

Speech Accommodation and Apprehensions Among Maritime Students During Mock Job Interviews

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Abstract: *This research examines how maritime students adjust their speech and manage nervousness during mock-job interviews in a Purposive Communication course. Using both quantitative measures of accommodation speed, vocabulary, accent, gestures and qualitative reflections from students, the study finds that students need the most support in adjusting speed and vocabulary, while accent and gestures show moderate proficiency. Analysis identifies three recurring barriers: high-stakes anxiety, lack of readiness, and language difficulties. The study recommends targeted training for communication skills to boost interview readiness and employability.*

Keywords: Maritime Students, Mock-job Interview, Purposive Communication, Speech Accommodation, Speech Apprehensions

1. Introduction

The global maritime industry is a critical component of international trade, responsible for transporting approximately 90% of the world's goods (UNCTAD, 2021). As this industry continues to grow, the demand for highly skilled and competent maritime professionals also increases. Effective communication is one of the most crucial skills required in this field, particularly during job interviews, which serve as a gateway to employment. This study aims to explore the speech accommodation and apprehensions of maritime students during mock-job interviews in the context of purposive communication. By understanding these aspects, Maritime Higher Education Institutions (MHEIs) can better prepare future maritime professionals for the challenges they may face in their careers.

Communication in the maritime industry is not only vital for operational efficiency but also for ensuring safety at sea. Miscommunication can lead to accidents, operational failures, and even loss of life (Hanzu-Pazara et al., 2008). Therefore, maritime professionals must possess excellent communication skills to convey and receive information accurately and effectively. This necessity extends to job interviews, where clear and confident communication can significantly influence hiring decisions.

Despite the critical importance of communication skills, many maritime students experience significant apprehension when communicating in formal settings, such as job interviews. Communication apprehension is a form of anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others (McCroskey, 1977). This apprehension can hinder performance during job interviews, potentially impacting the students' employment prospects. Studies have shown that communication apprehension can negatively affect both academic performance and career success.

Research suggests that communication anxiety and public speaking apprehension are widespread among university students, with one survey indicating that approximately 61% reported fear of speaking in public academic contexts (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012). In the maritime context, this issue is exacerbated by the high-stakes nature of the industry,

where effective communication is not just a skill but a critical competency.

Speech accommodation theory, developed by Giles (1973), suggests that individuals adjust their speech patterns to either converge or diverge from their interlocutor's style. In a job interview setting, successful speech accommodation can help candidates appear more relatable and competent. However, if not managed properly, it can also lead to increased anxiety and communication apprehension (Gallois et al., 2005). Understanding how maritime students adjust their speech during mock-job interviews can provide insights into their communication strategies and areas where they may need additional support.

This study is crucial as it addresses a significant gap in the preparation of maritime students for the job market. By exploring speech accommodation and apprehensions, MHEIs can develop more effective communication training programs that equip students with the skills they need to succeed. The findings of this study will contribute to the broader understanding of communication apprehension in high-stakes environments and provide practical solutions for improving the employability of maritime professionals.

Furthermore, this study examined the level of speech accommodation among maritime students during their mock job interviews in the Purposive Communication course. The aspects considered were accent, speed, vocabulary, and gestures. Additionally, the study explored the reasons behind the speech apprehensions experienced by these students during their mock interviews.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study is grounded in the Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), initially proposed by Howard Giles in 1973. Originally known as Speech Accommodation Theory, CAT explores how individuals adjust their communication styles to either converge or diverge from their interlocutor's speech patterns. This theory is particularly relevant in the context of maritime students' speech accommodation and apprehensions during mock-job interviews in purposive communication.

Volume 15 Issue 2, February 2026

Fully Refereed | Open Access | Double Blind Peer Reviewed Journal

www.ijsr.net

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT)

CAT posits that individuals adjust their communication behaviors in response to their interlocutors for various social reasons, including the desire for social approval, the need to establish a positive social identity, and the aim to reduce social distance (Giles, 1973). The two primary processes within CAT are convergence and divergence. Convergence occurs when individuals adapt their speech patterns to become more similar to their interlocutor's style. Convergence is often motivated by the desire to gain social approval or to enhance social integration and understanding (Gallois et al., 2005). On the other hand, Divergence happens when individuals accentuate the differences between their speech and that of their interlocutor. Divergence can be used to maintain social distance, assert independence, or emphasize distinct social or cultural identity (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

In the context of job interviews, effective communication is essential for conveying competence, confidence, and suitability for the position. For maritime students, the ability to appropriately adjust their speech during interviews can significantly influence the interviewer's perception and the overall outcome of the interview. This adjustment involves both verbal and non-verbal communication strategies, which are critical in a high-stakes setting like job interviews.

Maritime students may engage in speech accommodation during job interviews by modifying their speed, accent, vocabulary and gestures to align more closely with the interviewer's expectations and communication style. Successful convergence can lead to a positive impression and increased chances of securing a job. However, if students are unable to effectively accommodate their speech due to high levels of apprehension, this can negatively impact their performance.

Furthermore, communication apprehension refers to the fear or anxiety associated with real or anticipated communication with others (McCroskey, 1977). High levels of communication apprehension can hinder a student's ability to engage in effective speech accommodation, leading to poorer interview performance. Understanding the interplay between speech accommodation and communication apprehension is crucial for developing targeted interventions to support maritime students.

Using CAT as the theoretical framework provides a structured approach to understanding the dynamics of speech accommodation and communication apprehension among maritime students during mock-job interviews. By examining how these students adjust their communication and the factors that influence their performance, this study aims to offer insights that can enhance training programs and improve the employability of maritime professionals.

3. Literature Review

This study examined four key areas in the integration of communication accommodation theory: accent, speed, vocabulary, and gesture. By analyzing these aspects, the research aims to understand how individuals adapt their communication styles to align with others and the practical

implications of these adjustments in various contexts.

