

Speaking Performance Among Maritime Students

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Abstract

This study focused on the speaking performance of maritime students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University-College of Maritime Education during Academic Year 2025–2026. Specifically, the study assessed the students' oral communication skills in terms of fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These components were considered essential indicators of effective speaking performance in maritime education, where English communication plays a significant role in classroom discussions, simulations, oral presentations, and future shipboard operations. A quantitative descriptive research design was employed in the study to determine the current level of speaking performance among maritime students. A standardized speaking performance rubric was utilized to evaluate the respondents' oral communication competence objectively and consistently. The study emphasized the importance of effective English communication in preparing maritime students for the communication demands of the global maritime industry, where clarity, accuracy, and confidence in speaking are necessary for safety, coordination, and professional interaction. The findings of the study served as basis for developing communication enhancement activities, instructional interventions, and language support programs intended to improve the oral communication competence of maritime students. Furthermore, the results may provide valuable insights for language instructors and university administrators in designing strategies that strengthen students' speaking proficiency and overall communicative effectiveness in maritime education and training.

Keywords: Speaking Performance, Maritime Students, Oral Communication, Maritime English

1. Introduction

Speaking performance is a critical competency in maritime education because oral communication supports safety, operational efficiency, classroom participation, simulation activities, and future shipboard coordination. Since English functions as the international language of the maritime industry, maritime students must develop fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content organization, vocabulary, and pronunciation to communicate effectively in academic and professional maritime contexts. This study therefore examined the level of speaking performance among maritime students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University during Academic Year 2025–2026 as basis for communication enhancement activities, instructional interventions, and language support programs.

Effective speaking performance is essential in maritime education because students are expected to communicate clearly, accurately, and confidently in English during classroom discussions, oral presentations, simulation exercises, safety demonstrations, onboard training, and future shipboard operations. In actual maritime work, seafarers must give commands, relay information, report incidents, and coordinate with multinational crews through clear oral communication (Al-Khatib & Salem, 2022; Lee & Kim, 2021). In maritime settings, communication errors may result in misunderstandings, operational delays, and safety risks. Ineffective speaking performance may also affect the accurate transmission of instructions, emergency communication, and coordination among crew members. Thus, strong oral communication skills are necessary in preparing maritime students for future responsibilities in the global maritime industry (Soriano, 2021; Cakici & Yavuz, 2021).

The literature emphasizes that speaking competence contributes to students' confidence, participation, and professional readiness. Students with stronger speaking performance are more capable of expressing ideas, joining academic and training activities, and interacting in multicultural maritime environments. Speaking competence also supports readiness for interviews, shipboard training assessments, and employment opportunities in international shipping industries (Dewaele & Li, 2020; Fernandez & Ramos, 2023). Related studies further suggest that maritime students' oral communication competence must be assessed through specific performance components such as fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These dimensions provide a clearer basis for identifying strengths and areas for improvement in students' speaking abilities (Zhang, 2022; Lou et al., 2024).

Locally, the study focused on maritime students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation and Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering programs at Jose Rizal Memorial State University during Academic Year 2025–2026. These students participate in oral communication activities such as classroom discussions, oral presentations, simulations, and other speaking-related academic tasks relevant to maritime education. Nationally and globally, the study is relevant because maritime education prepares students for an industry that requires communication across different cultures, nationalities, and professional roles. Since maritime operations depend on clear and timely communication, improving students' English-speaking competence supports their readiness for shipboard responsibilities and international maritime employment.

The study was conceptually anchored on the assessment of speaking performance through five core oral communication indicators: fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation. These indicators served as the basis for evaluating the students' level of speaking competence. The speaking performance evaluation was based on an adapted rubric from Başak (2019), which was originally developed as a Teachers' Rubric for Speaking Exam to measure oral proficiency in English as a Foreign Language. The rubric provided an analytical basis for assessing learners' speaking performance using defined criteria and performance descriptors.

Although speaking competence is necessary in maritime education, the study identified the need to determine the specific level of speaking performance among maritime students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University. The study focused only on speaking performance and did not include other variables such as language anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, or demographic profile. By assessing fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation, the study aimed to provide a clearer understanding of students' oral communication abilities and identify areas that may require instructional support. The findings may serve as basis for communication enhancement programs, Maritime English training, and future research on speaking performance in maritime education.

