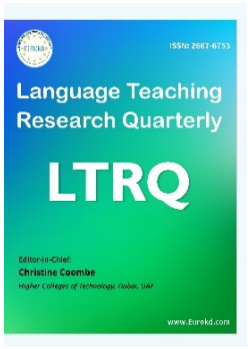


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# Blended Task-Based Language Teaching in Maritime English: Voices of Indonesian Seafarer Upgrading Program Students

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**Abstract**

Blended learning in maritime education, particularly in the Seafarer Upgrading Program, faces challenges in adapting effective teaching methods for Maritime English (ME) instruction. A promising approach, Blended Task-Based Language Teaching (B-TBLT), combines Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) with blended learning environments. However, limited studies have explored students' perspectives on its implementation. This study endeavours to investigate students' perceptions of B-TBLT in ME teaching. Data were collected from twenty Deck Officer Class IV students who were enrolled in ME instruction with B-TBLT using a mixed-method approach. This was achieved through questionnaires and interviews. The results indicate that students perceive B-TBLT positively, particularly in improved language skills, satisfaction and engagement, task relevance to real-world applications, and the role of technology. Moreover, the students expressed favourable views on the blended learning format, as it helped them increase independence and collaboration. Despite these positives, challenges related to time management and learning balance were identified. These findings underscore the potential of B-TBLT in ME education and provide implications for improving blended learning strategies in specialized training programs, particularly in vocational contexts.

**Keywords:** *Blended-Task Based Language Teaching, Blended Learning, Maritime English, Seafarer Students*

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## Introduction

Maritime industries play a critical role in global trade and transportation, necessitating proficient English communication skills among seafarers. Maritime English (ME), as a specialized field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), addresses these needs by equipping

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seafarers with skills for competencies such as radio communication, emergency procedures, and report writing (Pejaković, 2014). The International Maritime Organization (IMO) has long advocated for modernizing maritime education through innovative approaches such as blended learning. Blended learning integrates online and face-to-face modalities, providing flexibility while addressing the challenges of practical, real-world maritime applications. This approach gained further momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic, which disrupted traditional learning modalities and necessitated adaptive solutions for ME instruction.

Despite the growing recognition of blended learning, maritime education faces persistent challenges in aligning language instruction with real-world maritime scenarios. Many seafarers struggle to master essential communication skills due to the limited practical engagement offered by traditional methods. Moreover, online-only education often lacks the interactive, hands-on experience required for effective learning in maritime contexts (Ahmmed, 2021). To resolve these challenges, Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT) has arisen as a viable approach that prioritizes authentic, task-oriented learning to connect theoretical knowledge with practical application (Long, 2015; Willis, 1996).

Blended Task-Based Language Teaching (B-TBLT) integrates the core principles of TBLT with the flexibility of blended learning environments. This approach allows students to engage in tasks that mirror their professional responsibilities (Anggoro et al., 2023; Duan, 2020). B-TBLT is particularly effective in fostering language proficiency and intercultural competence by emphasizing meaningful interaction and collaborative learning (Chen, 2019; Wu et al., 2016). Furthermore, the integration of technology in blended learning enhances engagement and accessibility, enabling students to balance independent and collaborative learning activities (Alshahrani, 2023; Kim, 2020; Silalahi et al., 2022).

While extensive research has explored diverse aspects of TBLT such as its implementation (Barrot, 2017; Calvert & Sheen, 2015; Huang, 2015; Manzoor et al., 2020; Poonpon et al., 2022), students' perceptions of TBLT (Gutiérrez, 2024; Sholeh et al., 2021; Torres & Serafini, 2016), and TBLT in a blended learning environment (Anggoro et al., 2023; Chen, 2019; Guo & Möllering, 2016; Liontou, 2015; Lu et al., 2022), studies focusing on its integration within blended learning environments remain limited. Specifically, there is a lack of research investigating seafarer students' perceptions of B-TBLT in ME instruction. Existing studies often overlook the unique challenges faced by adult learners in upgrading programs, including balancing work commitments with learning and managing cognitive load in blended environments (Pérez-Sanagustín et al., 2021; Sweller, 2010). This gap underscores the need for a targeted investigation into the implementation of B-TBLT in maritime education.

This study seeks to examine seafarer students' perspectives regarding the implementation of B-TBLT in ME instruction within Indonesia's Seafarer Upgrading Program, focusing on Deck Officer Class IV. The study highlights students' evaluations of the teaching method, its relevance to real-world applications, and the integration of blended learning. This research is interesting due to its emphasis on seafarer students, an underrepresented demographic in blended learning, and TBLT research. By addressing a critical gap in the literature, the study offers valuable insights for instructors and policymakers seeking to optimize language instruction in maritime education.

