

The Effect of English Language Proficiency on Cadets' Port Documentation Completion During Maritime Internships

 <https://doi.org/10.31004/jele.v11i5.3212>

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ABSTRACT

English language proficiency is important in maritime workplace communication because cadets need to understand maritime terminology, document-related instructions, and relevant information when completing operational documentation during internships. This study aimed to examine the relationship between English language proficiency and port documentation completion among maritime cadets during internships. A quantitative explanatory design was employed with 45 cadets from Akademi Ketatalaksanaan Pelayaran Niaga Bahtera who were undertaking or had completed internships in shipping and maritime-related workplaces. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire consisting of eight items measuring English language proficiency and six items measuring port documentation completion. Both instruments demonstrated high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha values of 0.939 and 0.947, respectively. Simple linear regression revealed a strong and statistically significant positive relationship between English language proficiency and port documentation completion ($R = 0.836$, $R^2 = 0.699$, $p < .001$). The R^2 indicates that 69.9% of the variance in port documentation completion scores was statistically explained by English language proficiency within the study sample and regression model. The finding suggests that stronger English language proficiency is associated with better completion of port documentation tasks during maritime internships. These findings support task-oriented Maritime English instruction and authentic documentation exercises in cadet internship preparation.

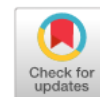
Keywords: *English Language Proficiency, Port Documentation, Maritime English, Cadets, Internship*

Article History:

Received 20th August 2026

Accepted 10th October 2026

Published 17th October 2026



INTRODUCTION

English has an important operational role in international maritime transport because maritime activities require personnel to exchange information accurately across organizations, vessels, ports, and regulatory authorities. In this environment, communication is not limited to ordinary conversation but also includes standardized terminology, written instructions, operational reports, safety-related information, and formal documentation. To encourage uniform and transparent marine communication, the International marine Organization (IMO) created the Standard Marine Communication Phrases (Organization, 2001), and the STCW establishes competency requirements relevant to English communication in maritime work (Organization, 2011). English competence is therefore an important component of maritime professional competence rather than merely an academic subject.

In shipping-company and port-service environments, English may be encountered in correspondence, vessel information, cargo-related records, operational instructions, reports, and standardized transport documents. Personnel working in ship agencies, stevedoring companies, port authorities, freight forwarding, logistics, and related organizations may need to understand information written in English before entering, checking, or completing a document. Accurate documentation is important because maritime documents support the movement of ships and cargo and facilitate communication and coordination among multiple stakeholders. Errors, incomplete information, or misunderstanding of document requirements

may create difficulties in administrative processing and operational communication. Maritime English research has consequently emphasized the importance of aligning language learning with the actual communicative demands of maritime workplaces (Ahmmed et al., 2020; Dirgeyasa, 2018; Herdawan et al., 2021).

The issue becomes particularly relevant for cadets undertaking internships. Internship is an important stage in maritime education because it provides an opportunity to transfer classroom knowledge into authentic workplace activities. Cadets may encounter real documents, workplace terminology, instructions from supervisors, and communication routines that cannot be fully reproduced in classroom exercises. From an experiential-learning perspective, learning develops through the interaction between experience, reflection, conceptualization, and application (Kolb, 1984). Consequently, the ability to use English in a practical context may influence how effectively cadets perform tasks that require them to understand written information and follow document-related procedures.

Previous studies have provided evidence of the importance of English in maritime education and employment. Ahmmed et al. (2020) examined the Maritime English language needs of seafarers and highlighted the importance of English skills for effective maritime communication. Dirgeyasa (2018) investigated the need for Maritime English learning materials for nautical students in Indonesia and emphasized the importance of materials based on the actual requirements of maritime stakeholders. Herdawan et al. (2021) also conducted a needs analysis of Maritime English and demonstrated the relevance of English to the specific communication demands of maritime education and work. In addition, Nurdin & Rahman (2023) investigated the utilization of English in cadet internship programs, demonstrating that English is encountered in authentic internship activities. More recent studies have also identified terminology and proficiency challenges among Indonesian maritime learners (Abimanto & Mahendro, 2025; Sari & Putro, 2026), while Sumarta et al. (2023) examined the relationship between vocabulary size and Maritime English achievement among cadets. These studies establish the importance of English for maritime learning, communication, and workplace preparation. However, most of them focus on language needs, vocabulary, speaking, general communication, or instructional requirements rather than on the performance of a specific administrative or documentation-related workplace task.