Accent Accommodation in Job Interviews

Accents, a crucial component of personal identification, significantly influence perceptions of skill, reliability, and cultural origin (Dahlback et al., 2007). Speech accommodation, the process of adjusting one's speech patterns to correspond with conversational partners, involves two primary strategies: convergence (adopting the partner's speech traits) and divergence (emphasizing one's own) (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Face-to-face interviews provide a unique set of challenges and opportunities for accent accommodation due to the presence of both verbal and non-verbal cues.

In face-to-face job interviews, candidates must navigate complex communication dynamics. While non-verbal cues such as body language, facial expressions, and eye contact can aid in communication, they also add layers of interaction that can be difficult to manage, especially under stress. Accents can be particularly salient in this context, as they are often more noticeable and impactful in person.

Candidates may engage in speech accommodation by either converging or diverging their accents to align with or distinguish themselves from their interviewers. Convergence, the process of adopting the speech traits of the interviewer, can lead to positive interview outcomes by fostering rapport and perceived similarity (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). However, there is a fine line between effective convergence and over-assimilation, which can lead to perceptions of inauthenticity and potentially undermine trust.

Biases related to accents can influence interview outcomes, as interviewers may unconsciously associate certain accents with specific stereotypes or cultural backgrounds. Awareness of these biases is crucial for both interviewers and candidates. For candidates, understanding how to strategically manage accent accommodation can enhance their ability to present themselves effectively. For interviewers, recognizing and mitigating accent biases can lead to fairer hiring practices.

Speed Accommodation in Job Interviews

Speech rate, an essential component of effective communication, significantly influences perceptions in face-to-face job interviews. The speed at which a candidate speaks can affect how their competence, confidence, and clarity are perceived by the interviewer. Adjusting one's speech rate, or speed accommodation, is a strategic communication behavior that can enhance the interview outcome. This discussion delves into the importance of speed accommodation, its impact on interview dynamics, and the role it plays in the perception of candidates.

According to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) proposed by Howard Giles, individuals modify their communication styles to either converge with or diverge from their interlocutor's speech patterns to achieve social approval, efficiency, or distinctiveness (Giles & Ogay, 2007). In the context of face-to-face job interviews, speed accommodation involves adjusting one's speaking rate to match the interviewer's, which can facilitate better mutual

understanding and positive interpersonal dynamics.

Speech rate affects comprehension, persuasion, and the perceived credibility of the speaker. Faster speech rates are often associated with competence and confidence, while slower speech rates are linked to clarity and thoughtfulness (Smith & Shaffer, 1995). However, extreme deviations in either direction can have adverse effects; excessively rapid speech may be perceived as nervous or overwhelming, while overly slow speech may seem tedious or lackluster.

Research supports the significance of speech rate adjustment in various communication contexts. Smith and Shaffer (1995) found that moderate speech rates enhance listener comprehension and speaker persuasiveness. Furthermore, Miller et al. (1976) demonstrated that individuals who adapt their speech rate to that of their conversational partner are perceived more positively in terms of social attractiveness and competence.

Vocabulary Accommodation in Job Interviews

Vocabulary accommodation, the practice of adjusting one's word choice to align with the interlocutor's language, is crucial in face-to-face job interviews. This strategy helps candidates establish rapport, demonstrate competence, and positively influence the interviewer's perceptions. Understanding the dynamics of vocabulary accommodation in face-to-face settings is essential due to the rich interplay of verbal and non-verbal cues, which together influence the overall communication effectiveness.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) posits that individuals modify their communication styles to converge with or diverge from their interlocutor's speech patterns for social reasons, such as gaining approval or asserting identity (Giles & Ogay, 2007). In face-to-face job interviews, vocabulary accommodation involves aligning one's language with the interviewer's terminology, technical jargon, and level of formality to create a positive impression.

In face-to-face job interviews, candidates can use vocabulary accommodation to navigate the complex dynamics of the interaction. Research indicates that vocabulary accommodation can enhance perceptions of competence, likability, and social attractiveness. Coupland et al. (1991) found that speakers who adjust their language to match their conversational partner are often viewed more favorably. In job interview contexts, using relevant terminology and mirroring the interviewer's language can demonstrate that the candidate is both competent and attuned to the industry's culture (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

Gesture Accommodation in Job Interviews

Gesture accommodation, the practice of adjusting one's non-verbal behaviors to align with those of the conversational partner, is a critical aspect of effective communication in job interviews. Non-verbal cues, such as gestures, play a significant role in conveying confidence, competence, and engagement. This discussion explores the importance of gesture accommodation in job interviews, supported by relevant theories and empirical evidence.

Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) posits that individuals adapt their communication behaviors to either converge with or diverge from their interlocutor's style for social and relational purposes (Giles & Ogay, 2007). Gesture accommodation, a component of non-verbal communication, involves modifying gestures to align with those of the interviewer, thereby fostering a sense of rapport and mutual understanding.

Research has demonstrated that non-verbal behaviors, including gestures, significantly impact perceptions of candidates in job interviews. A study by Gifford et al. (1985) found that candidates who used positive non-verbal behaviors, such as appropriate gestures, were perceived more favorably by interviewers. Similarly, Ivcevic and Ambady (2012) showed that gestures contribute to perceptions of expressiveness and confidence, which are crucial in interview settings.

This study explored the application of Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT) in job interviews, focusing on four key aspects: accent, speed, vocabulary, and gesture accommodation. It examined how individuals adjust their communication styles to align with others and the impact of these adjustments on interview outcomes. Accent accommodation involves candidates converging or diverging their accents to either build rapport or maintain distinctiveness. Speed accommodation also plays a vital role in interviews, where adjusting speech rate to match the interviewer can improve perceptions of competence and clarity. Vocabulary accommodation allows candidates to align their word choice with the interviewer's language, demonstrating competence and fitting within the professional culture. Lastly, gesture accommodation, or aligning non-verbal cues with the interviewer, fosters rapport and enhances perceptions of confidence and engagement.