**Blended Learning in Maritime Education**

Blended learning, integrating online and in-person training, has proven to be an effective approach in addressing the unique challenges of maritime education. As outlined by the IMO, blended learning offers a flexible, adaptable solution to align with advancements in technology and the specific requirements of maritime training (International Maritime Organization [IMO], 2015). It supports the advancement of both academic knowledge and real-world skills through a mix of synchronous and asynchronous online activities as well as in-person activities (Wai, 2021). This approach allows seafarer students to balance the demands of professional training and real-world application, especially in areas such as ME instruction. In Indonesia, the Ministry of Transportation has emphasized the use of blended learning, integrating online modules with hands-on training in simulators and workshops (Human Resource Development Agency of Transportation Regulation, 2021). This blend addresses the cognitive and practical demands of seafarer training, offering a comprehensive learning experience. In this study, blended learning is relevant due to its capacity to offer a structured yet flexible learning environment for seafarers, thereby enabling the development of their ME skills while also addressing their professional responsibilities. By combining in-person and virtual instruction, this model ensures that students receive practical exposure while leveraging the convenience of digital platforms.

**TBLT in Maritime English**

The learner-centered approach known as TBLT prioritizes the utilization of language to accomplish significant tasks (Long, 2015; Willis, 1996). This approach is particularly suitable for ME instruction, as it mirrors the real-world tasks seafarers encounter, such as ship-to-shore communication, drafting voyage reports, and handling emergency situations (Ahmmed, 2021). Authentic and contextually relevant tasks that promote practical language use and intercultural competence are the main focus of TBLT (Wu et al., 2016). Its holistic approach integrates speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, fostering both fluency and accuracy. In the maritime context, TBLT's emphasis on task authenticity enhances student engagement and motivation, making it a powerful tool for addressing the specific language needs of seafarers. By using tasks that simulate professional maritime scenarios, this study adheres to the principles of TBLT and establishes a connection between academic knowledge and real-world application.

TBLT has consistently demonstrated its efficacy in enhancing language proficiency across various educational settings. Research indicates that TBLT fosters increased student engagement and motivation, and reduced language learning anxiety while creating an enjoyable and productive learning experience (Jin, 2024; Malik & Pervaiz, 2023; Widanta et al., 2024). These benefits underscore TBLT's ability to create a learner-centered environment conducive to language acquisition. In terms of specific language skills, research consistently shows that TBLT is particularly effective in enhancing speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities across different languages and educational contexts. Studies by Basireddi et al. (2025) highlighted that TBLT significantly improves students' speaking abilities by aligning learning tasks with real-life communication needs. TBLT also improved EFL students' critical reading in higher education (Wibowo et al., 2024). Similarly, research in ESP contexts demonstrated that task-based activities significantly improve reading comprehension and content retention,

allowing learners to engage deeply with the material (Yousif, 2020). These findings suggested that TBLT is not only adaptable across contexts but also effective in addressing specific skill sets.

**Blended Task-Based Language Teaching (B-TBLT)**

B-TBLT combines the strengths of TBLT and blended learning, creating a dynamic and adaptive learning environment. B-TBLT facilitates the completion of real-world tasks through a combination of independent online learning and collaborative in-person activities (Anggoro et al., 2023; Duan, 2020). The integration of technologies, including Learning Management Systems (LMS) and simulators, supports both autonomous and collaborative learning, enhancing students' engagement and learning outcomes (Kim, 2020; Silalahi et al., 2022). Moreover, the flipped classroom model often used in B-TBLT encourages students to engage with materials before class, maximizing in-class interactions for task performance and feedback (Wang & Liu, 2018). For this study, B-TBLT serves as the primary framework for investigating the effectiveness of blended learning in ME instruction. By combining authentic task-based activities with flexible learning modes, B-TBLT addresses the practical, linguistic, and cognitive needs of seafarers, making it a relevant and innovative solution for maritime education.

When integrated into blended learning environments, TBLT further amplifies its impact. Duan (2020) investigated the use of TBLT in flipped classrooms for hospitality students and found significant improvements in professional language skills through a combination of online and offline tasks. Similarly, Anggoro et al. (2023) explored the integration of TBLT with Interactive Response Systems (IRS) in virtual environments, which enhanced students' writing skills and engagement. These studies illustrate that combining TBLT with innovative technological tools in blended learning environments not only broadens its applicability but also reinforces its effectiveness in specialized professional contexts.