The practical relationship between English proficiency and documentation performance can be understood through the linguistic demands involved in completing maritime documents. Cadets may need to recognize specialized terminology, interpret written instructions, identify required information, distinguish between similar terms, and transfer information accurately into standardized forms or records. Better English proficiency may facilitate these processes by reducing difficulties in reading and interpreting the information required for a documentation task. Conversely, limited proficiency may increase the likelihood of misunderstanding terminology or instructions, entering information incorrectly, requiring repeated clarification, or depending more heavily on supervisors. English proficiency may therefore be associated with documentation performance because language competence supports the comprehension and interpretation processes that precede accurate completion of documentation tasks.

In this study, English language proficiency is operationally defined as cadets' perceived ability to understand and use English in situations relevant to maritime documentation and workplace communication. The construct is not limited to general conversational English; rather, it concerns the practical use of English in a maritime context, particularly the ability to understand terminology, instructions, and information relevant to documentation tasks. This operational definition is consistent with the study instrument, which consists of eight items designed to measure respondents' perceived ability to understand and use English in situations relevant to maritime documentation. Port documentation completion is operationally defined as cadets' perceived ability to complete documentation tasks accurately, smoothly, and efficiently. The construct therefore concerns the performance of documentation tasks rather than proficiency in completing one particular type of document. This broader

conceptualization is appropriate because cadets in the study were placed in different maritime workplaces and could encounter different documentation routines.

The research gap is therefore located at the intersection of Maritime English competence and operational documentation performance. Previous studies have established the importance of English for maritime communication and have identified language needs among cadets and maritime personnel. However, limited empirical evidence directly examines whether differences in English language proficiency are associated with differences in cadets' ability to complete port documentation tasks during internships. This distinction is important because documentation performance may involve not only language competence but also the ability to interpret information and follow workplace documentation procedures. The present study addresses this gap by examining English language proficiency as the independent variable and port documentation completion as the dependent variable and by statistically testing the relationship between the two variables using simple linear regression.

The issue is particularly relevant because cadets are exposed to different internship conditions, including different workplaces, levels of English-language document exposure, and degrees of mentor supervision. In the present study, respondents were placed in ship agencies, port authorities or harbour masters, stevedoring companies, freight forwarding or logistics organizations, container terminals, and other maritime-related workplaces. Such variation represents the actual conditions in which cadets apply their classroom knowledge to workplace tasks. The study therefore aims to examine the relationship between English language proficiency and port documentation completion among maritime cadets during internships. Based on the theoretical and empirical rationale above, the research hypothesis is formulated as follows: H1: English language proficiency has a positive and significant relationship with port documentation completion among maritime cadets during internships.

METHOD

A quantitative explanatory research design was used in this study. The design was chosen because, rather than just describing respondents' perceptions, the study aimed to assess the impact of one independent variable on one dependent variable (Sugiyono, 2019). English language proficiency was specified as the independent variable (X), while port documentation completion was specified as the dependent variable (Y). The main inferential technique was simple linear regression to analyze the causal relationship between the variables (Sugiyono, 2019).

Respondents

The respondents were 45 cadets of Akademi Ketatalaksanaan Pelayaran Niaga Bahtera who were undertaking internships in shipping and maritime-related workplaces. A total sampling technique was used because the 45 respondents represented the entire population of cadets undertaking internships during the data collection period. The inclusion criteria were active cadets of Akademi Ketatalaksanaan Pelayaran Niaga Bahtera who were undertaking internships during the study period.