4. Methodology

For this study on "Speech Accommodation and Apprehensions of Maritime Students in a Mock-Job Interview in Purposive Communication," a *convergent parallel mixed methods design* is used. This design allows for the simultaneous collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The rationale for using this design includes the ability to gather quantitative data on the level of speech accommodation while simultaneously collecting qualitative data to explore students' nuanced experiences and perceptions of their speech apprehensions during mock-job interviews. This approach enables cross-validation and corroboration of findings, enhancing reliability and validity, and addresses complex research questions involving both measurable outcomes and in-depth insights (Giles & Ogay, 2007).

The quantitative component includes the students' ratings provided by the Purposive Communication subject instructor, who assumed the role of a job interviewer during the mock-job interview. The interviewer used a rubric to

gather the needed data and the speech accommodation of maritime students in mock-job interviews. The criteria mentioned on the rubric was based on the Speech Accommodation Theory components: the accent, speed, vocabulary and gestures. The qualitative component involves the written reflections provided by the interviewees after the interview, where they articulate the reasons for their speech apprehensions. These reflections offer valuable insights into the specific factors contributing to their anxiety and how it impacted their communication strategies during the interview.

Data collection occurs concurrently, with initial analyses conducted separately for quantitative and qualitative data, followed by integration of findings in the interpretation phase to provide a holistic understanding of the research problem (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

The participants of the study were the 1st-year maritime students who enrolled in NGE 5 (Purposive Communication) during the Summer class of 2023. A total of 36 respondents agreed to be part of this study.

5. Ethical Considerations

Trustworthiness of the Research

To uphold the trustworthiness of the research in this study, the researcher used triangulation by incorporating multiple data sources (e.g., ratings from instructors and written reflections from students) to cross-verify findings. Conduct member checks by sharing preliminary results with participants for validation. The researcher provided detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, and procedures to enable others to determine the applicability of findings to other settings. Audit trail documenting all research processes and decisions was used. Consistent methods were used for data collection and analysis to ensure replicability. The researcher ensure that findings are shaped by the participants' responses and experiences rather than researcher bias.

Procedures and Protocol

The procedures and protocol for this study involved several key steps. First, the researcher recruited maritime students enrolled in a Purposive Communication course and obtained their informed consent. Next, the students participated in mock-job interviews conducted by their instructor, who assumed the role of a job interviewer and rate their performance using a standardized rubric. Immediately following the interviews, the students wrote reflections detailing their experiences and any speech apprehensions they encountered. Both quantitative data (instructor ratings) and qualitative data (student reflections) were collected concurrently. The data was then analyzed separately—quantitative data using statistical methods and qualitative data using thematic analysis—before integrating the findings to provide a comprehensive understanding of speech accommodation and apprehension in the interview context. Throughout the study, confidentiality and ethical considerations was strictly maintained.

Duration

The research was taken place in 6 months. The mock-job interview was done during the class hours of students in NGE 5. The interview took around 15-20 minutes per student.

Risks

The primary risk of this research is the potential for psychological discomfort or anxiety among participants due to the mock-job interview setting, which could cause stress or self-consciousness. Additionally, there is a risk of breach of confidentiality if participants' identities and responses are not adequately protected. However, these risks can be mitigated by ensuring a supportive environment, obtaining informed consent, and strictly maintaining the confidentiality of all data.

Benefits

The benefits of this research include enhancing the communication skills of maritime students by identifying and addressing their speech apprehensions. The findings can inform more effective training programs, improving students' performance in real job interviews. Additionally, the study contributes to academic knowledge on speech accommodation and communication apprehension, offering insights that can be applied to other educational and professional contexts.

Reimbursements

The respondents will not be provided with any payment for taking part in the research.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality measures for this study included assigning unique codes to each participant to ensure anonymity. All data, including interview ratings and written reflections, were securely stored in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. Participants' identities were not linked to their responses in any reports or publications. Additionally, all physical documents were kept in a locked cabinet, and any identifying information was removed during data analysis to further protect confidentiality.

Sharing the Results

The results of the study were shared with participants through a summary report, which was done during their academic consultation with their instructor. Additionally, findings will be presented at academic conferences and possibly be published in relevant scholarly journals, ensuring that individual identities remained confidential. The results were also discussed with the educational institution's faculty to inform improvements in their communication training programs.

6. Results and Discussion

The researcher evaluated the speech accommodation of maritime students during an online mock-job interview. A validated rubric was used to ascertain their level of speech accommodation. After analyzing the collected data, the following results were obtained.

Table 1: Level of Speed Accommodation of the Respondents during mock-job interview in Purposive Communication

	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
SP1	36	2.25	2	0.874	1	4	NI
SP2	36	2.25	2	0.806	1	4	NI
SP3	36	2.08	2	0.841	1	4	NI
SP4	36	2.11	2	0.887	1	4	NI
SPEED	36	2.17	2	0.819	1	4	NI

Table 1 presents data on the level of speed accommodation exhibited by respondents during mock-job interviews in Purposive Communication. Each item has 36 observations, meaning the ratings for 36 students are included in the analysis. This is the average score the students received for each question related to their speed adjustment. The mean scores range from 2.08 to 2.25, and for overall Speed, the mean is 2.17. These scores fall within the Needs Improvement (NI) range (1.81–2.60), indicating that the students' ability to adjust their speaking speed during the interview was rated as below average by the interviewers. This suggests that most students struggled with modifying their speaking speed effectively, and they would benefit from focused training and development in this area.

