



Maritime instructors' strategies, practices, and challenges in utilizing arts-based teaching: bases for the enhancement of supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching

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Abstract

This study aimed at determining Arts-based teaching strategies, practices, challenges, and how maritime instructors manage these challenges as bases for the enhancement of supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching. The following were the Arts-based teaching strategies used by the maritime instructors in their classes: visual arts and graphic representation, role playing, and writing or storytelling. The practices in utilizing the Arts-based teaching strategies included: integration of creative expression, student engagement, and learning by doing. The challenges encountered by the instructors were: time constraints, individual differences, and limited resources. The following outlined how the challenges are managed: systematic planning, adaptive and flexible mindset, and instructional scaffolding and synthesis. Enhancement of the supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching was proposed on the basis of the result of the study.

Keywords: Arts-based teaching strategies, practices, challenges, arts-assisted teaching, enhancement, supplementary material

Introduction

The modern maritime industry requires a truly high level of English communication skills from seafarers, as miscommunication can lead directly to safety hazards, non-compliance with international standards (STCW), and career failure. One of the leading institutions in maritime education in Iloilo City is committed to ensuring that its graduates are not just technically skilled, but are also articulate and effective communicators, a commitment central to its institutional mission. This crucial task of building flawless shipboard communication, however, falls heavily on maritime instructors.

While the instructors bring invaluable real-world experience — many are seafarers themselves — there is a recognized challenge in effectively translating their expertise into engaging classroom instruction. Traditional pedagogical strategies, even when coupled with high-tech simulators and e-learning platforms, often fail to fully motivate cadets or boost their confidence in spontaneous, high-stakes communication situations. This instructional gap necessitates the introduction of genuinely innovative and student-centered methods.

This is why Arts-based Teaching (ABT) strategies have become a focal point. Using techniques like drawing, drama, and role-playing allows students to move beyond passive learning and practice specialized language in a less intimidating, highly creative, and highly relevant context. These methods are proven to stimulate memory, deepen understanding of technical vocabulary, and build the communicative competence essential for success at sea.

However, the effectiveness of these proven methods is often undermined by a lack of consistency in how they are implemented. The lack of unified instructional activities across Maritime English classes presents a significant equity concern for maritime cadets. Because the activities and learning tasks are heavily dependent on the individual instructor's preference, students are not guaranteed a unified, high-quality learning experience; some report feeling short-changed on essential communicative practice, while others

are overwhelmed by a disparate collection of complex, uncontextualized assignments.

This instructional variability means that the acquisition of critical skills such as using Standard Marine Communication Phrases (SMCP) is inconsistent, potentially compromising the professional readiness of some future seafarers. The absence of a uniform approach to utilizing engaging methods creates an undesirable disparity in cadet preparation.

Given the pursuit of pedagogical excellence and the concrete, daily struggles instructors face in the classroom, this study is vital. There is a need to move past assumptions and directly document the real-world challenges and the successful creative practices maritime instructors are actually employing. Understanding these narratives will provide the concrete evidence necessary for JBLFMU's administration to develop targeted professional development programs and institutional support that truly empower its faculty, thereby ensuring they can better equip every future seafarer with the skills needed to navigate the complexities of the global maritime profession.

Objectives of the Study

This study aimed at determining the maritime instructors' strategies, practices, and challenges in utilizing arts-based teaching as bases for the enhancement of supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching in one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City for school year 2025-2026.

Specifically, the study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What arts-based teaching strategies do English maritime instructors use in their classes?
2. What are the practices of the English maritime instructors in utilizing arts-based teaching strategies in their classes?
3. What challenges do the English maritime instructors encounter in utilizing arts-based teaching strategies in their classes?

4. How do the English maritime instructors manage the challenges they encounter in utilizing the arts-based teaching strategies?
5. What enhanced supplementary materials can be proposed as a result of the study?

Theoretical Underpinning

This study is anchored on the principle of Constructionism. According to the study of Kretchmar (2021), "bricolage" and hands-on creation are essential for developing critical thinking in modern technical curricula. It further incorporates Experiential Learning Theory, specifically through the work of Chen, *et al.* (2023), who demonstrated that Kolb's learning cycle effectively bridges the gap between theoretical maritime knowledge and practical environmental responsibility. Finally, the research utilizes Multimodal Learning Theory, drawing on Sugiarti (2021) to highlight how semiotic cues and visual-gestural communication are vital for literacy in 21st-century professional settings. Collectively, these modern perspectives provide a robust framework for examining how maritime instructors navigate the challenges of arts-based strategies to meet the complex, multimodal communication needs of contemporary seafarers. Constructionism is a learning theory that postulates that knowledge construction is significantly amplified when learners are actively engaged in designing and creating a tangible, shared, external artifact that holds personal relevance (Ackermann, 2021). Building upon Piaget's constructivism, constructionism asserts that the deepest form of learning occurs when the cognitive process of building knowledge in the mind is coupled with the hands-on, external process of designing a public object, thereby enabling the learners to reflect upon, test, and refine their internal conceptual understanding through interaction with their creation (Kafai & Peppler, 2019). In addition, constructionism asserts that knowledge can be constructed most effectively when engaging in the creation of meaningful artifacts, such as drawings, models, performances, and other creative outputs. Thus, learning occurs through "learning-by-making", where students actively design, build, and present objects that embody their understanding.