**Student Perceptions of TBLT in a Blended Learning Context**

It is essential to comprehend how students view TBLT in order to evaluate its effectiveness and reception. Many elements, such as attitudes, interests, expectations, and prior learning experiences, influence perception, which is the process by which people perceive their experiences (Robbins & Judge, 2022). This is a critical area of inquiry in educational research, as the way in which students perceive their learning environment and methodologies directly influences their engagement and learning outcomes. Students' perceptions of TBLT are especially significant in blended learning contexts, as this approach integrates autonomous online tasks with collaborative in-person activities. Positive perceptions often stem from the meaningful, real-world tasks inherent to TBLT, which motivate learners and provide a sense of relevance to their professional goals. These perceptions serve as valuable feedback for educators, providing them with an understanding of their strengths and potential for development in implementing TBLT (Hande et al., 2014). Moreover, incorporating student feedback into the refinement of TBLT method ensures the creation of lessons that are not only engaging and learner-centered but also aligned with the practical and academic needs of students (Ginns & Ellis, 2009). As the primary stakeholders in the learning process, students'

evaluations provide critical direction for enhancing teaching practices, particularly in contexts like ME instruction, where real-world applicability is paramount.

**Self-Determination Theory in Adult Learning**

Ryan and Deci's (2000) Self-Determination Theory (SDT) provides a valuable lens through which to examine human motivation and its impact on learning by focusing on three key psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. People become more intensely engaged, intrinsically driven, and more likely to meet their learning goals when these demands are met (Pelikan et al., 2021). Autonomy is defined as the ability to make independent choices. Relatedness is a feeling of belonging and being appreciated in a group, whereas competence is a person's belief in their own capabilities (Dutt et al., 2023).

The integration of SDT principles can substantially increase student motivation in the setting of adult English language learning. Autonomy can be fostered by designing learning tasks that align with learners' interests and real-world applications (Schiller et al., 2020), leveraging technology for language acquisition (Chiang, 2024; Işık & Balçıkanlı, 2020), and involving learners in decision-making processes (Alrabai, 2021). Supporting competence involves establishing clear learning objectives, designing challenging yet achievable activities that build linguistic skills (Shelton-Strong, 2022), and providing specific, constructive feedback to enhance confidence and language proficiency (Alrabai, 2021; Zarrinabadi et al., 2021). Finally, relatedness can be strengthened by fostering a collaborative and communicative learning environment and promoting positive interpersonal relationships (Han, 2021; Koirala, 2020).

**Method**

*Site*

This study was conducted at a government maritime education and training institution under the Ministry of Transportation of the Republic of Indonesia, which is nationally recognized for its role in producing competent seafarers. The institution operates under rigorous standards and adheres to the STCW (Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping) Convention, influencing both curriculum design and instructional delivery. It offers Seafarer Upgrading Programs for Deck and Engineering Officer Classes V to I. These programs are attended by professional seafarers with prior sailing experience. Since 2021, the institution has implemented blended learning as part of its instructional framework, combining online and face-to-face modalities.

*Design*

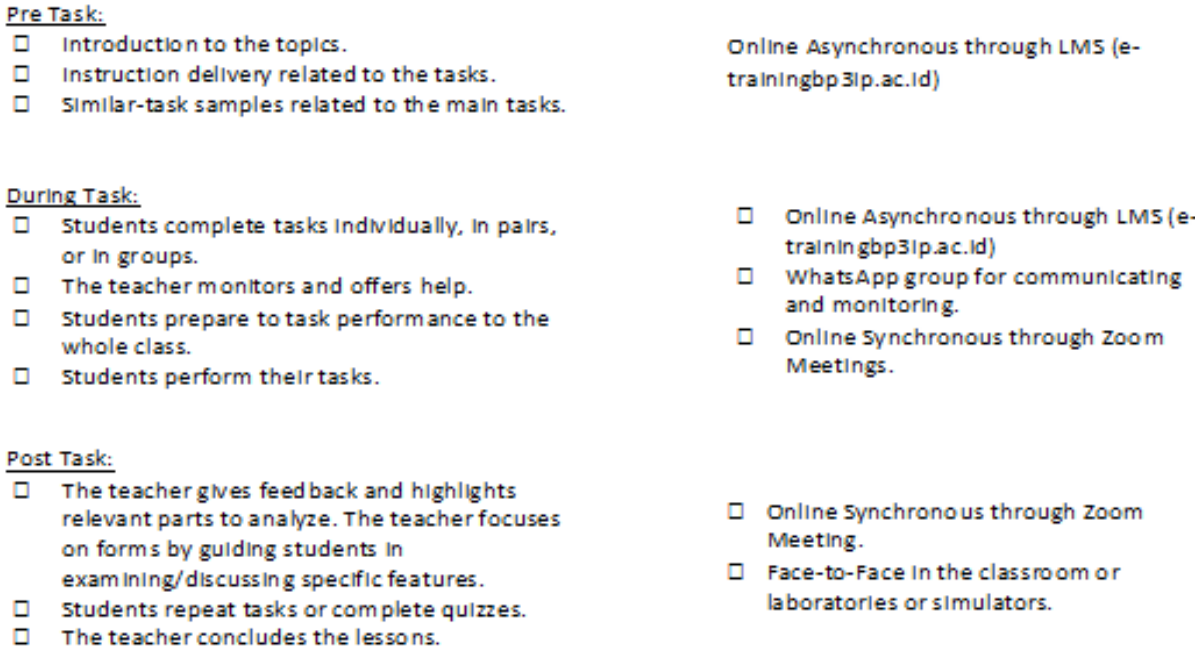
To explore students' perceptions regarding B-TBLT, a mixed-methods approach was employed. This approach facilitates a thorough examination of the research objectives by combining quantitative and qualitative methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The B-TBLT was conducted for Deck Officer Class IV students over a four-month period, with 112 instructional hours dedicated to ME. The instructional design incorporated online sessions via a Learning Management System (LMS) asynchronously and Zoom meetings synchronously, complemented by face-to-face activities held in classrooms, laboratories, and simulators.