The median (middle value) for all items is 2.00, which also falls into the Needs Improvement (NI) category (1.81–2.60). This means that the majority of students were rated below average, with 50% of them scoring 2 or below. The median confirms that many students found it difficult to adjust their speaking speed during the interviews.

The SD values range from 0.806 to 0.887, with the SD for overall speed at 0.819. This moderate variability indicates that while there were some differences in how students were rated, the ratings were relatively consistent. Most students received scores close to the mean, suggesting that the overall difficulty in adjusting speaking speed was a widespread issue among the group. The minimum score for all items is 1 (Poor), and the maximum score is 4 (Very Good).

Notably, the maximum score did not reach 5 (Excellent), indicating that none of the students achieved the highest possible rating on any of the speed-related items. Even the best-performing students were rated at Very Good or below, which implies that there is room for improvement even for the higher-rated students in their ability to adjust their speaking speed effectively.

The individual items and the aggregate mean indicate a general "Needs Improvement" description, reflecting an overall challenge among respondents in effectively adjusting their speaking speed during interviews.

The first item, with a weighted mean of 2.25, indicates that

respondents generally need improvement in adjusting their speaking speed to match the interviewer's pace. According to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), effectively adjusting speech rate can enhance understanding and rapport (Giles & Ogay, 2007). This low score suggests that respondents are not effectively utilizing this adaptive strategy, potentially leading to miscommunication and decreased rapport with interviewers.

The second item, with a weighted mean of 2.25, shows that respondents feel uncomfortable modifying their speech rate. Comfort with modifying speech behavior- such as speaking rate- is conceptually tied to communication accommodation theory, which posits that adaptive adjustments in speech can promote effective interpersonal interaction (Giles et al., 1991). This discomfort may hinder respondents' ability to adapt their speech effectively, negatively impacting their overall communication during interviews.

The third item, with a weighted mean of 2.08, reflects a significant need for improvement in respondents' ability to consciously slow down their speech for better understanding. Effective communication often requires adapting speech rate to the listener's processing needs (Bradac et al., 1979). The low score suggests that respondents may struggle to recognize when to slow down their speech, which is critical for ensuring comprehension, especially in a high-stakes context like a job interview.

The fourth item, with a weighted mean of 2.11, indicates that respondents need to improve their ability to modify their speaking speed to project confidence. Research has shown that appropriate adjustments in speech rate can enhance perceptions of confidence and competence (Apple et al., 1979). The respondents' low score in this area suggests that they may not be effectively using speech rate adjustments to convey confidence, which could negatively affect their interview performance.

The aggregate mean of 2.17, described as "Needs Improvement," indicates that respondents overall acknowledge the need for significant improvement in their speed accommodation skills during interviews. This suggests a gap in the respondents' ability to adapt their speech rate to varying interview contexts.

Table 2: Level of Vocabulary Accommodation of the Respondents during the mock-job interview in Purposive Communication

	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
V1	36	2.5	3	1.082	1	5	NI
V2	36	2.47	3	1.028	1	4	NI
V3	36	2.78	3	1.045	1	5	G
V4	36	2.42	2.5	1.105	1	4	NI
VOCABULARY	36	2.54	2.63	0.99	1	4.25	NI

Table 2 presents data on the level of vocabulary accommodation exhibited by respondents during mock-job

interviews in Purposive Communication. Each item has 36 observations, meaning the ratings for 36 students are

included in the analysis. The mean scores for the vocabulary-related items range from 2.42 to 2.78, with the overall vocabulary mean at 2.54. The scores for V1, V2, and V4 fall within the Needs Improvement (NI) range (1.81–2.60), while V3 falls into the Good (G) category (2.61–3.40). The overall vocabulary mean (2.54) is in the Needs Improvement (NI) category. This reflects an overall challenge among respondents in effectively adjusting their vocabulary during interviews, with some areas showing better performance. This indicates that students' ability to adjust their vocabulary during the interview was generally rated as below average by the interviewers. Most students struggled with modifying their vocabulary effectively to match the context and demands of the interview. However, the higher mean for V3 (using simpler terms for clarity) suggests that students were relatively more successful in simplifying their language when needed, but still have room to improve.

The median (middle value) for the vocabulary items is 3.00 for V1, V2, and V3, and 2.50 for V4. This suggests that many students were rated closer to Good on certain items, but the median for V4 falls within the Needs Improvement (NI) category. The median values, especially for V1, V2, and V3, indicate that a significant portion of students performed better than the mean suggests, as half of the students scored 3.00 or above in their ability to modify vocabulary in certain areas. This suggests that while improvement is needed, some students are better able to adjust their vocabulary during the interview than others. However, the median for V4 (use of technical terms) indicates that students particularly struggled with this aspect, as half of the students were rated 2.50 or lower.

The SD values range from 1.028 to 1.105, with the SD for overall vocabulary at 0.990. This moderate variability indicates that while there were some differences in how students were rated, the ratings were relatively consistent. Most students received scores close to the mean, but there were still noticeable variations in performance. The moderate variability in the scores suggests that although many students struggled with adjusting their vocabulary, there were some students who performed significantly better (as reflected by the maximum scores). This indicates that vocabulary adjustment is a skill that some students have a better handle on, but others may need more focused guidance in recognizing when and how to modify their vocabulary.

The minimum score for all items is 1 (Poor), while the maximum score is 5 for V1 and V3 and 4 for V2 and V4. Notably, only V1 and V3 reached the Excellent rating (score of 5), while the others peaked at Very Good (4). This indicates that a few students excelled at adjusting their vocabulary, particularly in simplifying their language for clarity (V3).

The individual items and the aggregate mean indicate a

general "Needs Improvement" description, reflecting an overall challenge among respondents in effectively adjusting their vocabulary during interviews.

