

The Essential of Using Standard Marine Communication Phrases in Avoiding Accidents at Sea for Indonesian Seafarers

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Abstract

Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) is compulsory to be used onboard vessels by all seafarers worldwide, and it has been mandatory by International Maritime Organization (IMO). This research employs a qualitative method, and collecting the data is done by SMCP documents analysis in the context of onboard and external communication, administering open-ended questionnaires, conducting interviews, and recording. From the study, the usage of SMCP for external & internal communication had different numbers. The utilization of SMCP for external communication is 9% optional, 26% for recommend, and 65% mandatory. Moreover, the usage of English in crew radio communication, especially for onboard communication, differs in number. 11% of respondents chose optionally, 41% chose recommended, and 48% chose mandatory. From the finding, it could be summarized that Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) was rarely used by Indonesian seafarers while working on the bridge. They were reluctant to use the language for some reasons; the crew being fully Indonesian seafarers, lacked awareness of the language and never had any reward or punishment for the one who obeyed/disobeyed the regulation. Besides, they had to memorize every word from the standardized phrases from the



SMCP book. Therefore, using SMCP for internal and external onboard communication has become the most crucial priority to avoid accidents and incidents at sea.

Key words: SMCP, External Communication, Internal Communication, Indonesian Seafarers

INTRODUCTION

English competence must become the highest priority for people whose job is related to sailing, meet with foreign people, and utilize export-import documents. This English is also the primary tool for seafarer candidates to have job interview or job recruitment with the vessel is an ocean-going line (Rahmawati, Y et al. 2020). The term Standard Marine Communication Phrase, or SMCP, is also familiar to maritime people whom jobs related to sailing onboard vessels, whether on ocean-going lines or domestic ones. To have a job on the vessel, someone must have more than twelve professional certifications (besides a formal certificate/ijazah from the Ministry of Transportation). Therefore this certification was a compulsory additional certificate that allowed them to work on vessels.

Research related to studies on the SMCP topic had been conducted previously. Some research about onboard vessel communication related to Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) was discussed by Murrel (2020). He argues that traditional language instruction cannot be implemented in teaching SMCP. Commonly, the items of language and the regulation of grammar will be used to generate an infinite number of new structures. He also discussed that the students have a limitation of memory in memorizing the huge maritime vocabulary required by the SMCP.

Another related research comes from Takagi (2015). He discussed a workshop that focused on training SMCP-based maritime communication with the help of computer dialogue systems (aka ChatBots). The exercise presented in the workshop will target the compulsory part of the SMCP in their use in communication on Very High Frequency (VHF). Simulated phone call challenges participants to develop an efficient communication strategy in order to obtain relevant details on a navigational accident. In line with this research, Rosedi (2015) highlights a preliminary study on the SMCP which involves 110 navigation cadets from the Malaysia Maritime Academy (ALAM). The result of his study was to assist relevant parties in further improving training in the SMCP so as to comply with regulations set by the STCW Codes.



All the previous studies above are significantly different from this current research because the researcher talks much about the essential of using SMCP standards which are conducted by Indonesian seafarers both for internal and external communication.

As the candidate of the professional seafarer, Indonesian seafarers must be competent in English because the standard language used on their duty is mainly English. English is the primary tool for communication onboard vessel, between ship to ship, ship to shore or shore to ship. The crew members usually come from different nationalities, especially if the vessel has an ocean-going line. Therefore, as various backgrounds of vessel crew from around the world use navigational and safety communication, it needs a standardized language to avoid miscommunication during radio communication. This statement is also stated by Murakami (2002) that the English used for communication, navigation, and security must be correct, uncomplicated, and explicit in order to evade distraction and fault due to the background of the crew coming from different countries and nationalities.