The respondents represented Levels I, II, and III and were distributed across ship agencies, port authorities'/harbour masters, stevedoring companies, freight forwarding/logistics organizations, a container terminal, and other maritime-related workplaces. Their internship duration, frequency of completing English-language documents, and level of mentor supervision also varied. This variation was retained because the study was intended to represent the actual internship environment rather than a single type of maritime workplace.

Table 1. Characteristics Respondents

Characteristic	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	28	62.2
	Female	17	37.8
Age	<18 years	1	2.2
	18–20 years	15	33.3

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Characteristic	Category	n	%
Current academic level	21–23 years	27	60.0
	>23 years	2	4.4
	Level I	13	28.9
Internship status	Level II	12	26.7
	Level III	20	44.4
	Currently undertaking	24	53.3
Internship workplace	Completed	21	46.7
	Ship agency	17	37.8
	Port authority/harbour master	5	11.1
	Stevedoring company (PBM)	13	28.9
	Freight forwarding/logistics	7	15.6
	Container terminal	1	2.2
	Other maritime-related workplace	2	4.4
Internship duration	1–2 months	18	40.0
	3–4 months	18	40.0
	>4 months	9	20.0
English-document frequency	Almost never	14	31.1
	Sometimes (1–2 times/week)	11	24.4
	Often (3–4 times/week)	12	26.7
Mentor supervision	Every day	8	17.8
	Always fully supervised	15	33.3
	Frequently supervised	18	40.0
	Occasionally checked	10	22.2
	Independent	2	4.4

As shown in Table 1, the sample was heterogeneous in terms of academic level and internship context. Level III cadets formed the largest group (44.4%), followed by Level I (28.9%) and Level II (26.7%). Most respondents were aged 21–23 years (60.0%). Ship agencies and stevedoring companies constituted the largest internship settings, although respondents also came from port authorities, freight forwarding/logistics organizations, a container terminal, and other maritime-related settings. The frequency of English-language document use was also varied: 17.8% reported daily exposure, while 26.7% reported frequent exposure and 24.4% reported occasional exposure. This variation is relevant because the ability to perform documentation tasks develops within different levels of workplace exposure and supervision.

Instruments

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire developed by the researchers based on the theoretical definitions of the constructs, relevant Maritime English literature, and the practical requirements of maritime internship activities. The questionnaire measured two constructs: English language proficiency and port documentation completion.

The English language proficiency construct was based on [Bachman & Palmer \(2015\)](#) and the English for Specific Purposes perspective of [Hutchinson and Waters \(2010\)](#), supported by previous Maritime English studies ([Ahmmed et al., 2020](#); [Dirgeyasa, 2018](#); [Herdawan et al., 2021](#); [Nuridin & Rahman, 2023](#)). It consisted of eight items (X1–X8) assessing cadets' perceived ability to understand maritime terminology, written information, instructions, and use English in maritime documentation activities.

The port documentation completion construct consisted of six items (Y1–Y6), developed based on the practical requirements of documentation tasks during maritime internships. The items assessed cadets' perceived ability to understand requirements, identify relevant information, follow instructions, complete documents accurately, and perform documentation tasks efficiently. Both constructs were measured using a Likert-type scale.

Validity and Reliability Testing

Before the main study, a preliminary instrument test was conducted with 30 cadets who had not yet undertaken their maritime internships. The test was conducted to evaluate the

validity and reliability of the questionnaire before it was used in the main study. Item validity was assessed using Pearson product-moment item-total correlation, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha to measure the internal consistency of each construct. The 30 respondents involved in the preliminary test were not included in the main study. The main study involved 45 cadets undertaking internships, selected using a total sampling approach. Thus, the preliminary test and the main study involved different respondents..