This study aligns with SDG 4 – Quality Education because it supports the improvement of language instruction, communication competence, and academic readiness among maritime students. By identifying students' level of speaking performance, the study may guide instructors and administrators in designing instructional interventions that strengthen learning outcomes in maritime education. The study also supports SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth because effective English communication can help prepare maritime students for future employment in the global maritime industry. Improved speaking competence may enhance students' professional readiness, employability, and ability to perform communication-based maritime tasks. In addition, the study is connected to SDG 9 – Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure because communication competence is part of human capital development for a technical and globally connected industry. Strengthening Maritime English instruction contributes to the preparation of competent graduates who can participate effectively in international maritime operations.

The study contributes to educational sustainability by providing evidence that may improve language instruction, performance-based assessment, and communication enhancement programs in maritime education. It also supports socio-economic sustainability by helping prepare maritime students for employment opportunities that require clear, accurate, and confident English communication. From an institutional sustainability perspective, the findings may assist Jose Rizal Memorial State University in strengthening Maritime English training and communication support activities. From a professional and industry perspective, the study promotes safer and more effective maritime communication by emphasizing the speaking competencies needed for shipboard coordination, emergency response, and multicultural workplace interaction.

2. Material and methods

2.1 Research Design

The study employed a quantitative descriptive research design to determine the level of speaking performance among maritime students. This design was appropriate because the study aimed to describe and assess the students' oral communication competence in terms of fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation without manipulating any variables.

2.2 Locale of the Study

The study was conducted at Jose Rizal Memorial State University during Academic Year 2025–2026. The research focused on maritime education students who were engaged in academic speaking tasks, oral presentations, classroom communication, and simulation-related activities relevant to maritime training.

2.3 Respondents of the Study

The respondents were maritime students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Marine Transportation and Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering programs. They were selected because they were actively involved in oral communication

activities such as classroom discussions, oral presentations, simulation exercises, and other speaking-related academic tasks connected to maritime education.

2.4 Sample and Sampling Procedure

The study involved maritime students from the identified programs who participated in the speaking performance assessment. Total population sampling may be employed if all identified maritime students are included in the study; otherwise, an appropriate sampling technique may be used depending on the total number of respondents and the availability of participants.

2.5 Research Instrument

The speaking performance of the respondents was assessed using a modified Maritime Speaking Performance Evaluation Rubric adapted from Başak (2019). The original rubric was developed as a Teachers' Rubric for Speaking Exam to measure oral proficiency in English as a Foreign Language and included five assessment dimensions: grammatical accuracy and range, vocabulary, fluency, pronunciation, and content. For this study, the rubric was modified in terms of format and contextual application to fit oral presentations, classroom speaking activities, and oral interviews among maritime students. A scoring column and total score computation were added to support systematic evaluation and quantitative data encoding. The assessment instructions and layout were also reorganized to promote consistency among evaluators. However, the original assessment dimensions, scoring criteria, and performance descriptors from Başak (2019) were retained to preserve the validity and reliability of the instrument.

2.6 Data Gathering Procedure

Before the conduct of the study, the researcher secured permission from the appropriate university authorities. After approval was granted, coordination was made with instructors and respondents regarding the schedule and procedures of the speaking assessment. The respondents were then assessed through oral presentations, classroom speaking activities, and oral interviews relevant to maritime communication contexts. During the assessment, the respondents were given sufficient time to prepare and perform the required speaking tasks. Panel evaluators and language instructors rated the respondents' speaking performance using the standardized rubric. Each respondent was evaluated in terms of grammatical accuracy and range, vocabulary, content, fluency, and pronunciation using a five-point scale.

2.7 Data Analysis Techniques

After data collection, the scores were organized, encoded, and subjected to descriptive statistical analysis. Frequency count, mean, and standard deviation were used to determine and interpret the level of speaking performance of the respondents. The mean scores were interpreted using a five-point scale, where higher mean scores indicated a higher level of speaking proficiency.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study observed ethical principles in conducting research involving human participants. Permission to administer the speaking performance assessment was obtained from the appropriate authorities of Jose Rizal Memorial State University. The respondents were informed about the nature, purpose, and objectives of the study before participating. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were allowed to withdraw at any stage without penalty. Informed consent was obtained, and confidentiality and anonymity were maintained throughout the research process. The data gathered were used only for academic and research purposes, and the assessment procedures were conducted fairly and objectively to avoid bias, discrimination, or psychological discomfort.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Speaking Performance Among Maritime Students

3.1.1 Fluency

The respondents obtained a mean score of 3.55 with a standard deviation of 0.464 in fluency, which was interpreted as "Very Good." This result showed that the maritime students were generally able to speak with relatively smooth delivery and minimal hesitation during oral communication tasks. This finding indicates that the students possessed adequate fluency for classroom communication, oral presentations, and maritime-related speaking activities. Their performance suggests that they could express ideas continuously and understandably, although further enhancement may still strengthen their confidence and natural speech delivery.