During the first three months, instruction was delivered online. Asynchronous learning involved modules on the LMS which included readings, audios, videos, and scenario-based tasks related to onboard communication and operations. Synchronous learning was conducted once a week via Zoom Meetings, where students interacted with the teacher, presented task outcomes, engaged in discussion, and received real-time feedback. A WhatsApp group was also maintained to facilitate continuous communication and monitoring between sessions.

In the final month, students transitioned to face-to-face sessions. These sessions were held in classrooms, laboratories, and bridge simulators. Students practiced simulator-based tasks, repeated earlier tasks under real-time conditions, and participated in assessments. The structure of B-TBLT presented in Figure 1 reflects the phased integration of task-based activities and blended learning components.

**Figure 1**

*The Design of the B-TBLT in this Study*




*Participants*

The study involved 20 students enrolled in the Deck Officer Class IV of the Seafarer Upgrading Program, conducted between July and November 2024. These students completed the full 112 instructional hours of ME designed under the B-TBLT framework. As detailed in Table 1, all participants were male, reflecting the predominant gender in the maritime industry. Their varied age ranges, sailing experiences, and device preferences for online learning represent key mediating variables that were considered during the study. Notably, 90% of the students accessed the online learning components via smartphones, indicating a high level of adaptability of the LMS to diverse technological resources and user preferences.

**Table 1**

*Demographic Characteristics of Sample (N=20)*

| Category | Category | Frequency (person) | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender | Male | 20 | 100 |
| | Female | 0 | 0 |
| Age (years old) | 21 – 25 | 2 | 10 |
| | 26 - 30 | 4 | 20 |
| | 31 - 35 | 3 | 15 |
| | 36 - 40 | 3 | 15 |
| | 41 - 45 | 5 | 25 |
| | >45 | 3 | 15 |
| Sailing Experiences (years) | 5 – 10 | 8 | 40 |
| | 11 - 15 | 5 | 25 |
| | 16 - 20 | 3 | 15 |
| | 21 - 25 | 3 | 15 |
| | >25 | 1 | 5 |
| Online Learning Access Device | Computer/Laptop | 2 | 10 |
| | Smartphone | 18 | 90 |

*Instruments*

A questionnaire was used to measure students' perceptions of the implementation of B-TBLT. The instrument was adapted from the Subject-Specific Student Perception Survey (SPS_ML) developed by Molway (2021) and the Perceptions of the Blended Learning Environment Questionnaire (PBLEQ) by Han and Ellis (2020). It consisted of 66 statements categorized under eight dimensions, addressing both the language teaching approach and the blended learning environment. The questionnaire included three main sections: an introduction explaining the study's purpose and ensuring the confidentiality of responses, a section for collecting demographic information, and a series of statements to assess students' perceptions. To ensure contextual relevance and clarity, the questionnaire was translated into Indonesian and piloted with five students before distribution. The instrument was validated by two English instructors, and Cronbach's alpha reliability testing produced a coefficient of 0.97, which suggests high reliability. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were implemented to acquire a more profound understanding of students' perceptions regarding B-TBLT. The interviews explored two main areas: the implementation of TBLT and the blended learning environment. These interviews complemented the quantitative data by providing rich, qualitative perspectives on the students' learning experiences.

*Data Collection and Analysis*

Prior to data collection, ethical clearance was obtained. Using Google Forms, the questionnaire was distributed to all 20 students, and the link was also shared online. Six participants were purposively selected for follow-up interviews due to their commitment to participating in both online and face-to-face sessions, ensuring a detailed exploration of their experiences. The interviews were conducted individually, with each participant provided with a list of questions beforehand to ensure understanding of the prompts. Interviews were audio-recorded to facilitate accurate transcription and analysis.