Table 2. Validity Test of the English Language Proficiency Instrument (n = 30)

Item	Pearson correlation with total	Sig.	Decision
X1	0.724	<.001	Valid
X2	0.922	<.001	Valid
X3	0.846	<.001	Valid
X4	0.866	<.001	Valid
X5	0.888	<.001	Valid
X6	0.905	<.001	Valid
X7	0.936	<.001	Valid
X8	0.636	<.001	Valid

Table 3. Validity Test of the Port Documentation Completion Instrument (n = 30)

Item	Pearson correlation with total	Sig.	Decision
Y1	0.805	<.001	Valid
Y2	0.852	<.001	Valid
Y3	0.931	<.001	Valid
Y4	0.875	<.001	Valid
Y5	0.927	<.001	Valid
Y6	0.947	<.001	Valid

All items in both instruments showed statistically significant positive correlations with their respective total scores ($p < .001$). The item-total correlations for the English language proficiency scale ranged from 0.636 to 0.936, while those for the port documentation completion scale ranged from 0.805 to 0.947. These results provide empirical support for the validity of the individual questionnaire items based on their relationship with the total score of their respective construct. Therefore, all items were retained for the subsequent main analysis.

Table 4. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Items	Cronbach's alpha	Decision
English language proficiency	8	0.939	Reliable
Port documentation completion	6	0.947	Reliable

The English language proficiency scale produced Cronbach's alpha of 0.939 and the port documentation completion scale produced Cronbach's alpha of 0.947. Both coefficients indicate high internal consistency. The instruments were therefore considered sufficiently reliable for the main survey analysis.

Data analysis

The data analysis included respondent characteristics, instrument validity and reliability testing, and simple linear regression. Statistical significance was assessed at the 5% level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Pearson product-moment correlation and Cronbach's alpha were used to assess item validity and internal consistency, respectively.

The main analysis included all 45 cadets through total sampling. Since the model involved only one independent variable, multicollinearity testing was not applicable. The regression model was specified as:

$$Y = a + bX$$

where Y represents port documentation completion, X represents English language proficiency, a is the constant, and b is the regression coefficient.

The analysis examined the correlation coefficient (R), coefficient of determination (R^2), adjusted R^2 , ANOVA F-test, and regression coefficient t-test to assess the statistical relationship and explanatory contribution of English language proficiency to port documentation completion.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Respondent Characteristics

The characteristics in Table 1 show that the respondents were exposed to a range of internship conditions. The largest group consisted of Level III cadets, which is consistent with the possibility that more senior cadets have greater exposure to workplace activities. However, the inclusion of Level I and Level II cadets provides a broader representation of internship experience across academic levels. The workplace distribution is also important: 37.8% of respondents were placed in ship agencies and 28.9% in stevedoring companies, while the remaining respondents were distributed among port authorities, freight forwarding/logistics organizations, a container terminal, and other maritime-related settings. These settings involve different documentation routines and different levels of English exposure.

The frequency of English-language document use indicates that the respondents did not experience identical language demands. Eight respondents (17.8%) reported daily exposure, whereas 12 (26.7%) reported frequent exposure and 11 (24.4%) reported occasional exposure. Fourteen respondents (31.1%) reported that they almost never completed English-language documents. This pattern is important for interpreting the findings because English proficiency may be developed and demonstrated through different levels of task exposure. The supervision distribution similarly shows that 33.3% were always fully supervised and 40.0% were frequently supervised, while only 4.4% reported working independently. Therefore, the internship environment combines language competence with workplace support, and the present regression model should be interpreted as estimating the contribution of English proficiency within this broader environment.

Instrument Quality

The validity and reliability findings indicate that the measurement instruments were appropriate for the study. Every English proficiency item had a significant relationship with the total score, and the same pattern was found for all port documentation items. Strong internal consistency is demonstrated by the high Cronbach's alpha values. Importantly, the reliability result does not mean that the instruments measure all aspects of maritime competence; rather, it indicates that the items within each construct functioned consistently as a scale. This distinction is important because port documentation performance may also be influenced by procedural knowledge, digital literacy, workplace experience, document complexity, and supervision.