Moreover, even if the vessel is a domestic one, the Indonesian crew must use maritime English for the passing vessel around theirs. Maritime English knowledge is used in maritime activities and conveying a message in an internal or external vessel, like through radio communication. The standardized sentences that are used are based on SMCP standardization. This standardization is implemented due to the availability of various nationalities and different native language. As navigational and safety communication from ship to shore and vice versa, from ship to ship, and the onboard ship must be precise, simple, and unambiguous to avoid confusion and error, there is a need to standardize the language used. This standard is essential in light of the increasing number of internationally traded vessels with crews speaking many different languages. Communication problems may need to be clarified, leading to dangers to the vessel, the people on board, and the environment. (Tchkonja, N 2019).

The role of maritime English is English for Specific Purposes (ESP) which cannot be separated from vocational maritime higher education (Vidhiyasi, DM, 2022). This ESP also can help the students in mastering the spoken language, especially in radio communication through English. The lack of competence in that language harms the safety and navigation of vessels and leads to accidents and incidents at sea.

Based on the preliminary observation, the assumption of this research is that the suitability of maritime English teaching with the Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) is less satisfactory. Nautical students were getting below-average scores in English when they



were in the second semester. Based on the preliminary interview with some respondents from Nautical Department batch 54, they need to be more addressed in using English as standardized by SMCP during communication via radio. Many of them also need help understanding the meaning when they have to communicate English with another crew whose nationality is different. This statement can be proved based on the result of preliminary research done by the researchers through questioner to seafarer candidates who ever done watch keeping duty. At the same time, they had sea job training, is that:

- a. Sometimes the receivers were unfamiliar with and understood using Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP).
- b. Difficult to catch the idea and understand the English language due to the different accents, especially while meeting with the crew from China, Taiwan, Korea, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- c. They feel nervous because they rarely practice using the language every day.
- d. The pronunciation of each crew needed to be corrected.
- e. Misspelling and sometimes blank.
- f. The hard rain and foul weather could have made communication more evident.

The prior research on accidents at sea was done by Haryani (2022), and the result showed that there had been many accidents at sea over the last four years. The reasons for accidents are sinking, collision, fire, explosion, capsized, aground, etcetera. (KNKT, in Haryani, 2022). Therefore, this current research aims to discover the essence of using the Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) for the crew while having jobs on board, what other problems appear, and how they can avoid accidents or incidents at sea.

METHOD

This qualitative research employs eight respondents as the subject of the research, like the chairperson of the nautical study program, simulator instructor, REOR or GMDSS instructor, domestic line students, and ocean-going line students. The subject was chosen based on purposive sampling, and they have real experience implementing SMCP on board. Besides, some documents like curriculum and syllabus, SMCP book, and radio communication transcription are also used as secondary data. The subject of this research can be seen in the following table:



Table 1 The Number of research Subject as the respondents

No	Category	Number of respondent
1	Chairperson of nautical study program	1
2	Simulator instructors	2
3	REOR or GMDSS instructor	1
4	Domestic line from nautical 54 batch	2
5	Ocean going line from nautical 54 batch	2
	Total	8 people

The technique of collecting the data is by doing SMCP documents analysis in the context of onboard and external communication, Administering open-ended questionnaires, conducting interviews, and recording. The procedure of analyzing the data is by analyzing the result of the analysis in the form of Analytical and content analysis. Moreover, in analyzing the data from the open-ended questionnaire and interview transcript, the researchers manually counted the data into percentages, then described the result qualitatively. After that, the data from the open-ended questionnaire and interview was further analyzed based on Miles and Huberman's data analysis procedure (1994).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) guide seafarers in communication on board vessels between ship-to-ship or ship-to-shore in international (oceangoing) or domestic lines. The book of SMCP consists of jargon and determinate sentences or phrases that become the standardization of seafarers in communication with internal and external vessels in which the crew comes from different languages and nationalities.

Communication on the bridge is a process by which information through the radio is done by one crew to another on a different board vessel using the radio as the primary tool. The communication is usually done by the captain, Second officer, or Third Officer in the bridge room. Besides, they also talk about external distress information or routine communication verbally in the maritime context, and the form of the language should be standardized with SMCP in order to avoid misunderstanding and ambiguity in meaning.