The data analysis employed a systematic method to integrate quantitative and qualitative findings. IBM SPSS Statistics 26 was used to analyze quantitative data obtained from the questionnaire responses. To provide an overview of students' perceptions across various

dimensions of the B-TBLT implementation, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were computed. For the qualitative data, interview recordings were transcribed verbatim. The transcriptions were carefully reviewed and coded, allowing for detailed descriptions and thematic categorizations (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Themes were then presented and discussed in detail to emphasize key aspects of students' learning experiences. The combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses established a thorough analysis of students' perceptions regarding B-TBLT. This mixed-method approach enabled a robust understanding of the B-TBLT on students' learning experiences in ME, integrating statistical trends with contextual insights.

## Results

This study found that students expressed a generally positive perception of B-TBLT implementation. These perceptions are reflected in seven key findings, which are summarized in Table 2.

**Table 2**

*The Summary of Key Findings by Themes*

| Main theme | Sub-Theme | Data Source |
|---|---|---|
| Overview of students' perceptions | Generally positive perception (Mean: 4.28/5); highest scores in IFO (4.59) and CM (4.58); lowest in OW (2.84). | Questionnaire |
| Student satisfaction and engagement | Supportive learning environment; active participation and positive interaction; effective integration of online and face-to-face learning. | Questionnaire (CM, IFO)<br>Interview |
| Perceived improvement in language skills | Significant improvement in speaking and writing skills; realistic tasks and constructive feedback were considered highly beneficial. | Questionnaire (LTP, SCE)<br>Interview |
| Relevance of tasks to real-world and exams | Simulation tasks were seen as relevant to maritime work and exam preparation; task design aligned with exam formats. | Questionnaire (CC, IFO)<br>Interview |
| Role of technology in ME teaching | Zoom, LMS, and WhatsApp supported interaction and flexibility; technology-based maritime simulator use increased motivation and collaboration. | Questionnaire (OC, SCE)<br>Interview |
| Blended learning: independence & collaboration | Students showed increased independence; effective collaboration through pair tasks; instructor support built confidence. | Questionnaire (SCE, CC, CM, LTP)<br>Interview |
| Perceived challenges in time management and learning balance | Online tasks were perceived as heavy; difficulties in balancing time with personal responsibilities; importance of balancing online and face-to-face modes. | Questionnaire (OW)<br>Interview |

### *Overview of Students' Perceptions of B-TBLT Implementation*

The questionnaire results, as illustrated in Table 3, suggest that students generally held positive perceptions of the B-TBLT implementation in ME instruction. The effectiveness and relevance of the method were strongly supported by the aggregate mean score of 4.28 out of 5 across all measured dimensions. The highest mean score was observed for the integration of face-to-face and online learning (4.59), followed by classroom management (4.58), reflecting the effectiveness of the instructional design. However, challenges were noted in the online

workload dimension, which received the lowest mean score (2.84), thereby pointing out specific areas requiring improvement in workload balance.

**Table 3**

*The Results of Students' Perception Questionnaire in B-TBLT Implementation*

| Method | Aspects | Dimensions | Mean | SD |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Blended-Task Based Language Teaching | Task Based Language Teaching | Student learning (SL) | 4.52 | .681 |
| | | Student-centered environment (SCE) | 4.56 | .571 |
| | | Classroom community (CC) | 4.16 | .571 |
| | | Classroom management (CM) | 4.58 | .587 |
| | | Language teaching principle (LTP) | 4.50 | .571 |
| | Blended Learning Environment | Integration between face-to-face and online learning (IFO) | 4.59 | .826 |
| | | Online contributions (OC) | 4.51 | .587 |
| | | Online workload (OW) | 2.84 | .444 |
| | Overall | | 4.28 | |

*Student Satisfaction and Engagement with B-TBLT Implementation*

The B-TBLT approach was well-received by students, who expressed satisfaction with its implementation. This underscores the effectiveness of the instructional methods implemented in the ME instruction. Interview data revealed that students highly valued the supportive and positive learning environment fostered by ME instructors. They noted the encouraging atmosphere, which promoted active participation and engagement in both online and in-person sessions. The positive dynamics of collaboration among students and mutual respect between students and instructors were further reflected in the questionnaire data, which showed high ratings in the Classroom Management (CM) dimension, particularly regarding the facilitation of respect and cooperation.

Students also appreciated the integration of online activities, which were closely aligned with in-person learning experiences. The Integration of Face-to-Face and Online (IFO) dimension received the highest scores of the questionnaire results, suggesting that the online components were effectively designed to complement in-person instruction. Interview data also emphasized the benefits of online learning's flexibility, enabling self-paced review and study, while in-person courses facilitated a more thorough understanding and practical application of ME concepts.

*Perceived Improvement in Language Skills*

A central theme emerging from the data was the perceived improvement in students' ME language skills, particularly in speaking. Students reported significant advancements in their speaking abilities, attributed to the ample opportunities provided by instructors for practice through tasks such as ship-to-ship communication dialogues and peer discussions on internal ship communication. The questionnaire results confirmed this, with high ratings in the Language Teaching Principles (LTP) dimension, particularly regarding the encouragement to use English consistently and employ complete sentences during communication tasks. These speaking tasks were viewed by students as both realistic and engaging, fostering the development of confidence in verbal communication.