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Table 5. Simple Linear Regression Model Summary (n = 45)

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.836	0.699	0.692	2.653

The regression model produced $R = 0.836$, indicating a strong positive association between English language proficiency and port documentation completion. The R^2 value of 0.699 means that 69.9% of the observed variance in port documentation completion scores was statistically explained by English language proficiency in the regression model. The adjusted R^2 of 0.692 indicates that the explanatory proportion remains substantial after adjustment for the model. The relatively high explanatory proportion suggests that English proficiency is an important predictor of port documentation completion in this specific internship context. However, these results should not be interpreted as evidence that English proficiency alone

causes 69.9% of documentation performance, because the present study used a simple regression model and did not control for other workplace-related factors.

Table 6. ANOVA Test for the Regression Model

Source	df	F	Sig.
Regression	1	100.076	<.001
Residual	43		
Total	44		

The ANOVA result demonstrates that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(1, 43) = 100.076$, $p < .001$. This indicates that the model containing English language proficiency provides a statistically significant explanation of variation in port documentation completion. In relation to the research hypothesis, this result supports H1, which states that English language proficiency has a positive and significant effect on port documentation completion among cadets undertaking internships. The significant F-test indicates that the regression model as a whole provides a statistically meaningful prediction of documentation-completion scores under the specified model. Nevertheless, the statistical significance of the model should be distinguished from causal inference; the result demonstrates a significant predictive relationship within the sample rather than definitive evidence of a causal effect.

Table 7. Regression Coefficients

Predictor	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Constant	0.585	2.277	—	0.257	.798
English language proficiency	0.725	0.073	0.836	10.004	<.001

The estimated regression equation is $Y = 0.585 + 0.725X$. The positive coefficient of 0.725 indicates that higher English language proficiency is associated with higher port documentation completion scores. More specifically, a one-unit increase in the English language proficiency score is associated with an estimated 0.725-unit increase in the predicted port documentation completion score, based on the Likert-type measurement scale used in this study. Thus, $B = 0.725$ should be interpreted as a change in the predicted documentation-completion score for each one-unit change in the English proficiency score, rather than as a 72.5% increase in documentation performance. The coefficient is statistically significant, $t = 10.004$, $p < .001$. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is supported. Within the scope of the study, English language proficiency is a significant positive predictor of port documentation completion.

The strong relationship found in this study has a plausible practical explanation. Completing a maritime document requires more than recognizing individual English words. Cadets may need to understand maritime terminology, interpret written instructions, identify relevant information and document fields, distinguish similar terms, communicate with supervisors when clarification is required, and transfer information accurately into standardized documents. Stronger English proficiency may therefore help cadets process the linguistic information required at different stages of documentation completion. Conversely, limited English proficiency may increase the need for clarification, increase the possibility of misunderstanding terminology or instructions, and result in greater dependence on supervisors. Stronger proficiency may reduce this linguistic burden and allow cadets to concentrate more effectively on the procedural and operational aspects of documentation. This provides a plausible explanation for the strong positive relationship observed in the present regression model.

The finding is consistent with previous empirical research in Maritime English. [Ahmmed et al. \(2020\)](#) identified specific English language demands among mariners, while [Dirgeyasa \(2018\)](#) and [Herdawan et al. \(2021\)](#) emphasized the importance of needs-based Maritime English instruction that reflects the communicative requirements of maritime education and work. [Nuridin & Rahman \(2023\)](#) also discussed the use of English in cadet internship activities. These studies provide empirical and contextual support for the present

finding because they demonstrate that English competence is closely connected to communication demands in maritime education and workplace settings. Therefore, the present finding supports rather than contradicts previous research. However, the present study extends the existing discussion by quantitatively examining the relationship between English proficiency and a specific operational workplace task, namely port documentation completion. Previous studies have mainly focused on language needs, vocabulary, speaking, or general maritime communication, whereas the present study provides empirical evidence concerning documentation performance during cadet internships.

