025; Rahmiani et al., 2024; Wibowo et al., 2025). Coursebooks should also follow structured pedagogical principles to enhance student comprehension and job readiness (Fisher & Frey, 2021; Richlin, 2023; Smart et al., 2020).

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

However, many ESP coursebooks used in maritime education present several challenges. Some contain general English content that is only marginally relevant to the maritime contexts. Others lack realism, consistency in instructional design, or alignment with international standards. These gaps raise concerns about whether coursebooks adequately prepare cadets for work in high-risk, multilingual ship environments (Alibakhshi et al., 2022; Herdawan et al., 2021; Mokhtari & Maouche, 2023).

This study addresses the absence of systematic evaluations conducted by expert raters on the quality of maritime English coursebooks, particularly those used in Indonesian maritime polytechnics (Darmawan et al., 2024; Odell et al., 2020; Mashartanto et al., 2024). While existing studies often focus on student perceptions or coursebook design theory, few employ document-based content evaluations using established ESP criteria (Johnson & Majewska, 2022; Ngo, 2021; Thominet, 2020). These evaluations are essential for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the coursebook content.

This research was motivated by the urgent need to improve the quality of ESP materials used in maritime education. As the maritime industry evolves with increasing international cooperation and technological advancement, teaching materials must be evaluated and improved. This study aims to provide practical insights that can support curriculum development, coursebook revision, and more effective Maritime English instruction by using expert raters to assess coursebook content based on detailed indicators.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of English as a lingua franca in the maritime industry has been widely acknowledged, especially with the adoption of standardized communication protocols by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) (Sari & Dewi, 2023). Maritime English is considered a branch of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), that focuses on equipping learners with communicative competence tailored to occupational needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Anthony, 2018). ESP materials

must be authentic, relevant, and aligned with learners' professional environments (Basturkmen, 2019; Yulia et al., 2022).

Several studies have emphasized aligning Maritime English coursebooks with real-life shipboard communication. For instance, Rakkus and Darmawan (2022) found that many vocational coursebooks lacked authentic dialogues and failed to simulate real-world maritime interactions. Similarly, Wahyuni, Kusni, and Safitri (2021) reported a disconnect between classroom materials and the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) framework, thus limiting students' preparedness for international maritime operations.

Various ESP studies have proposed coursebook evaluation frameworks to ensure material quality. Evaluating ESP coursebooks based on content relevance, language accuracy, skill integration, layout, and learner engagement. More recent approaches include cultural appropriateness and digital adaptability (Ng et al., 2023; Zhang & Lin, 2021). In maritime education, Fitriati and Rata (2020) highlighted that English coursebooks for seafarers should promote technical competence, intercultural awareness, and safety-critical communication. Meanwhile, Irwansyah and Nurjanah (2022) emphasized the need for coursebooks to reflect the operational reality of maritime tasks, such as bridge communication, cargo handling, and emergency responses.

Document-based analysis is a relevant approach to ESP material evaluation. Arslan and Yıldız (2020) and Kusuma and Hidayat (2021) used content analysis to assess how well ESP coursebooks align with vocational standards. Moreover, rater-based evaluation has been explored as a valid method for assessing instructional materials, allowing experts to judge content quality through structured rubrics (Kim, 2019; Suherdi et al., 2022). Although research on ESP coursebook evaluation is increasing, only a small number have specifically examined Maritime English coursebooks used in Indonesian vocational schools. Furthermore, most of these evaluations are based on the views of students or teachers, with few studies involving multiple expert raters to assess detailed content criteria. This leaves a gap in understanding

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

how expert-based judgment can reveal strengths and weaknesses in ESP coursebook design.

This study closes this gap by using structured, rater-based document analysis. Four expert evaluators assessed a Maritime English coursebook using 48 Likert-scale indicators. Unlike previous studies that focused on general impressions or limited criteria, this research provides a more detailed and systematic evaluation that could improve the development of coursebooks for maritime education.

3. METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive approach using document analysis as the primary method (Doyle et al., 2020; Stanley, 2023; Wood et al., 2020). The focus was to evaluate the quality of a Maritime English coursebook based on the principles of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The chosen method allows for in-depth interpretation of instructional materials and aligns with the study's aim of exploring expert perspectives through a systematic content review (Li, 2021; Yeh et al., 2021).