Onboard communication is used among the vessel crew to run the daily crew routine onboard vessels. Communication can only be done through internal crew among different ranks, roles, and fields of jobs; in the deck, engines, galley, and radio departments. The tools usually used walky talky in conveying the message. On the contrary, external communication is slightly different from onboard communication above. This communication is used among the vessel crew in all departments to run active or routine jobs. The communication happened between ship to ship, ship to shore, and vice versa. The tools usually used are radio or walky-talky in conveying the message, especially distress messages, to ask for assistance in case of a disaster (accident and incident at sea).

DISCUSSIONS

The less awareness of Using Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP)

Based on the previous interview with the respondents, most said that when they were sailing onboard, Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) was rarely used by them while doing a job on the bridge. They were reluctant to use the language for some reasons, the crew being fully Indonesian seafarers, lack of awareness in using the language did not have any reward or punishment for the one who obeyed/disobeyed the regulation. Besides, the term and its standardized phrase become a significant burden for them to memorize every term in the SMCP book. Therefore, the researcher provides a table comprising the division of IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) part A & part B, which is the representative from the thick book. The data can be in the form of topic area:

Table 2 Part A & Part B of SMCP (IMO, 2002)

PART A IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrase	PART B IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrase
External communication phrase	On-board communication phrases
A1/1: Distress traffic A1/1.1 Distress communication: Fire, explosion, Flooding, Collision, Grounding, List-danger of capsizing, Sinking, Disable and adrift, Armed / Attack/piracy, Undesigned	B1/1: Handling over the watch B1/1.1 Briefing on position, movements and draught. B1/1.2 Briefing on traffic situation in the area.



distress, abandoning vessel, and Person overboard A1/1.2 Search and Rescue Communication ; SAR Communication, Acknowledge and/or relay of SAR messages, Performing/co-ordinating SAR operations, and Finishing with SAR operation A1/1.3 Requesting medical assistance. A1/2 Urgency traffic: Technical failure, cargo, ice damage, A1/3 Safety Communications: Meteorological and hydrological conditions: winds, storms, tropical storm, sea state, restricted visibility, ice, and navigational warnings.	B1/1.3 Briefing on navigational aids and equipment status. B1/1.4 Briefing on radio communication. B1/1.5 Briefing on meteorological conditions. B1/1.6 Briefing on standing orders and bridge organization. B1/1.7 Briefing on special navigational events. B1/1.8 Briefing on temperature, pressures and soundings. B1/1.9 Briefing on operation of main engine and auxiliary equipment. B1/1.10 Briefing on pumping of fuel, ballast water, etc B1/1.11 Briefing on special machinery events. B1/1.12 Briefing on record keeping. B1/1.13 Handling and taking over the watch.
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Source: SMCP Book, 1995

From the table above, it can be seen that the content of the IMO SMCP book is divided into two sections; namely, part A and B. IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases part A thoroughly discuss external communication phrases, like Distress communication, Search and Rescue (SAR), Requesting Medical Assistance, Urgency traffic, safety communication, meteorological and hydrological conditions, and navigational warnings involving environmental protection communications. Vessel traffic service (VTS) and handing over to another VTS. Furthermore, IMO Standard Marine Communication Phrases part B mainly discusses onboard communication like operative ship handling, handling over the watch, safety onboard, operational safety, damage control, SAR onboard activities, cargo handling, cargo care, and passenger care.



The Essential of using SMCP for Internal and External Communication

Communication between internal and external interests becomes crucial in the job field, especially onboard vessels or on land. The language used is English, as the international and legal language used around the world. Good radio communication becomes the most important priority due to avoiding accidents and incidents at sea. The result of the data about the nature of SMCP on actual board vessels can be seen based on the result of the questionnaires. It was found that the number of using SMCP as optional, recommended, and mandatory both in onboard and external communication settings was different. The data of these perceptions can be seen as follow:

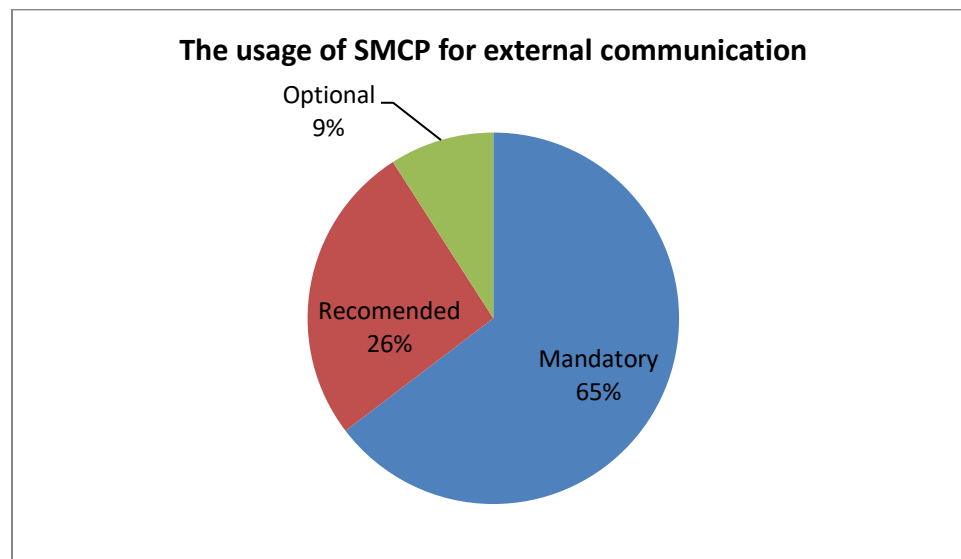


Figure 1: The Usage of SMCP for the External Communication

The chart shows that the usage of SMCP for external communication is 9% optional, 26% for recommend, and 65% mandatory. Therefore, using English while having radio communication onboard a vessel is obligatory because the seafarer's job is related to foreign crew and vessels. The job relates to plotting the navigational route and doing berthing and

unberthing, anchorage, docking, bunkering, etcetera.

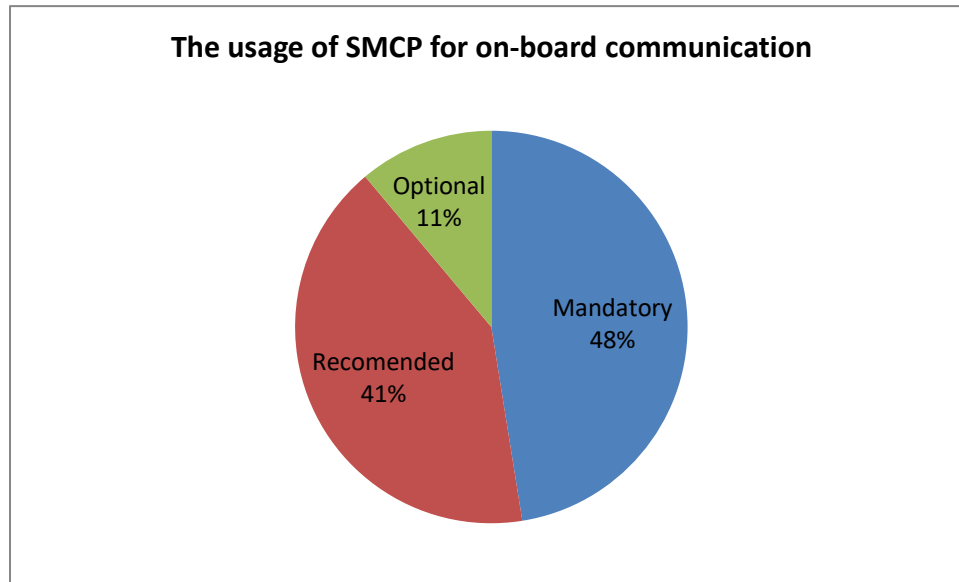


Figure 2: The Usage of SMCP for on-board Communication

The chart above shows that the usage of English in crew radio communication, especially for onboard communication, differs in number. 11% of respondents chose optionally, 41% chose recommended, and 48% chose mandatory. This percentage is quite different from the external communication data above. In other words, the different vessel has its different call signs, MMSi number, particular ship, and seaworthy document.

