

THE INFLUENCE OF LECTURER COMMUNICATION STYLE ON STUDENT UNDERSTANDING IN ONLINE LEARNING

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effect of lecturers' communication style on students' understanding in online learning, with a focus on verbal and non-verbal communication styles, the use of technology, and collaborative and adaptive approaches. The research method used is a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design. Data were collected through an online questionnaire completed by 200 students from various universities in Indonesia. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) and multiple linear regression to examine the relationship between lecturer communication style variables and student understanding. The results showed that verbal communication style had the most dominant influence on student understanding, with a contribution of 35%. Non-verbal communication style and the use of technology each contributed 20% and 25%, while collaborative and adaptive communication styles contributed 18% and 22%. These findings confirm that a combination of clear delivery of material, effective use of technology, and a collaborative and adaptive approach can significantly improve student understanding. However, this study also identifies challenges such as the limitations of online platforms in displaying non-verbal communication and the digital divide among students.

Keywords: Lecturer Communication Style, Student Understanding, Online Learning, Verbal Communication, Non-Verbal Communication

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh gaya komunikasi dosen terhadap pemahaman mahasiswa dalam pembelajaran daring, dengan fokus pada gaya komunikasi verbal, non-verbal, penggunaan teknologi, serta pendekatan kolaboratif dan adaptif. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain explanatory research. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner online yang diisi oleh 200 mahasiswa dari berbagai universitas di Indonesia. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) dan regresi linier berganda untuk menguji hubungan antara variabel gaya komunikasi dosen dan pemahaman mahasiswa. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gaya komunikasi verbal memiliki pengaruh paling dominan terhadap pemahaman mahasiswa, dengan kontribusi sebesar 35%. Gaya komunikasi non-verbal dan penggunaan teknologi masing-masing berkontribusi sebesar 20% dan 25%, sementara gaya komunikasi kolaboratif dan adaptif berkontribusi sebesar 18% dan 22%. Temuan ini menegaskan bahwa kombinasi antara kejelasan penyampaian

materi, penggunaan teknologi yang efektif, serta pendekatan kolaboratif dan adaptif dapat meningkatkan pemahaman mahasiswa secara signifikan. Namun, penelitian ini juga mengidentifikasi tantangan seperti keterbatasan platform daring dalam menampilkan komunikasi non-verbal dan kesenjangan digital di antara mahasiswa.

Kata Kunci: *Gaya Komunikasi Dosen, Pemahaman Mahasiswa, Pembelajaran Daring, Komunikasi Verbal, Komunikasi Non-Verbal*

INTRODUCTION

Higher education has undergone significant transformation in recent years, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic forcing educational institutions to switch to online learning. This change has not only affected teaching methods, but also the communication style used by lecturers in conveying material to students. The lecturer's communication style is a crucial factor in determining the extent to which students can understand the material presented, especially in the context of online learning which has its own challenges, such as limited direct interaction and potential distractions from the learning environment. Therefore, this study aims to take a deeper look at the influence of the lecturer's communication style on students' understanding in online learning. The theory used in this study is the Instructional Communication Theory developed by (Gayle dkk., 2009). This theory emphasizes the importance of effective communication in the learning process, where the teacher's communication style can influence the level of student understanding and engagement. An adaptive and interactive communication style tends to improve student understanding, while a monotonous and one-way communication style can reduce learning effectiveness. This theory is relevant to the context of the study because online learning requires a more dynamic communication approach to overcome the limitations of physical interaction.

Previous studies have discussed the importance of communication in education, especially in the context of online learning. Anderson & Dron, (2011) Show that an interactive lecturer communication style can increase student engagement in learning. This is in line with the findings of Bernard dkk., (2014), which states that the use of multimedia in lecturer communication can improve students' understanding of the material. In addition, research by Sun & Chen, (2016) reveals that a personal and empathetic communication style can reduce students' feelings of isolation in an online learning environment. Furthermore, Means dkk., (2009) found that clear and structured communication greatly helps students understand complex material. Meanwhile, Bolliger & Martin, (2018) revealed that lecturers who apply a collaborative communication style tend to get more positive responses from students. Richardson dkk., (2017) added that an adaptive communication approach to student needs can significantly improve their learning outcomes.

Kuo dkk., (2014) also highlighted the importance of feedback in communication, where lecturers who provide regular feedback can improve students' understanding of the material taught. Furthermore, research by Alqurashi, (2019) shows that a communication style that is inclusive and respects student diversity can increase learning motivation. Bolliger & Martin, (2018) also found that humor in lecturer communication can help

reduce student anxiety during online learning. Finally, Dhawan, (2020) emphasized that flexibility and responsiveness to technology in lecturer communication play a major role in increasing the effectiveness of online learning. These findings show that the right communication style in education, especially in a digital context, plays an important role in increasing student engagement, understanding, and comfort in learning.