The material analyzed in this study was a printed coursebook titled *Bahasa Inggris untuk Perwira Kapal Niaga*, which is widely used in a Maritime English course at Politeknik Bumi Akpelni, a vocational maritime polytechnic in Indonesia. The course is mandatory for cadets enrolled in the Maritime English subject, which is offered in the early semesters of the Nautical department. Four expert raters, two senior ESP lecturers, one maritime English practitioner, and one coursebook evaluator, were the main participants in this study. They were selected based on their academic and professional expertise in ESP, maritime education, and applied linguistics. Their role was to evaluate the coursebook using a standardized evaluation instrument.

The evaluation instrument consisted of 48 indicators, grouped into five categories: Language and content alignment with International Maritime Organization standards (LIMO); Principles of English as an International Language (LEIL); Coursebook quality from the IMO perspective (QIMO); Coursebook quality from the EIL perspective (QEIL); and ESP-based content quality (ESP).

Each rater assessed the coursebook using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (5). The evaluation was done independently, and the results were then analyzed thematically to identify common trends, strengths, and areas needing improvement.

The study setting was document-based, with no classroom observation or student feedback. The reason for choosing document analysis is its effectiveness in exploring written educational materials against established standards and frameworks. This method enables researchers to critically assess the extent to which the coursebook reflects ESP principles, contributes to student learning, and equips cadets for real-world maritime communication. Overall, the document analysis focused on several key aspects: how well the language and content align with actual maritime practices; the coherence and consistency of materials throughout the units; the authenticity and practicality of dialogues and tasks; the instructional design and strategies for engaging learners; and the appropriateness of visuals, vocabulary, and technical terms used. This approach enabled a structured, expert-driven evaluation of the coursebook and provided insights for curriculum developers and educators to enhance the effectiveness of ESP materials in maritime education.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The *Bahasa Inggris untuk Perwira Kapal Niaga* coursebook is structured into 21 chapters to help maritime cadets develop their communicative competence for shipboard operations, safety communication, and professional tasks. The study evaluated the coursebook using 48 indicators divided into five categories: (1) Language based on IMO standards (LIMO); (2) Language based on English as an International Language (LEIL); (3) Coursebook quality based on IMO standards (QIMO); (4) Coursebook quality based on EIL principles (QEIL); and (5) English for Specific Purposes (ESP) indicators. The following table presents the 48 items from the five categories mentioned above.

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

Table 4.1. Item Description Table

Item Nr.	Indicator	Code	Item's Description
1	LIMO	LIMO 1	The flow of learning objectives and material in this coursebook is relevant to the Learning Outcomes written in IMO standards.
2		LIMO 2	This coursebook covers IMO concepts and standards relevant to maritime education.
3		LIMO 3	This coursebook helps students understand the procedures and terminology that apply in the international maritime environment under IMO standards.
4		LIMO 4	The learning assessment in this coursebook measures the achievement of learning objectives according to IMO standards.
5		LIMO 5	The information presented in this coursebook is accurate and supports international safety standards and regulations set by the IMO.
6		LIMO 6	The examples and case studies in this coursebook reflect situations consistent with international maritime practice according to IMO standards.
7		LIMO 7	The content of this coursebook has been updated following the latest developments in maritime regulations and practices governed by the IMO.
8		LIMO 8	This coursebook provides sufficient knowledge to prepare students for IMO-recognized examinations or certifications.
9		LIMO	The dialogues

		9	presented in this coursebook are relevant and appropriate to situations commonly encountered in a maritime environment.
10		LIMO 10	The talks and reading passages in the coursebook reflect realistic and practical experiences in the maritime environment.
11	LEIL	LEIL 1	The coursebook clearly shows how each lesson is relevant to the learning goals of the EIL concept.
12		LEIL 2	The coursebook promotes students' intercultural awareness.
13		LEIL 3	Cultures in the coursebook are represented in either an information/fact-oriented or communication-oriented manner.
14		LEIL 4	The coursebook creates opportunities for students to explore different scenarios and cultural roles.
15		LEIL 5	Cultures from other countries are represented in a way that contests or perpetuates stereotypes.
16		LEIL 6	The material (text and images) in the coursebook aligns with the values and norms of Pancasila.
17		LEIL 7	The material (text and images) reflects diversity/inclusion, is free from racial defamation, gender bias, disability discrimination, pornography, violence, and hate speech.
18		LEIL 8	The scientific material in the coursebook is validly and accurately described according to prevailing truths in the field of science.
19	QIM	QIMO	The language used in