The first item, with a weighted mean of 2.50, indicates that respondents generally need improvement in adjusting their vocabulary to match the interviewer's level of expertise. Effective vocabulary adjustment is essential for clear and effective communication, especially in professional settings (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The low score suggests that respondents may struggle to align their language with the interviewer's expertise, potentially leading to miscommunication or a perception of inadequacy.

The second item, with a weighted mean of 2.47, also shows that respondents feel uncomfortable modifying their vocabulary to suit the context of the interview. Comfort in vocabulary modification is crucial for ensuring that the communication is both appropriate and effective. This discomfort may hinder respondents' ability to adapt their language, negatively impacting their overall communication during interviews.

The third item, with a weighted mean of 2.78, is rated as "Good." This indicates that respondents are generally able to use simpler terms consciously when necessary for better understanding. This is a positive finding, as simplifying language when appropriate can significantly enhance communication clarity (Bradac et al., 1979).

The fourth item, with a weighted mean of 2.42, indicates that respondents need improvement in using more technical or specialized terms appropriately during the interview. The ability to use specialized vocabulary correctly is important for demonstrating expertise and competence (Apple, Streeter, & Krauss, 1979). The low score suggests that respondents may not be effectively using technical language, which could negatively affect their credibility and perceived competence.

The aggregate mean of 2.54, described as "Needs Improvement," indicates that respondents overall recognize the need for significant improvement in their vocabulary accommodation skills during interviews. This suggests a gap in the respondents' ability to adapt their vocabulary to varying interview contexts. The analysis of the vocabulary data reveals that while students showed some strengths in simplifying their language for clarity (V3), they generally need improvement in adjusting their vocabulary during interviews, particularly in areas like matching the interviewer's expertise (V1), feeling comfortable with vocabulary modification (V2), and using technical language appropriately (V4). The variability in scores suggests that while a few students performed well, the majority need more development to improve their vocabulary adaptability and fluency in different contexts.

Table 3: Level of Accent Accommodation of the Respondents during the mock-job interview in Purposive Communication

	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
A1	36	2.83	3	0.91	1	4	G
A2	36	2.39	2	1.05	1	4	NI
A3	36	3.17	3	1.108	2	5	G
A4	36	2.67	3	0.894	1	4	G
ACCENT	36	2.76	2.75	0.939	1.25	4.25	G

The table 3 presents data on the level of accent accommodation exhibited by respondents during mock-job interviews in Purposive Communication. Each item has 36 observations, meaning the ratings for 36 students are included in the analysis. The mean scores for the Accent Accommodation items range from 2.39 to 3.17, with the overall mean for Accent at 2.76. Based on the Likert scale, A1, A3, and A4 fall within the Good (G) range (2.61–3.40). A2 falls into the Needs Improvement (NI) range (1.81–2.60). The overall mean for Accent is 2.76, which places it in the Good (G) category. The results indicate that students were generally rated as Good in their ability to adjust their accent to match the interview context, particularly for A1 (adjustment of accent to match the interviewer's speech patterns) and A3 (ability to soften accent for better understanding). However, their comfort in modifying their accent (A2) was rated as Needs Improvement (NI), indicating that students generally struggled to feel confident when adjusting their accent. Overall, students were seen as doing a fairly good job in managing their accents, but further improvement is needed in developing comfort and confidence in this area.

The median for most items is 3.00, indicating that the majority of students were rated around the Good (G) level. However, for A2 (comfort in modifying accent), the median is 2.00, placing it in the Needs Improvement (NI) category.

The median scores suggest that while most students were rated as Good for adjusting their accent, comfort in modifying the accent (A2) remains a notable area of difficulty for many students. Half of the students were rated 2.00 or below for A2, highlighting a lack of confidence in their ability to modify their accent.

The SD values range from 0.894 to 1.108, with the overall SD for accent accommodation at 0.939. This moderate variability indicates that while there are some differences in how students were rated, the scores are fairly consistent. Some students performed better in their accent accommodation, while others struggled more. The SD values show moderate variability in performance, suggesting that while most students performed close to the mean, some students were more proficient at adjusting their accents while others needed more assistance. This variability implies that individualized coaching may be beneficial for students who are less comfortable with accent adjustment.

The minimum score for all items is 1 (Poor), and the maximum score ranges from 4 to 5 (Very Good to Excellent). A3 (ability to soften accent) has a maximum score of 5 (Excellent), while the others peak at 4 (Very Good). The fact that some students achieved the highest possible rating (5) for A3 (ability to soften accent) shows that a few students

excelled in this area. However, for other items, the maximum score only reached Very Good, suggesting that even the best-performing students still have room for improvement in their overall accent accommodation skills.

The individual items mostly indicate "Good" descriptions, with one item needing improvement. The aggregate mean also indicates a "Good" level of performance, reflecting that respondents are generally adept at adjusting their accents during interviews.

The first item, with a weighted mean of 2.83, indicates that respondents are generally good at adjusting their accent to match the interviewer's speech patterns. This aligns with Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), which suggests that matching the speech patterns of conversational partners can enhance mutual understanding and rapport (Giles & Ogay, 2007). This good performance implies that respondents are able to effectively modify their accent to facilitate better communication during interviews.

The second item, with a weighted mean of 2.39, shows that respondents need improvement in appearing comfortable while modifying their accent. Comfort in accent modification is crucial as it can impact the fluidity and authenticity of communication (Street, 1991). This discomfort may hinder respondents' ability to adapt their accent effectively, potentially affecting their overall performance during interviews.

The third item, with a weighted mean of 3.17, indicates a good ability among respondents to consciously soften their accent when necessary for better understanding. This skill is important for ensuring that the interviewer comprehends the content of the communication, particularly in diverse linguistic settings (Bradac et al., 1979). The high score suggests that respondents are proficient in recognizing and adjusting their accent to enhance clarity.