In line with the result of gathering data from questionnaires, it can be concluded that the data all the respondents used radio communication through various topics of discussion like the following table:

Table 3: Various Topics Related with SMCP Standard

No	Topics onboard communication	Very often (%)	Often (%)	Quite often (%)	Not often (%)	Seldom (%)	Never (%)
1	The use of SMCP for external communication	35.3	41.2	8.8	2.9	11.8	0
2	The use of SMCP for internal communication	17.6	38.2	20.6	17.6	5.9	0

3	The use of topic “ General exchange information ship-to-ship	20.6	58.8	11.8	5.9	0	2.9
4	The use of topic “ General exchange information ship-to-shore	11.8	52.9	26.5	5.9	0	2.9
5	Communication with VTS stations	29.4	41.2	5.9	8.8	11.8	0
6	The use distress communication	8.8	2.9	14.7	17.6	38.2	17.6
7	The use of urgency communication	8.8	8.8	14.7	23.5	29.4	14.7
8	The use of safety communication	20.6	26.5	14.7	20.6	11.8	5.9
9	Communication using standard of GMDSS	14.7	29.4	20.6	17.6	14.7	2.9
10	The use of Pilotage	9.1	60.6	6.1	9.1	12.1	3
11	The use of SAR	8.8	26.5	11.8	11.8	29.4	11.8
12	Requesting medical assistance	9.1	21.2	3	6.1	42.4	18.2

From the table above, the 12 topics discussed by using English in radio communication tend to be different based on the need and necessities of the crew on the vessel. Based on the table above, various topics happened when the respondents were onboard and used the radio to communicate. The area of issues that had the most significant percentage were: the use of SMCP for external communication (41.2%), for internal communication (38.2%), “ General exchange information ship-to-ship (58.8%), General exchange information ship-to-shore (52.9%), communication with VTS stations (41.2%), safety communication (26.5%), communication using the standard of GMDSS (29.4%), Pilotage (60.6%), whereas the topics which seldom used were; the use distress communication (38.2%), urgency communication (29.4%), SAR (29.4%), and requesting medical assistance (42.4%).



Besides the above various topic, the common problems found by the respondents are: 1) There is the different accent of the speaker, which make the crew unclear in receiving the language, 2) sometimes the interlocutor does not know the meaning comprehensively, 3) the lack of practice, 4) lack of training and master the vocabulary, 5) the interlocutors do not use SMCP.

The Essential of Using General Maritime Communication

The topic of general maritime English was taught in the early semester to support the success of English communication through radio devices. The IMO curriculum has also decided on some issues related to the activities that use SMCP. Below is the result analysis of the English curriculum, which guideline the course outline and maritime English teaching.

The following table 1 shows the data on maritime English teaching (MET) and the usage of general maritime communication in the context of Onboard Communication (OC) and External Communication (EC):

Table 4: Course outline and category of maritime English teaching (MET) in one semester

No	Course outline	Category		App time hours (based on trainers' need)	
		OC	EC	Classroom hours	Self-study hours
1	Comprehend standard helms orders	√		8	2
2	Name position onboard; give directions onboard and ashore	√	√	10	2
3	Describe routine operation onboard; describe watchkeeping duties; understand standard engine order	√	√	8	2
4	Understand commands in emergency situations onboard.	√	√	10	2



5	Check supplies, cargo number and safety, passanger information, discuss cargo handling procedure; report damage to carry cargoes.	√	√	10	2
6	Describe weather conditions; understand weather forecasts	√	√	10	2
7	Report event from past voyages; describe main engine and propulsion	√		15	2
8	Report detail of incidents at sea	√	√	20	2
9	Request for medical assistance		√	15	2
10	VHF communnication regardng bunkering, distress and urgency message using SMCP	√	√	18	2
	Total	9	8	126	20