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

	O	1	this coursebook is appropriate for operational-level cadets who will work in the maritime industry.			appropriate for diverse cultural and professional contexts in an international environment.
20		QIMO 2	The language used in this coursebook is appropriate for the student's cognitive development.	28	QEIL 2	The coursebook adequately presents language that reflects different levels of formality and registers required in varying communication situations (e.g., formal instructions, peer conversations, and commands).
21		QIMO 3	The spelling and vocabulary used in this coursebook are in line with international standards for maritime communication.	29	QEIL 3	The coursebook provides sufficient examples of how to modify language use based on the hierarchical or social relationship between speakers (e.g., officer to cadet, crew member to captain).
22		QIMO 4	The coursebook demonstrates lexical accuracy, ensuring the correct use of words and phrases in various maritime and professional contexts.	30	QEIL 4	The coursebook effectively addresses language use in different international contexts, ensuring that communication skills are adaptable across cultural and regional varieties of English.
23		QIMO 5	The vocabulary selection in the coursebook is suitable for students from different linguistic backgrounds, promoting clear and effective communication in an international maritime environment.	31	QEIL 5	The sociolinguistic elements (such as politeness strategies, tone, and cultural nuances) are well integrated into the coursebook's examples and dialogues.
24		QIMO 6	The coursebook provides consistent and clear explanations of vocabulary and terms essential for maritime communication in global contexts.	32	QEIL 6	The vocabulary used in the coursebook is suitable for international communication, promoting clear understanding across non-native English-speaking contexts.
25		QIMO 7	The examples and exercises in the coursebook are grammatically accurate and reflective of real-world maritime English usage in international settings.	33	QEIL 7	The grammar in the coursebook is suitable for a diverse international audience, considering the global variations in English usage.
26		QIMO 8	The coursebook's language supports global communication by using simplified and standardized English suitable for an international maritime audience.	34	QEIL	The lexical accuracy
27	QEIL	QEIL 1	The language used in the coursebook is			

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

		8	(the correct use of words and expressions) in the coursebook is appropriate for learners from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.
35		QEIL 9	The explanations of vocabulary in the coursebook are clear and culturally neutral, avoiding bias toward any specific English-speaking country.
36	ESP	ESP 1	The presentation of material in this coursebook from unit 1 to unit 21 is consistent.
37		ESP 2	The teaching materials are presented in a coherent manner.
38		ESP 3	The teaching materials are presented using a particular learning method.
39		ESP 4	The material in this coursebook is presented comprehensively.
40		ESP 5	The pictures in the teaching materials help students understand the material.
41		ESP 6	The material in this coursebook is interesting and keeps students motivated to learn more.
42		ESP 7	The learning activities in the coursebook resemble real-world tasks.
43		ESP 8	The materials meet students' expectations and learning styles in the learning process.
44		ESP 9	Each chapter contains standardized supporting elements, namely chapter title, initial chapter image, learning objectives, keywords, flow of learning objectives, triggering text (question sentence or paragraph), apperception, learning activities, examples, learning enrichment,

			summary, learning assessment, and reflection.
45		ESP 10	The textbook follows the proportional size as a companion textbook as regulated by the Ministry of Education and Culture Number 030/P/2022.
46		ESP 11	The textbook has an appeal determined by the correct use of typography, images (illustrations/photos), and color combinations that are appropriate to the book material and target audience.
47		ESP 12	The font size of the book title is more prominent than the font size for the author's name and other information, and the font color contrasts with the background color for readability.
48		ESP 13	The tasks in this coursebook help students understand and achieve the learning goals of the EIL concept.

The LIMO category (ten items) assessed the use of language aligned with IMO communication standards, such as navigational phrases and operational terminology. The findings showed that Chapters 6, 12, 13, 15, and 19 scored the highest, with mean values up to 4.00. These chapters included realistic maritime scenarios and appropriate technical terms. However, other chapters demonstrated insufficient task realism or lacked standardized phraseology. These findings support Basturkmen's (2019) assertion that ESP materials should reflect authentic language from the target domain. Interrater reliability for the LIMO category was strongest in Chapters 1, 4, 8, 10, and 15, indicating high agreement among raters in these sections.

The LEIL category (eight items) assessed how well the coursebook represents global English usage while avoiding native-speaker bias and accommodating multicultural

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

contexts. Chapters 4, 8, 15, and 16 received the highest average scores (up to 3.75), demonstrating attention to international intelligibility. However, other chapters received low ratings (as low as 1.25), revealing a lack of cultural diversity and dominance of Western-centric names and examples. These findings echo Zhang and Lin's (2021) recommendation that EIL-based materials expose learners to various Englishes, particularly in globalized maritime environments.