In the context of the study, arts-based teaching in maritime education inherently reflects constructionist principles because learners create visual representations, engage in performance-based outputs, and collaborate to construct shared meanings through creative tasks. Constructionism explains why Maritime instructors utilize arts-based strategies and how these strategies foster learning. It will allow the study to identify the practices challenges that hinder the implementation of arts-based teaching strategies. These theories serve as a comprehensive foundation that connects the strategies, practices, and challenges faced by the maritime instructors in utilizing arts-based teaching strategies, and the enhancement of the existing supplementary materials for arts-assisted teaching.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The study is descriptive-qualitative research aimed at determining the strategies, practices, and challenges of maritime instructors in utilizing arts-based teaching as bases for the enhancement of supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching for the school year 2025-2026.

The participants in the study were the 6 maritime instructors in one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City who were purposively chosen on the basis of a predefined criteria established for the study which included the following: they teach the course Maritime Communications, and they are permanent instructors of the university.

The researcher used a researcher-made interview guide to gather responses from the participants.

The research instrument underwent validation from qualified panel of experts in English and research.

The responses of the participants were analyzed using thematic analyses to determine emerging themes.

Research Methodology

In this study, the descriptive-qualitative research method was utilized in order to determine and interpret the strategies, practices, and challenges of maritime instructors in utilizing arts-based teaching.

Creswell (2023) explained that a descriptive-qualitative approach is appropriate as it will allow for an in-depth understanding of the participant's perceptions, emotions, and reflections. What, when, where, when and how inquiries can be answered, but not why questions. It was further stated that a descriptive research design could study one or more variables using a wide range of research methods.

This method was an appropriate choice in this study in which the practices and challenges of the maritime instructors in utilizing arts-based teaching strategies were determined and interpreted and would be the bases for enhancement of the supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching.

Research Design

The study used the descriptive-qualitative research design through phenomenology to find out the arts-based teaching strategies utilized by the maritime instructors in one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City.

Phenomenological approach to research may be used on single cases as well as multiple cases, with clear emphasis on minimum structure and maximum depth to keep balance of research focus within limitations of time and other resources. This type of research, like other qualitative researches, uses many methods including interviews, observations, action researches, discussions, focus group meetings, and analyses of the text (Qutoshi, 2018; in Tagalogon, 2024).

Sampling Design

The Purposive sampling was used in selecting the participants of the study. Six (6) maritime instructors were selected on the basis of a set of criteria which were: they were teaching Maritime Communications course; and they are permanent instructors of the university.

Respondents

The participants in the study were the six (6) maritime instructors in one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City. These six (6) participants were identified on the basis of a pre-survey conducted where the Dean of the BSMT Department confirmed that the participants were qualified on the criteria set by the researcher: they were teaching Maritime Communications course; and they are permanent instructors of the university.

The researcher secured six (6) participants to be part of the intensive data gathering regarding the practices and challenges they encountered in utilizing arts-based teaching strategies in their classes.

To achieve fairness and confidentiality, the researcher named these instructors as Participants ^[1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6].

Data Gathering Instrument

The research instrument used in this study was a researcher-made in-depth interview guide/questionnaire. It was composed of relevant questions about the arts-based teaching strategies utilized in the respondents' classes, the practices they do in utilizing these strategies, the challenges that they encountered, and how they managed these challenges.

The shared experiences were carefully noted and documented.

The researcher-made instrument was printed and handed out individually to the maritime instructors of one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City who were the participants in this study.

Data Gathering Procedures

In gathering data, the researcher followed the necessary procedures. An in-depth interview guide which was professionally checked and validated by a set of accomplished validators in English and research field was first prepared by the researcher. After the instrument was validated, a letter requesting for permission to conduct the study was submitted and signed by the Dean of PHINMA Graduate School, the thesis adviser, and the researcher.

These request letters were then submitted personally to the Dean's Office of the Bachelor in Science of Maritime Transportation Department in one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City. Indicated on the letter was the assurance by the researcher that ethical standards would be observed and that the data gathered would be held confidential.

Upon the approval of the Dean, the questionnaires were personally distributed to the participants to ensure that the participants were aware of the content of the Interview guide questionnaires and returned to the researcher on time for analysis. They were assured that all the information provided would be kept confidential.

The researcher made a detailed analysis using the coding process after gathering the responses. The coding process was used to generate descriptive themes for analyses.

Data Analyses

The study employed thematic analyses of data gathered. Emergent themes were identified according to the specific questions asked in the study.