In addition to speaking skills, students also perceived improvements in their writing, specifically in composing ship reports using appropriate terminology and grammar. The

guidance and constructive feedback provided by instructors during writing tasks were key to these improvements. These aspects were corroborated by high ratings for LTP in the questionnaire and interviews, where students emphasized the importance of feedback in helping them refine their skills, identify strengths, and address weaknesses. The Student-Centered Environment (SCE) dimension reflected students' appreciation of feedback, with high scores indicating its role in motivating continued language development.

*Relevance of Tasks to Real-World Applications and Exam Preparation*

The alignment of B-TBLT tasks with real-world maritime applications and exam preparation emerged as a crucial factor in students' perceptions. Students highly valued tasks that closely mirrored practical scenarios they might encounter in maritime contexts. Interview data revealed that activities such as radio communication simulations and ship accident report writing were particularly effective in providing authentic learning experiences. These tasks were seen as not only relevant to their future professional roles but also valuable for exam preparation. High ratings in the Classroom Community (CC) dimension for materials such as videos, books, and articles further supported this notion, highlighting the global use of English in maritime contexts. Additionally, students appreciated the clear alignment between task design and exam formats. The questionnaire data for the IFO dimension showed that online learning activities were particularly effective in preparing students for exams. Interview responses reinforced this, with students noting that tasks and quizzes mirrored exam structures, thus providing practical experience and boosting their preparedness for assessments. This alignment contributed to students' sense of confidence and readiness for the exams.

*The Role of Technology in Maritime English Teaching*

In the implementation of B-TBLT, technology significantly improved students' learning experiences. The technology used in the course, especially the Zoom Meetings and the LMS, was viewed favourably by the students. The synchronous Zoom sessions facilitated real-time interactions with both peers and instructors, providing opportunities for task performance and immediate feedback. The flexibility of the LMS, which supported asynchronous learning, was also highly valued, as it allowed students to engage with materials and complete tasks at their own pace. These findings were supported by positive questionnaire responses, especially in the Online Contribution (OC) dimension, where students indicated that online activities motivated them to engage more deeply with the course content. Furthermore, the use of WhatsApp groups for communication among students and instructors was noted as a vital tool for maintaining ongoing interaction during the online learning phases. Students appreciated the ease of communication and the prompt responses from instructors, contributing to a supportive learning environment. These perceptions were reflected in the high ratings for the SCE dimension, which indicated that the availability of communication channels significantly enhanced students' motivation and learning progress. The use of technology-based simulators during face-to-face sessions, which mirrored online learning activities, was also praised, confirming the effective integration of technology in both learning modalities.

*Blended Learning in B-TBLT: Fostering Independence and Collaboration*

Blended learning was instrumental in fostering students' independence in managing their learning. The integration of both online and face-to-face components provided students with the flexibility to study at their own pace, significantly enhancing their sense of autonomy. Many students reported taking greater responsibility for their learning during the asynchronous online sessions, where they actively sought out information and completed tasks independently. The questionnaire data for LTP confirmed this trend, with high ratings for statements related to independent learning in ME. Students also demonstrated improved time management and problem-solving skills, vital components for effective language acquisition in the maritime context.

The opportunities for communication and collaboration offered by the blended learning environment were also highly valued by students. The data obtained from the questionnaire indicated that the SCE, CC, and CM dimensions were viewed favorably, particularly in terms of the opportunity to interact with peers and instructors, respectful interactions, and well-organized discussion spaces. Interviews highlighted how pair tasks, which required an active exchange of ideas and collaborative problem-solving, were especially effective in promoting communication and collaboration. Furthermore, students appreciated the face-to-face sessions, where they had the opportunity to explain operational procedures on simulators to peers in English. This task, while initially challenging, was deemed rewarding, as it facilitated both language practice and collaboration. The instructor's encouragement to engage in these tasks without the fear of making mistakes further boosted students' confidence and willingness to participate. This was reflected in high ratings for the LTP dimension, indicating the importance of teacher support in fostering a risk-taking attitude in language use.

*Perceived Challenges in Time Management and Learning Balance*

Despite the positive aspects of the blended approach, students faced significant challenges in managing their time effectively. The questionnaire and interview data both indicated that there were concerns regarding the heavy workload associated with online assignments and the difficulty in balancing academic demands with personal responsibilities, such as work and family commitments. The Online Workload (OW) dimension in the questionnaire recorded the lowest mean scores, particularly in relation to time management challenges. Students acknowledged the need for greater discipline to meet deadlines and manage complex or time-consuming tasks. Moreover, students emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between online and face-to-face learning to optimize the benefits of both modalities. While online learning provided flexibility, face-to-face sessions were crucial for practicing speaking and receiving immediate feedback from instructors. This integration of both learning environments was considered essential for maximizing the effectiveness of B-TBLT.