The fourth item, with a weighted mean of 2.67, reflects a good ability to maintain an appropriate balance between their natural accent and clarity of speech. This balance is essential for preserving one's identity while ensuring effective communication (Apple et al., 1979). The good performance indicates that respondents are capable of adjusting their accent without compromising their natural speech characteristics.

The aggregate mean of 2.77, described as "Good," suggests that respondents generally have a positive level of skill in accent accommodation during interviews. This indicates that respondents are relatively proficient in adjusting their accents to facilitate effective communication, although there are areas that could be improved.

Table 4: Level of Gesture Accommodation of the Respondents during the mock-job interview in Purposive Communication

	N	Mean	Median	SD	Minimum	Maximum	Interpretation
G1	36	2.67	3	0.926	1	4	G
G2	36	2.53	3	0.971	1	4	NI
G3	36	2.56	3	0.998	1	4	NI
G4	36	2.72	3	0.974	1	4	G
GESTURES	36	2.62	3	0.944	1	4	G

Table 4 presents data on the level of gesture accommodation exhibited by respondents during mock-job interviews in Purposive Communication. Each item has 36 observations, meaning the ratings for 36 students are included in the analysis. The mean scores for Gesture Accommodation range from 2.53 to 2.72, with the overall mean for gestures at 2.62. Based on the Likert scale: G1 (adjusting gestures to match the interviewer's body language) and G4 (using expressive gestures appropriately) fall within the Good (G) range (2.61–3.40). G2 (comfort in modifying gestures) and G3 (ability to use more restrained gestures) fall into the Needs Improvement (NI) range (1.81–2.60). The overall mean for Gestures is 2.62, which places it on the boundary between Needs Improvement (NI) and Good (G). These scores indicate that while students were generally rated as Good in their ability to adjust gestures to match the interviewer's body language (G1) and use expressive gestures when appropriate (G4), they struggled with feeling comfortable modifying gestures (G2) and using more restrained gestures when necessary (G3). Overall, students demonstrated some level of proficiency in gesture accommodation, but there are areas, particularly related to control and comfort, that need improvement.

The median for all items is 3.00, indicating that the majority of students were rated around the Good (G) level. The median values show that a significant number of students were rated Good in their ability to accommodate gestures. However, with some scores falling below 3.00 (indicating Needs Improvement for some students), there is still a portion of the group that struggled more with gesture control, particularly with restrained and comfortable use of gestures.

The SD values range from 0.926 to 0.998, with the overall SD for gestures at 0.944. This moderate variability suggests that while there are some differences in how students were rated, the ratings were relatively consistent across the group. Some students performed better at accommodating gestures, while others struggled more. The SD values suggest that the majority of students were rated similarly, but there are still noticeable differences in performance. Some students managed their gestures well, while others found it difficult to adjust their gestures appropriately during the interview.

The minimum score for all items is 1 (Poor), and the maximum score is 4 (Very Good). No student achieved a score of 5 (Excellent) on any of the gesture-related items, indicating that even the highest-performing students were rated as Very Good at best, and most students did not exceed this level. The lack of scores in the Excellent range suggests that students have not yet mastered the ability to modify and control their gestures effectively during interviews. While some students were rated as Very Good at adjusting gestures to match the interviewer and using expressive gestures, there is still room for improvement in these areas, as none of the students demonstrated excellent proficiency.

The individual items mostly indicate "Good" descriptions, with two items needing improvement. The aggregate mean also indicates a "Good" level of performance, reflecting that respondents are generally adept at adjusting their gestures during interviews.

The first item, with a weighted mean of 2.67, indicates that respondents are generally good at adjusting their gestures to match the interviewer's body language. Effective nonverbal communication, including gesture accommodation, can enhance rapport and understanding (Giles & Ogay, 2007). This good performance implies that respondents are able to modify their gestures to facilitate better nonverbal alignment with the interviewer.

The second item, with a weighted mean of 2.53, shows that respondents need improvement in appearing comfortable while modifying their gestures. Comfort in modifying gestures is crucial as it impacts the naturalness and effectiveness of nonverbal communication. This discomfort may hinder respondents' ability to adapt their gestures effectively, potentially affecting their overall nonverbal communication during interviews.

The third item, with a weighted mean of 2.56, indicates a need for improvement in respondents' ability to use more restrained gestures consciously when necessary for better understanding. Restraining gestures appropriately can help in maintaining clarity and preventing misinterpretation (Bradac et al., 1979). The lower score suggests that respondents may struggle to recognize when to moderate their gestures to ensure effective communication.

The fourth item, with a weighted mean of 2.72, reflects a good ability to use more expressive gestures appropriately during the interview. Expressive gestures can enhance the dynamism and engagement of communication (Apple et al., 1979). The good performance indicates that respondents are generally capable of using expressive gestures effectively to complement their verbal communication.

The aggregate mean of 2.62, described as "Good," suggests that respondents generally have a positive level of skill in gesture accommodation during interviews. This indicates that respondents are relatively proficient in adjusting their gestures to facilitate effective nonverbal communication, though there are areas for improvement. The "Interpretation" column highlights the overall evaluation of each item: G1 (adjusting gestures to match the interviewer's body language) and G4 (using expressive gestures appropriately) were interpreted as Good (G), indicating that students generally performed well in these areas. G2 (comfort in modifying gestures) and G3 (using more restrained gestures) were interpreted as Needs Improvement (NI), indicating that students struggled with feeling comfortable and appropriately using gestures during the interview. The results show that students generally have a good sense of how to use gestures in an expressive and responsive manner, but they lack comfort and control in modifying their gestures, especially when they need to be more restrained. This suggests that while students are able to express themselves through gestures, they may not be fully aware of how their gestures affect their overall communication or may feel awkward when trying to modify their nonverbal behavior.