Caulfield (2019) ^[13] states that Thematic Analysis is a method for analyzing qualitative data and is typically used with a group of texts, like transcripts or interviews. The researcher carefully examines the data to find common themes, which are topics, ideas, and patterns of meaning that recur frequently. He added that there are several approaches to conducting thematic analysis but the most popular one uses a six-step procedure that Braun and Clarke (2013) created for a psychology study. This process includes familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, and writing up. This process can help the researcher avoid confirmation bias when formulating his/her analysis.

Summary

The purpose of the study was to determine the maritime instructors' strategies, practices and challenges in utilizing arts-based teaching as bases for enhancement of supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching.

The participants in the study were the 6 (six) maritime instructors in one of the maritime universities in Iloilo City. They were chosen through convenience sampling.

The instrument used to gather data was a researcher-made interview guide. The instrument underwent validation from qualified experts in the fields of English and research.

To analyze the responses of the participants, the researcher used thematic analysis. Responses were organized and relevant themes were selected and coded.

The following were the findings of the study:

Maritime instructors utilized some similar arts-based teaching strategies and shared practices and challenges, not entirely different from one another, in utilizing these arts-based strategies.

The findings further revealed that the arts-based teaching strategies utilized by maritime instructors were visual arts and graphic representation, role playing, and writing and storytelling.

The practices of the maritime instructors in utilizing the arts-based teaching strategies were: integration of creative expression, student engagement, and learning by doing.

The maritime instructors experienced challenges in utilizing arts-based teaching strategies such as time constraints, individual differences of students, and limited resources.

The maritime instructors managed their challenges through systematic planning, adaptive and flexible mindset, and instructional scaffolding and synthesis.

Based on these findings, the researcher drew bases for a proposed enhancement of supplementary materials to arts-assisted teaching in the Maritime Communications course. These enhancements are designed to turn the creative practices already being used into a more organized and professional part of the curriculum.

Insights

Based on the findings, the following insights were drawn:

The arts-based teaching strategies identified in this study demonstrate how creative expression serves as a functional tool for mastering technical maritime skills. Visual arts and graphic representation allow students to translate complex data into clear sketches. Role playing shows that practicing under simulated pressure builds the muscle memory needed for real-world emergencies. Finally, writing and storytelling offer students to find meanings in simulations which are most likely remembered and followed during crises.

The practices discovered in this study demonstrate a shift toward more interactive and student-centered maritime training. Integration of creative expression shows that using art allows students to visualize abstract maritime safety rules. Student engagement offers the idea that participative classrooms reduce boredom and mental fatigue. Learning by doing presents that physically performing a task, such as practicing Morse code rhythms or role-playing a distress call, develops competency in maritime communication.

On the other hand, the challenges identified in this study highlight the practical struggles instructors must face when bringing creativity into a maritime classroom. Due to the heavy demand of a fixed syllabus, time constraints often leave little room for efficient creative experiences.

Individual differences of students have varying levels of confidence, interest and talent; this implies that instructors must also provide clear "scaffolds" to address these differences. Limitation on resources such as specialized materials or space forces instructors to be resourceful and look for accessible supplementary tools that can work in any classroom setting.

The ways maritime instructors manage classroom challenges show a blend of professional structure and creative problem solving. Preparing lessons in advance helps maintain a steady flow despite a heavy workload. Most effective instructors are those who can pivot to meet student needs without losing sight of the objectives. Breaking down of complex skills into smaller, creative steps helps students build confidence.

Accordingly, the proposed enhancement of supplementary materials may provide instructors with standardized activities of ready-to-use resources — such as visual templates, guided scripts, and clear rubrics — that may simplify the teaching process.

Recommendations

Taking into account the findings and insights that have emerged in the study, the following recommendations are advanced:

Maritime instructors should use the proposed enhancement materials to replace long lectures with pre-made drawing templates and role-play scripts that save time. They may apply or utilize the technical rubrics during laboratories to make grading faster and more objective for every student.

Maritime students should use the visual guides and mnemonic posters to simplify difficult concepts. They should focus on creative tools to build professional confidence.

English teachers should integrate specific storytelling and role-play scenarios in the lessons to make the IMO SMCP phrases feel more natural to speak. This helps students move past memorization and toward the fluent communication needed for safety at sea.

Program heads should lead the effort to standardize these arts-assisted supplementary materials so that all instructors would have access to the same high-quality teaching aids. This ensures that creative instruction becomes a consistent departmental strength rather than just an individual effort.

School administrators should allocate resources for the establishment of additional spaces and simulators to cater more students doing hands-on activities simultaneously. The support will ensure that these innovative teaching methods are sustainable and that the school remains a leader in modern maritime education.

Department of Education (DepEd) officials should consider these findings when designing curricula for technical-vocational tracks and should use this model to encourage more creative, hands-on approaches in specialized training across the country.

Parents should support children's participation in these creative classroom activities, as they are designed to build the critical thinking and communication skills they need for a safe career.

The proposed enhancement of the existing supplementary materials should be implemented by the university.

Future researchers should use this study as a foundation to test how arts-based strategies work in other technical subjects like Marine Engineering or Aeronautics. They

should also explore the long-term impact of these creative tools on how well students remember safety protocols after they graduate.

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