## Discussion

This study examined students' perceptions of the implementation of B-TBLT in ME instruction within the Seafarer Upgrading Program, Deck Officer Class IV. The findings indicate that students generally held positive perceptions of B-TBLT, particularly regarding its role in fostering engagement, motivation, and language skill development. These perceptions resonate with the principles of Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), which posits

that learning experiences are optimized when they support learners' autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

A key finding was the high student satisfaction with the combination of both online and in-person learning, which was reflected in the highest mean scores in the questionnaire. Students enjoyed the flexibility of online learning and also valued face-to-face interactions that facilitated deeper understanding and immediate feedback. This satisfaction was not only a matter of preference but appeared to stem from how each modality addressed different student needs. The flexibility of online learning enabled students to manage their study time around professional or family obligations, a crucial factor given that 65% of participants were over 30 years old and many had ongoing maritime or household responsibilities. Online access via smartphones (reported by 90% of students) further enhanced this flexibility, especially for those in environments with limited access to desktop computers or stable internet connections. Simultaneously, students valued face-to-face sessions for their structured practice and instructor feedback, elements essential for developing speaking and operational communication skills in ME. This dual approach promoted both independent learning and collaborative engagement (Liu, 2015; Ibrahim, 2020; Printer, 2024), thereby reinforcing the SDT perspective that autonomy and relatedness are necessary for sustained motivation in learning.

Furthermore, students across different age groups and levels of sailing experience highlighted the positive classroom culture, marked by mutual respect and cooperation. Older participants often took on informal mentoring roles during in-person activities, offering guidance to less experienced peers. This dynamic not only enriched the collaborative environment but also reinforced students’ sense of belonging, a critical factor in adult education contexts. These observations align with existing literature on classroom climate and student engagement (Kirby & Thomas, 2021; Luo et al., 2021; Ooi & Cortina, 2023; Qureshi et al., 2021). However, contrasting evidence is presented by Morreale (2018), who observed that generational gaps can lead to intergenerational conflict due to differences in communication styles, learning preferences, and approaches to feedback. This suggest that B-TBLT, when implemented with sensitivity to student demographics, can create a powerful space for meaningful professional language development.

Another noteworthy aspect is the reported improvement of students in ME with particular emphasis placed in the areas of speaking and writing. For speaking, tasks such as ship-to-ship communication and internal ship communication were seen as highly useful for boosting confidence and fluency. This aligns with the findings of James et al. (2018) who emphasizes that authentic communicative activities, including simulations of maritime communication scenarios, are effective in enhancing learners' speaking skills and building their confidence in professional settings. Likewise, writing tasks, including ship reports, enabled students to improve their technical writing skills. These improvements align with the notion of competence in SDT's concept, as students felt increasingly capable of using ME for professional communication. However, competence development was not uniform. It was mediated by students’ prior sailing experience group. For instance, students with over 15 years of maritime service tended to perform speaking tasks with greater ease, likely due to their familiarity with radio communication protocols and on-board communication.

Writing skill development also showed variation. Students in the 41–45+ age group, while professionally experienced, initially faced challenges with grammar and structure. This was likely due to habitual use of concise, operational language in their maritime roles, which differs from the formal style required in written tasks. Despite this, they demonstrated notable progress after receiving constructive feedback and engaging in collaborative editing, which helped them gradually transition from workplace discourse to academic writing. This supported their perceived competence and reinforced motivation, illustrating how instructional design that scaffolds challenges can effectively meet SDT's criteria for competence-driven engagement. This aligns with previous research (Abdalgane, 2023; Liu & Aryadoust, 2024; Motallebzadeh et al., 2020; Rahmanova et al., 2024; Vattøy, 2020), emphasizing feedback's role in enhancing both performance and student confidence.

The relevance of B-TBLT tasks to real-world maritime applications further reinforced student engagement. Tasks such as radio communication simulations and ship accident report writing were perceived as authentic and practical, increasing students' motivation to participate actively (Alioon & Delialioğlu, 2019; Kołsut & Szumilas, 2023; Ryandani et al., 2018; Ulla, 2020; Widanta et al., 2024). This finding is consistent with SDT's principle that learning is most effective when students see its real-world applicability, satisfying the need for relatedness and competence. Students' prior sailing experience played a mediating role in how they connected with these tasks. Those with over 15 years of maritime service reported feeling a stronger sense of task familiarity, which enhanced their confidence and perceived task authenticity. The alignment of tasks with professional scenarios and exam formats also contributed to students' confidence and preparedness for assessments, making the learning experience more meaningful.