Table 5: Summary of the Level of Speech Accommodation of the Respondents during their Mock-job Interview in Purposive Communication

Speech Accommodations	Weighted Mean	Description
Speed	2.17	Needs Improvement
Vocabulary	2.54	Needs Improvement
Accent	2.77	Good
Gestures	2.62	Good
Aggregate Mean	2.53	Needs Improvement

Table 5 provides a summary of the levels of speech accommodation exhibited by respondents during mock-job interviews in Purposive Communication across four dimensions: speed, vocabulary, accent, and gestures. The aggregate mean 2.53 indicates a "Needs Improvement" description, reflecting an overall challenge in effective speech accommodation despite some areas showing better performance.

The lowest score, with a weighted mean of 2.17, indicates that respondents need significant improvement in adjusting their speaking speed. Effective speed accommodation is essential for clear and coherent communication. According to Communication Accommodation Theory (CAT), aligning speech rate with the conversational partner can enhance understanding and rapport (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The low score suggests that respondents struggle to match their speech rate to the interviewer's pace, which can lead to miscommunication.

With a weighted mean of 2.54, respondents also need improvement in modifying their vocabulary to suit the context of the interview. Adaptability in vocabulary is crucial for ensuring that communication is appropriate and effective. This indicates that respondents may find it challenging to adjust their language to match the interviewer's level of expertise, potentially affecting the clarity and professionalism of their responses.

The score of 2.77 for accent accommodation is rated as "Good," suggesting that respondents are relatively proficient in adjusting their accent to facilitate better communication. This aligns with CAT, which posits that modifying accent can enhance mutual understanding and social approval (Giles & Ogay, 2007). The positive performance in this area indicates that respondents can effectively soften or adjust their accent when necessary, contributing to clearer communication.

The score of 2.62 for gesture accommodation is also rated as "Good," indicating that respondents are generally good at modifying their gestures to match the interviewer's body language. Effective nonverbal communication, including gesture accommodation, can enhance rapport and understanding (Apple et al., 1979). This good performance suggests that respondents can use expressive gestures appropriately, although comfort with modifying gestures still needs improvement.

The data indicates that respondents generally need improvement in various aspects of speech accommodation during mock-job interviews, with specific strengths in accent and gesture accommodation. This highlights the importance of incorporating targeted communication skills training into

preparatory programs for job interviews. Addressing these areas can lead to more effective and confident communication, ultimately enhancing interview success.

Table 6: Correlation Matrix

		Speed	Vocabulary	Accent	Gestures
Speed	Pearson's r	—			
	df	—			
	p-value	—			
Vocabulary	Pearson's r	0.704	—		
	df	34	—		
	p-value	<.001	—		
Accent	Pearson's r	0.86	0.904	—	
	df	34	34	—	
	p-value	<.001	<.001	—	
Gestures	Pearson's r	0.795	0.818	0.915	—
	df	34	34	34	—
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001	—

7. Analysis of Correlations

Speed and Vocabulary:

The result, $r = 0.704$, shows a strong positive correlation between speed and vocabulary, suggesting that as speaking speed increases, vocabulary usage also improves. This relationship is statistically significant ($p < .001$). Studies show that speaking speed and vocabulary use are interconnected. Faster speakers tend to use a broader range of vocabulary because increased speed is often associated with more proficient language skills. According to Levelt et al. (1989) Speech Production Theory, faster speakers are able to access their lexical repository more efficiently, thereby incorporating more varied vocabulary into their speech. Additionally, Boersma & Weenink (2018) demonstrated that speakers who produce speech at higher speeds typically exhibit more fluent and sophisticated language, which includes richer vocabulary.

Speed and Accent:

The result, $r = 0.860$, shows a very strong positive correlation between speed and accent, indicating that as speaking speed increases, accent clarity or strength also tends to increase. This is highly significant ($p < .001$). Communication Accommodation Theory (Giles, 1973) emphasizes how speakers adjust their speech to accommodate others' linguistic or accentual norms in conversational settings. Research by Munro & Derwing (1995) found that accent strength and speed are often correlated, as speakers modify their accents and adjust their speed for clearer communication. Faster speech tends to enhance clarity in well-practiced speakers, as they are better able to manage pronunciation and intonation, making the accent more distinct and easier to understand.

Speed and Gestures:

The result, $r = 0.795$, suggests a strong positive correlation between speed and gestures, indicating that faster speaking is associated with more pronounced or frequent gestures. This relationship is highly significant ($p < .001$). McNeill (1992) demonstrated that gestures and speech are closely linked, functioning as a unified system in human communication. When speech speeds up, gesture frequency and intensity tend to increase because gestures help to reinforce verbal communication, especially when the speaker

is conveying complex or rapid information. Faster speakers often use gestures to aid in comprehension and keep up with the speed of their verbal delivery.

Vocabulary and Accent:

The result, $r = 0.904$, represents the strongest correlation in the matrix, indicating that vocabulary and accent are very closely linked. When vocabulary usage increases, accent clarity or precision tends to improve, and this relationship is highly significant ($p < .001$). Vocabulary and accent are inherently connected in communication. Derwing and Munro (2009) found that the ability to use diverse vocabulary often results in clearer pronunciation and better accent accommodation, particularly in second language speakers. This is because individuals who have a better command of vocabulary can more precisely articulate words, which often results in clearer and more consistent accents. Additionally, Levelt et al. (1989) noted that vocabulary access is related to phonological encoding, meaning that the more fluid and diverse the vocabulary, the clearer and more well-pronounced the speech tends to be.

Vocabulary and Gestures:

The result, $r = 0.818$, demonstrates a strong positive correlation between vocabulary usage and gestural communication. This means that as a speaker's vocabulary improves, their use of gestures tends to increase significantly ($p < .001$). Research Evidence: According to Hostetter and Alibali (2008), people who use a richer and more diverse vocabulary tend to gesticulate more, as gestures serve to further clarify and emphasize their verbal expressions. The use of gestures is particularly prevalent when the speaker is conveying more abstract or complex concepts, often relying on hand movements to facilitate understanding. The Gestural-Speech Interface Hypothesis proposed by McNeill (1992) further supports this finding, emphasizing the complementary nature of speech and gesture.