The QIMO category (10 items) examined instructional quality based on IMO expectations, such as the clarity of learning objectives, task sequencing, and content integration. Chapters 8, 10, 14, 19, and 21 scored the highest, with mean ratings reaching 4.25. These chapters followed a structured approach and included tasks resembling actual maritime duties. However, inconsistency was found in other chapters where objectives were vague or activities lacked scaffolding, emphasized that good instructional materials must be coherent, goal-oriented, and logically sequenced. This coursebook only partially met the criteria.

In the QEIL category (seven items), which assesses the communicative quality of materials from an international perspective, chapters 10, 13, 15, and 16 achieved the best results. These chapters included visual aids and clear messages appropriate for multilingual learners. However, several other chapters showed weak alignment with EIL principles by offering limited exposure to diverse language varieties or relying too heavily on localized scenarios. Sari and Dewi (2023) state that maritime learners must understand global English variations to operate effectively on multicultural crews.

The ESP category (thirteen items) evaluated the coursebook's alignment with core ESP principles: occupational specificity, authenticity, and learner motivation. The highest scores were observed in chapters 15, 16, 19, and 20. These chapters presented job-relevant content, task-based activities, and realistic professional dialogue. However, several ESP indicators, particularly those related to visual support and communicative task diversity, scored low (some as low as 1.25). These shortcomings affirm Irwansyah

and Nurjanah's (2022) observation that many vocational coursebooks struggle to maintain authenticity and engagement.

The table below summarizes the score range, high-performing chapters, and reliability agreement among raters to visualize each category's overall tendencies better.

Table 4.2. The summary of the document analysis result score

Category	Nr. of Items	Score Range	Highest-Scoring Chapters	Most Reliable Chapters
LIMO	10	1.25 – 4.00	6, 12, 13, 15, 19	1, 4, 8, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15
LEIL	8	1.25 – 3.75	4, 8, 15, 16	1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9
QIMO	10	1.75 – 4.25	8, 10, 14, 19, 21	4, 8, 20, 21
QEIL	7	1.50 – 3.75	10, 13, 15, 16	1, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10
ESP	13	1.25 – 3.75	15, 16, 19, 20	7

In summary, while the coursebook demonstrates strengths in specific chapters, particularly in vocabulary accuracy, maritime relevance, and task-based elements, it still requires substantial improvement. The inconsistent pedagogical design, limited intercultural exposure, and underdeveloped visuals reduce its effectiveness as a Maritime English ESP resource. Anthony (2018) noted that ESP materials must meet the linguistic demands of the target field and respond to learners' evolving communicative contexts. This study contributes to the growing literature advocating for systematic, expert-based evaluation of vocational English materials in specialized domains.

5. CONCLUSION

This study assessed the quality of the Bahasa Inggris untuk Perwira Kapal Niaga coursebook used in maritime vocational

Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

education. The evaluation covered five key areas: the use of language based on International Maritime Organization (IMO) standards; the integration of English as an International Language (EIL); the overall quality of the coursebook in relation to IMO and EIL principles; and its consistency with core features of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Using a 48-item evaluation tool completed by four expert raters, the study identified both strengths and weaknesses across the book's 21 chapters. Results showed that chapters 10, 15, 16, 19, and 21 were particularly well-suited to vocational needs, especially in terms of maritime vocabulary, task relevance, and instructional design. These chapters demonstrated key characteristics of strong ESP materials.

However, the analysis also revealed several limitations, including inconsistent task design, insufficient cultural representation, and a lack of visual support in many units. These limitations hinder the coursebook's ability to meet cadets' communicative and intercultural needs in global maritime environments. In conclusion, this study accomplished its objectives. The rater-based document analysis comprehensively and systematically evaluated the coursebook's effectiveness. The results offer valuable insights for enhancing ESP coursebook development in maritime education and underscore the importance of ongoing material evaluation based on international standards.

For future research, it is recommended to expand the evaluation by involving a broader range of stakeholders, such as maritime instructors and cadets, to gain diverse perspectives. Additionally, incorporating classroom observations and interviews can provide deeper insights into how the coursebook is used in real teaching contexts. Future studies could also compare multiple Maritime English coursebooks to identify best practices and support the creation of more effective instructional materials aligned with global maritime communication demands.

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Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

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Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

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Vol 8, No 2 (2025): ESTEEM

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