Technology played a crucial role in enhancing students' learning experiences in B-TBLT. The integration of Zoom meetings, LMS, and WhatsApp groups facilitated real-time communication, asynchronous learning, and continuous engagement (Alamer & Khateeb, 2021; Kohnke & Moorhouse, 2020; Muhammad & Nagaletchimee, 2023; Naghdipour & Manca, 2022; Silalahi et al., 2022; Suárez-Lantarón et al., 2022). Students particularly valued the ability to interact with instructors and peers in multiple ways, which supported both their sense of autonomy in managing how and when they engaged with course content and enhanced their relatedness through sustained interpersonal connection. The use of technology-based simulators during face-to-face sessions also mirrored online learning activities, reinforcing the seamless integration of digital tools in ME instruction, fulfilling key SDT conditions by enabling self-directed learning, peer interaction, and competence development in a flexible yet structured format. However, while these technologies appeared to support motivation and engagement, some researchers caution against overestimating their pedagogical value. For example, Rafalow & Puckett (2021) argues that digital technologies often reinforce existing educational inequalities rather than resolve them, particularly when access and digital literacy vary among students. In the maritime education context, students working in remote locations or with limited connectivity may experience uneven benefits from tech-enhanced instruction. These concerns suggest that while technology can enrich B-TBLT, its integration must be intentionally designed to avoid exacerbating barriers and to ensure

equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Despite these positive aspects, students encountered issues with regard to managing time and balancing learning activities. The OW received the lowest mean score in the questionnaire, indicating that students found it difficult to manage their academic responsibilities alongside work and personal commitments (Al-Amrani & Al-Ghaithi, 2023). This issue was especially pronounced among students aged 36 and above, many of whom reported feeling overwhelmed due to the competing demands of professional duties and domestic roles. These findings align with SDT's recognition that autonomy must be supported with appropriate scaffolding to prevent feelings of overload or frustration (Maisonneuve et al., 2025). In this case, while asynchronous learning allowed flexibility, the volume and pacing of online assignments, particularly those requiring extended writing on smartphones, added pressure rather than promoting autonomy. To address this, more structured time management strategies and workload adjustments may be needed to optimize the effectiveness of B-TBLT (Pérez-Sanagustín et al., 2021; Shumeiko & Nypadymka, 2022; Yudt et al., 2024). Ultimately, the success of B-TBLT hinges not only on task design but also on how well the learning environment accommodates the diverse life contexts of adult learners.

## Conclusion

This study offers a fresh perspective by exploring seafarer students' experiences with B-TBLT in ME instruction within the Seafarer Upgrading Program, Deck Officer Class IV. Although numerous studies have been carried out on TBLT and blended learning in various educational settings, this study extends the literature by specifically examining the integration of these approaches within the unique setting of ME education. The findings offer valuable insights into the way in which B-TBLT can be modified to meet the requirements of adult learners in vocational training programs, where real-world applicability, professional communication skills, and the integration of technology are essential.

The study aimed to understand how students' views on the B-TBLT implementation in teaching ME within the Seafarer Upgrading Program, Deck Officer Class IV. The findings show that students have a positive perception of B-TBLT due to its unique feature to improve ME skills through a real-world application. Students appreciated the opportunities for independent learning and collaboration, with a notable emphasis on the importance of classroom management and respect in the learning environment. There is strong evidence from this study that blended learning environments can greatly assist in the effective management of students' collaborative and individual work. The study also reveals that students struggle in managing time effectively, which signifies that students need help on how to allocate time to various learning activities.

From a practical standpoint, this study offers valuable implications for ME instruction in vocational contexts. First, instructors must be equipped to facilitate authentic, profession-oriented tasks that not only mirror operational communication but also foster learner autonomy and competence. Second, course designers should be attentive to workload demands and ensure task complexity remains challenging without overwhelming students. Third, institutional support for time management, feedback, and

digital access, especially for mobile learning, is essential to fully realize the potential of blended learning for adult professionals.

Several aspects of this study warrant consideration as limitations. The relatively small number of participants, comprising 20 male seafarers from a single institution in Indonesia, may influence the extent to which these findings can be applied to a larger population, specifically beyond the scope of ME upgrading programs for seafarers. Furthermore, the use of interviews and questionnaires as the main data collection method could introduce bias, particularly if students felt pressured to provide answers that aligned with the researcher's expectations. Lastly, The study was also restricted to one instructional cycle of four months, making it difficult to evaluate long-term effects. These delimitations were intentional, focusing on capturing the student experience in depth within a specific maritime upgrading program context.

To validate and extend findings of the current study, a larger sample across different maritime institutions with a greater emphasis on specific language skills is recommended for future research. Longitudinal studies could also serve to measure how B-TBLT approach influences students' language skills and level of professional readiness over a longer period. Further exploration is also recommended on adaptive feedback systems, digital task design for mobile users, and targeted interventions to support time management and workload balancing in blended learning environments.

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**Competing Interests**

No, there are no competing interests.



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