The finding also supports an ESP-oriented approach to maritime education. [Hutchinson & Waters \(2010\)](#) argue that language learning for specific purposes should be connected to learners' target situations. In the context of maritime cadets, this means that language instruction should include the terminology, genres, instructions, and task procedures encountered during internships. The present result suggests that documentation-oriented English practice can be justified not only as language enrichment but also as preparation for operational performance. In this respect, the finding extends the application of the ESP perspective from general communicative preparation to a specific documentation-related workplace task.

At the same time, the R^2 value of 0.699 should be interpreted carefully. Although English proficiency statistically explains a substantial proportion of the variance in the dependent variable, approximately 30.1% of the variance remains unexplained by the present model. This remaining variance indicates that port documentation completion is not determined by English proficiency alone. The characteristics of the respondents and their internship environments indicate several plausible factors that may contribute to documentation performance, including the frequency of exposure to English-language documents and the level of mentor supervision. Previous maritime research has identified a strong association between seafarers' sea experience and their communicative competence, suggesting that practical experience may be an important factor to investigate further ([Fan et al., 2018](#)). In addition, maritime English requirements vary across occupational tasks, highlighting the importance of considering task-specific demands when examining workplace performance ([Ahmmed et al., 2020](#)). Other possible factors include familiarity with document formats, computer or digital literacy, procedural knowledge, document complexity, and workplace training. These factors were not included as predictors in the current model and may therefore account for part of the unexplained variance. Future research should consider incorporating these variables to obtain a more comprehensive explanation of port documentation performance.

The findings have practical implications for AKPN Bahtera and similar maritime education institutions. Pre-internship preparation could incorporate authentic document-based exercises, maritime vocabulary, guided completion of sample documents, error identification, reading and interpretation of maritime forms, and simulations of communication with ship agents, port authorities, PBM personnel, and logistics providers. Internship assessment could also distinguish language competence from procedural competence so that cadets' specific learning needs can be identified. Such an approach is consistent with experiential learning because cadets can prepare through simulation, perform tasks in the workplace, receive feedback, reflect on errors, and subsequently improve their performance ([Kolb, 1984](#)).

Overall, the findings support previous Maritime English research and extend it by demonstrating a strong statistical relationship between English language proficiency and port documentation completion among maritime cadets during internships. The results indicate that English proficiency is an important predictor of documentation performance in the studied context. However, maritime work performance is also associated with workplace communication, as communication frequency and quality have been found to contribute positively to seafarers' performance ([An et al., 2023](#)). Moreover, maritime tasks may be affected by workload and the simultaneous performance of multiple responsibilities, which can complicate adherence to workplace procedures ([Rajapakse & Emad, 2022](#)). The remaining

30.1% of unexplained variance therefore suggests that documentation completion may involve supervision, workplace exposure, prior experience, procedural knowledge, digital literacy, and other contextual factors. English proficiency should consequently be viewed as an important component of documentation performance rather than its sole determinant.

CONCLUSIONS

This study found a strong and statistically significant positive association between English language proficiency and port documentation completion among maritime cadets during internships ($R = 0.836$, $R^2 = 0.699$, $F(1, 43) = 100.076$, $p < .001$, $B = 0.725$). These findings support the research hypothesis and identify English proficiency as an important predictor of documentation completion, although they do not establish a direct causal relationship. The results highlight the importance of integrating Maritime English training with authentic workplace tasks, including terminology instruction, document interpretation, and task-oriented simulations before internships. However, the study's relatively small sample of 45 cadets and its specific institutional and internship context may limit generalizability. Furthermore, the unexplained 30.1% of variance suggests that documentation performance may also be influenced by workplace exposure, supervision, digital literacy, prior experience, and procedural knowledge. Future research should investigate these factors using larger and more diverse samples across maritime education institutions and workplace settings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to express appreciation to Akademi Ketatalaksanaan Pelayaran Niaga Bahtera and to all cadets who participated in the study and provided the data required for the research.

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