Accent and Gestures:

The result, $r = 0.915$, indicates an extremely strong positive correlation between accent clarity and gestural communication. As accent clarity or intensity increases, gestural communication also tends to increase, and this relationship is highly significant ($p < .001$). Kendon (2004) suggested that nonverbal cues, such as gestures, are often synchronized with verbal aspects of communication like accent and tone. Gestures serve to reinforce the clarity and intensity of speech, especially when communicating across cultures or languages.

All the correlations are quite high (ranging from 0.704 to 0.915), indicating strong relationships between these variables. All relationships are statistically significant with $p < .001$, meaning there is a very low probability that these correlations occurred by chance. These results could suggest that improvements in one area (such as vocabulary or accent) are strongly associated with improvements in the others (like speed or gestures). This could be particularly important in contexts like language acquisition, communication training, or speech analysis. The highest correlation is between Accent and Gestures (0.915), meaning they co-vary the most. The weakest correlation, while still strong, is between Speed and Vocabulary (0.704), indicating that while speed and

vocabulary are positively related, their connection isn't as tight as the others. This matrix offers insight into how various communication elements (speech speed, vocabulary, accent, and gestures) are interrelated and how improving or changing one could impact others.

Thematic Analysis on Reasons of Speech Apprehensions Among Respondents During the Mock-Job Interview

Job interviews are crucial for maritime graduates as they embark on their careers, especially for those seeking employment in shipping companies. Effective communication and presentation skills during interviews are vital for securing these positions. This thematic analysis identified three primary reasons for the students' speech apprehensions: High-Stakes Dread, Readiness Deficit, and Verbal Roadblocks. These key challenges underscore the need for targeted interventions. The following analysis explores these themes in-depth, supported by relevant researches.

Theme Cluster 1: High-Stakes Dread

A recurring theme in the analysis was students' nervousness and anxiety, particularly due to the high-stakes nature of job interviews, the unpredictability of questions, and the fear of underperforming. The pressure to perform well and secure a position in a competitive global industry heightened these feelings. This widespread nervousness is well-documented through student reflections, as illustrated by the following vignettes:

"I was not able to speak fluently because it was hard and I felt very nervous." - Participant 1-
"I felt nervous and I can't answer directly or fluently the questions."

Participant 3-

Interview anxiety can significantly impair performance, leading to negative evaluations by interviewers. This is particularly relevant for maritime graduates, who often face high-stakes interviews for competitive positions in a global industry. The pressure to perform well in these interviews can be overwhelming, especially when communication skills are critical to success.

Job interviews are crucial for maritime graduates aiming to enter the shipping industry. Given the competitive nature of this field, the ability to handle interview anxiety and communicate effectively can significantly impact employability.

Theme Cluster 2: Readiness Deficit

Many students felt unprepared for interviews, particularly when faced with unexpected questions. This lack of preparation contributed to their nervousness and impacted their ability to respond confidently. The following vignettes support this finding:

"I was not able to prepare myself physically and mentally during the interview." - Participant 4
"Because of lack of preparation, my mind can't focus. Even though this is my dream to be interviewed for a job, I am still nervous." - Participant 5

Research indicates that structured interviews with clearly defined expectations allow applicants to prepare more effectively, resulting in improved performance and more consistent evaluations by interviewers (Campion et al., 1997).

Theme Cluster 3: Verbal Roadblocks

Difficulties with English fluency and effective communication were significant barriers for many students. This challenge was compounded by nervousness and fear to commit incorrect grammar. The following vignettes support this finding:

"I am low at speaking English fluently and I got so nervous during the interview." - Participant 2

"During the interview, I have few words in my mind, long sentences but I can't express them because I am afraid that my grammar will be incorrect." - Participant 6

Nervousness can severely impact a maritime student's performance during mock-job interviews. The high-stress environment of an interview can exacerbate anxiety, leading to poor performance even if the student possesses the necessary technical knowledge and skills. Awan et al. (2010) found that language anxiety significantly affects students' academic and practical performance. For maritime students, this could translate to underperformance in interviews, despite being well-prepared technically.

Maritime students often need to communicate clearly and accurately in English, especially in international settings. The fear of making grammatical errors can hinder their ability to express themselves effectively during mock-job interviews. Pishghadam and Akhondpoor (2011) emphasize that fear of errors can lead to avoidance of speaking tasks, limiting opportunities to practice and improve. This avoidance is detrimental in preparing for job interviews where effective communication is critical.

8. Conclusions

The study revealed that maritime students face significant challenges in speech accommodation during online mock-job interviews, particularly in adjusting their speed and vocabulary to suit the interview context. Both dimensions were rated as Needs Improvement, with many students struggling to modify their speaking speed and use appropriate vocabulary, especially when dealing with technical terms. However, students demonstrated relatively better performance in accent and gesture accommodation, both rated as Good, though there is still a need for improvement in feeling comfortable modifying their accents and gestures.

The correlation analysis highlighted strong positive relationships between all aspects of speech accommodation, suggesting that improvements in one area can positively impact others. Additionally, a thematic analysis of speech apprehensions identified three key issues contributing to communication difficulties: High-Stakes Anxiety, Readiness Deficit, and Verbal Roadblocks. To address these challenges, the study recommends targeted interventions such as speech speed training, vocabulary development, accent confidence

building, and nonverbal communication training, alongside thorough interview preparation exercises. These initiatives can help students improve their communication skills and enhance their job interview performance, ultimately increasing their employability in the global shipping industry.

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