From table 2 above, there is a ten-course outline that is available in one semester. Each course outline has its different category and approximate time hours (based on the students' or trainers' needs). Category numbers 2,3,4,5,6,8 and 10 have a category for onboard and external communication, while numbers 1 and 10 are external communication categories. The total classroom activity is 126 hours, and the self-study activity is 20 hours. Those hour standard classifications are based on what is suggested in the IMO Model course curriculum. However, for the higher vocational school, those can be adjusted based on the need and interest. The curriculum's core section or topic materials can also be classified into four sections: General Maritime English (GME) and Specialised Maritime English (SME). SME consisted of 1) Specialised Maritime English for officers in charge of a navigational watch on ships of 500 gross tonnages or more, 2) Specialised maritime English for officers in charge of an engineering watch in a manned engine-room or designed duty engineers in a periodically

From the above explanation, this Maritime English (MarEng) skill becomes one of English for Specific Purpose (ESP) available in Politeknik Bumi Akpelni Semarang. MarEng is one of 29 general subjects listed in the curriculum, besides three subjects for navigational function and



GMDSS radio operation training (done after Prala). This subject is given starting from semester one until semester four in Nautical Study Program (Diploma 3). MarEng consisted of practice and theory. Below is the data for the credit semester, which is available in the Nautical Department: unmanned engine room, 3) Specialised maritime English for Electro-Technical Officers (ETO) (IMO Model Course, 2015).

Table b: Semester Credit System (SCS) of Nautical Students

Semester	SCS Theory	SCS Practice	Number of hours		Total
			Theory	Practice	
1	1	1	13.33	107	120
2	0	1			
3	0	1			
4	0	1			
Total	1	4			

The table shows that Maritime English (MarEng) is given from semester one until 4, with different SCS for each theory and practice. The total hours for theory are 13.33 and 107 for practice. Therefore, the total hours to be given during four semesters or two years of study in the academy is 120 hours. Human Resource Transportation Agency also defines this under the Ministry of transportation. The duration of learning in higher maritime vocational for Diploma III is five years with 108 minimum SCS and a maximum of 120 SCS.

The Nature of Maritime English Teaching

Maritime English Teaching (MET) means a teaching activity focusing on language and topics related to the maritime domain, and the person who teaches this language must have a qualified certification. Besides, the nature of MET in the context of onboard and external communication only could be found in the topic of SMCP. However, this topic was only given in some of the meeting of the lesson during the four semesters. However, teaching material about using SMCP can be continued after finishing regular classes, like before using CBT and practicing to bridge simulator, room, and using the GMDSS laboratory.

The nature of MET in the context of onboard and external communication can be seen from the following chart:



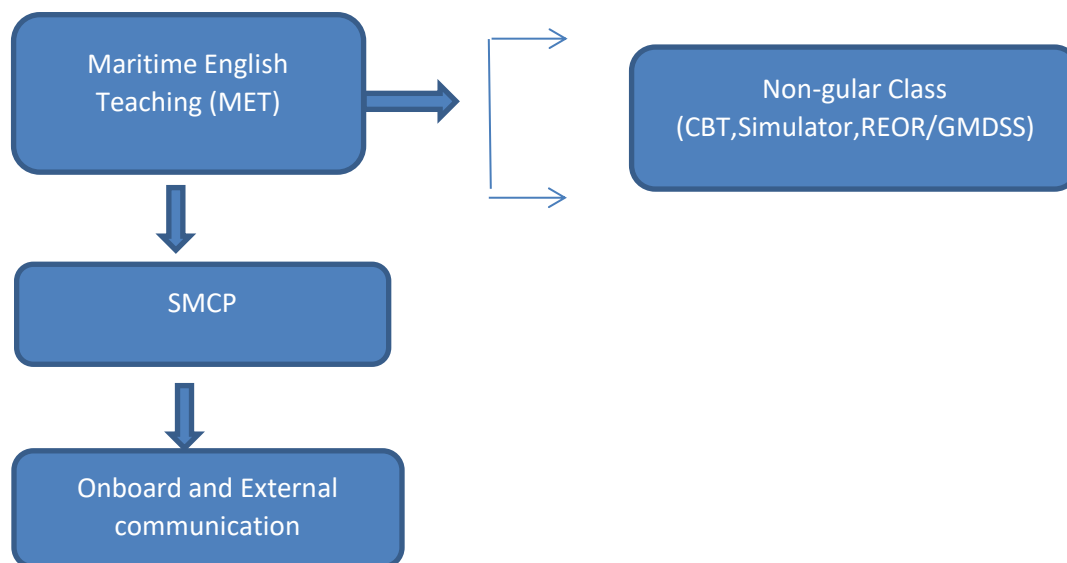


Figure 3: The Nature of MET in the Context of Onboard and External Communication

Maritime English Teaching (MET) is conducted in the form of regular and irregular classes (meetings). The regular class means teaching English in the maritime domain is given since cadets are in the first – fourth semester, and even the subject of the SMCP material cannot be found in all meetings of the teaching-learning process. However, irregular class is conducted after the cadets finish fulfilling the fourth semester. After that, the cadets have a schedule to do CBT activity and continue with simulator activity if the cadets meet the requirements.

From the table, it can be seen that Maritime English (MarEng) is given from semester one until four and has a different Semester Credit System for each theory and practice. The total hours for theory are 13.33 and 107 for practice. Therefore, the total hours to be given during four semesters or two years of study in the academy is 120 hours. Human Resource Development also defines this as Transportation Agency (BPSDM) under Ministry of Transportation. The duration of learning in higher maritime vocational for Diploma III is five years with 108 minimum SKS and a maximum of 120 SKS.

Maritime English Teaching (MET) is a teaching activity focusing on language and maritime domain topics. The person who teaches this language must have a qualified certification.

However, teaching material about using SMCP can be continued after regular classes, like before using CBT and practicing to bridge simulator, room, and the GMDSS laboratory.

Table 5: The Weaknessess and Strengths of Regular and Non Regular Classes

No	Types of Classes	Classification	
		Weaknesess	Strengths
1	Regular Class	- SMCP material was less - SMCP Practice was less than 40%. - Non-proffesional seafarer - Uncertified in maritime competence	The atmosphere of General maritime English was much
2	Non Regular Class	The atmosphere of General maritime English was less	- SMCP material was much - SMCP Practice was more than 60%. - Certified in maritime competence

The table above shows that the weakness of regular classes derived from SMCP material is not given in each meeting in one semester, so the material is less and not maximum. Moreover, the practice of using SMCP was less than 40%. Therefore this is different from the demand of BPSDM requirements. Besides, The lecturer is not a professional seafarer and does not have maritime competence or professional seafarer certification. On the other hand, the strength of this regular class can be seen from the atmosphere of General maritime English was much used and implemented in the classroom.

The following discussion was from the strength of a non-regular class. It can be proved by SMCP material which was given entirely in each meeting during the program running because, after the briefing, the cadets got to practice in Simulator bridge. Therefore, the practice of using SMCP was much more than 60%, and the instructor's background comes from ex-seafarers and had maritime competence certifications like IMO model course 6.09, IMO model course 3.12,

and also IMO 3.10. Those certifications were supporting certification to fulfill the requirements of Human.

CONCLUSION

The Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) can be used in two ways: through formal education and job practice on board. The SMCP is the additional and complete English material that cannot be found in English maritime books. The content of the SMCP book is mainly discussed External communication phrases and onboard communication phrases. However, the less awareness of Using the Standard Marine Communication Phrase (SMCP) has become the most significant tendency to make the seafarers reluctant to use the SMCP while working in the bridge room. These reluctances can create unwillingness to accident between vessel to vessel or vessel to another object. Overcoming these problems requires an exemplary commitment to implementing the curriculum from the International Maritime Organization (IMO), having a suitable teaching method, and having a deep awareness of the use of the phrases on the job. Therefore, using SMCP while running the vessel onboard ship is essential to avoid accidents and incidents at sea.

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