3.1.2 Grammatical Accuracy and Range

The respondents obtained a mean score of 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.403 in grammatical accuracy and range, which was interpreted as "Very Good." This result showed that the students were generally able to use appropriate grammatical structures when expressing their ideas orally. This suggests that the respondents had sufficient command of grammar for academic and maritime communication contexts. Their performance reflects the ability to construct

understandable spoken statements, which is important in delivering instructions, explanations, and responses in maritime education and future shipboard communication.

3.1.3 Content

The respondents obtained a mean score of 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.626 in content, which was interpreted as “Very Good.” This result showed that the students were generally able to organize and present relevant ideas during speaking tasks. This finding indicates that the respondents could communicate meaningful and coherent content in oral activities. Their ability to present relevant ideas supports effective classroom participation, oral reporting, and communication in maritime training situations where clarity of message is essential.

3.1.4 Vocabulary

The respondents obtained a mean score of 3.60 with a standard deviation of 0.575 in vocabulary, which was interpreted as “Very Good.” This was the highest-rated component among the five speaking performance indicators. This result suggests that the students had sufficient lexical knowledge to express ideas effectively in academic and maritime-related contexts. Their vocabulary performance indicates readiness to participate in oral communication tasks, although continued exposure to Maritime English terminology may further strengthen their professional communication competence.

3.1.5 Pronunciation

The respondents obtained a mean score of 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.471 in pronunciation, which was interpreted as “Very Good.” This result showed that the students generally demonstrated understandable speech production with acceptable articulation, stress, and intonation. This finding implies that the respondents could produce speech that was generally clear and comprehensible. Good pronunciation is important in maritime communication because unclear articulation may affect the delivery of commands, instructions, and safety-related information.

3.1.6 Overall Speaking Performance

The overall mean score of the respondents was 3.58 with a standard deviation of 0.018, interpreted as “Very Good.” The close mean scores across all indicators showed that the respondents had relatively balanced speaking performance in fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation. This overall result indicates that the maritime students possessed adequate oral communication competence for academic activities and future maritime professional interactions. The low variability in the scores suggests that most respondents performed within a similar proficiency range, which may be attributed to common instructional exposure, similar learning experiences, and standardized speaking activities within their maritime education program.

3.2 General Interpretation of the Findings

The results showed that the respondents demonstrated consistently high speaking performance across all assessed domains, with all indicators receiving a “Very Good” interpretation. This means that the maritime students were generally capable of expressing ideas clearly and effectively during oral communication tasks. These findings emphasize the importance of sustained oral communication activities, Maritime English instruction, simulation exercises, and performance-based speaking assessments. Although the students already showed adequate competence, continuous communication enhancement activities remain necessary to further improve their preparedness for the communication demands of the global maritime industry.

4. Conclusion & Recommendations

The study concluded that maritime students at Jose Rizal Memorial State University demonstrated a “Very Good” level of speaking performance in terms of fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The findings showed that the respondents possessed adequate oral communication competence for academic tasks and future maritime professional interactions, with relatively balanced performance across all speaking components and low variability in their scores. Overall, the results indicate that the students have satisfactory English-speaking proficiency, although continuous enhancement remains necessary to strengthen their preparedness for the communication demands of the global maritime industry.

Based on the findings, maritime students should continue participating in oral communication activities such as classroom discussions, oral presentations, simulations, and English-speaking exercises to further improve their speaking proficiency. Language instructors may design more communicative and interactive learning activities focused on fluency, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammatical accuracy, and content organization, while the university administration may strengthen Maritime English programs and communication enhancement activities. Maritime instructors may also integrate more performance-based assessments and simulation exercises that expose students to real-life maritime communication situations.

The study was limited to the speaking performance of maritime students enrolled in the Bachelor of Science in Marine

Transportation and Bachelor of Science in Marine Engineering programs at Jose Rizal Memorial State University during Academic Year 2025–2026. It focused only on fluency, grammatical accuracy and range, content, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and excluded other variables such as language anxiety, motivation, self-confidence, and demographic profile.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to institutional ethical standards by securing approval from the appropriate authorities of Jose Rizal Memorial State University before data collection. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The data were used solely for academic and research purposes, and the assessment was conducted fairly and objectively. The author acknowledges the support of the adviser, faculty, staff, family, friends, and participants, declares no conflict of interest, and affirms responsibility for the integrity and originality of the work.

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