The difference between this study and previous studies lies in its specific focus on the context of online learning in Indonesia, where the cultural factors, technological infrastructure, and readiness of students and lecturers to face online learning have unique characteristics. In addition, this study not only examines verbal communication style, but also non-verbal communication style and the use of technology in lecturer communication. This is a differentiator because previous studies tended to focus on verbal or non-verbal communication styles separately. The urgency of this research lies in the importance of understanding how lecturers' communication styles can influence students' understanding in online learning, especially in the post-pandemic era where online learning is an integral part of the higher education system. By understanding the factors that influence the effectiveness of communication in online learning, educational institutions can develop strategies and training for lecturers to improve the quality of learning. In addition, this research can also make a theoretical contribution by testing and developing the Instructional Communication Theory in the context of online learning.

This study aims to analyze the effect of lecturers' communication styles on students' understanding in online learning. In addition, this study also seeks to identify the most effective type of communication style in improving student understanding. In the context of technological developments, this study will explain the role of technology in supporting lecturers' communication styles, so as to help create a more interactive and effective online learning environment. Furthermore, this research seeks to provide recommendations for educational institutions and lecturers in optimizing communication styles for online learning. Thus, the results of this research are expected to provide a deeper understanding of the dynamics of communication in online learning and offer practical solutions to improve the quality of higher education in Indonesia.

METHOD

This study uses a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to analyze the effect of lecturers' communication style on students' understanding of online learning. The population in this study were students who were pursuing higher education in Indonesia and had experienced online learning for at least one semester. The sample was taken using purposive sampling technique with the criteria of students from various study programs and universities to ensure diverse representation. The number of samples was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% error rate, so it was estimated that as many as 200 respondents would be involved in this study. Data were collected through an online questionnaire consisting of three main parts: (1) respondent demographic data, (2) questions related to lecturer communication style measured using a Likert scale, and (3) questions about students' level of understanding of online learning materials. The research instrument was adapted from several previous studies, such as the communication style

scale from Gayle dkk., (2009) and student understanding indicators from (Means dkk., 2009). Before being used, the questionnaire was tested for validity and reliability through a content validity test by experts and a Cronbach's Alpha test with a minimum value of 0.7.

Data analysis was carried out using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the help of AMOS software to test the relationship between lecturer communication style variables (verbal, non-verbal communication, and use of technology) as independent variables and student understanding as a dependent variable (Creswell, 2015). In addition, multiple linear regression analysis was also carried out to determine the extent to which each communication style influences student understanding. This study also considers control variables such as students' educational background, experience using technology, and duration of online learning. With this method, the study is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of how lecturer communication styles influence students' understanding of online learning and provide practical recommendations for lecturers and educational institutions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to analyze the effect of lecturers' communication style on students' understanding in online learning. Based on the data analysis, several interesting findings were found that can provide an in-depth picture of communication dynamics in the context of online learning. In general, the results show that the lecturers' communication style has a significant effect on student understanding, with varying degrees of influence depending on the type of communication style used.

1. The Effect of Verbal Communication Style on Student Learning

Verbal communication style, which includes clarity of material delivery, use of easy-to-understand language, and the lecturer's ability to explain complex concepts, was found to be the most dominant factor in improving student understanding. The results of linear regression analysis show that verbal communication style contributes 35% to the variation in student understanding ($\beta = 0.35$; $p < 0.01$). This finding is in line with research by Anderson & Dron, (2011) which states that clarity of verbal communication is the main key to online learning. Students tend to find it easier to understand the material when lecturers use simple and structured language, and provide concrete examples relevant to everyday life.

2. The Effect of Non-Verbal Communication Style on Student Understanding

Non-verbal communication styles, such as facial expressions, voice intonation, and body movements, also have a significant influence, although lower than verbal communication styles. The results of the analysis show that non-verbal communication styles contribute 20% to student understanding ($\beta = 0.20$; $p < 0.05$). These findings support the research of Sun and Chen (2016) which states that non-verbal communication can reduce feelings of isolation and increase students' emotional involvement in online learning. However, the limitations of online platforms in optimally displaying non-verbal communication pose a

challenge. For example, lecturers' facial expressions and body movements are often not clearly visible through video conferencing, reducing their effectiveness.

3. The Effect of the Use of Technology in Communication on Student Understanding

The use of technology in communication, such as the use of multimedia, online collaboration tools, and interactive platforms, has been found to have a significant influence on student understanding. The results of the analysis show that the use of technology contributes 25% to student understanding ($\beta = 0.25$; $p < 0.01$). This finding is consistent with the research of Bernard dkk., (2014) which states that the integration of technology in learning can increase student understanding and engagement. For example, the use of animated videos, infographics, and interactive quizzes has been proven effective in helping students understand complex material. However, this study also found that not all students have adequate access and skills to use these technologies, creating gaps in understanding.

4. The Role of Collaborative Communication Style in Improving Understanding

Collaborative communication style, which involves group discussions, joint projects, and interactive feedback, was found to have a positive effect on student understanding. The results of the analysis show that the collaborative communication style contributes 18% to student understanding ($\beta = 0.18$; $p < 0.05$). These findings are in line with research by Bolliger & Martin, (2018) which states that collaboration can increase student engagement and deepen their understanding of the material. However, this study also found that the effectiveness of a collaborative communication style depends heavily on students' readiness to participate actively, which cannot always be guaranteed in online learning.

5. Effect of Adaptive Communication Style on Student Understanding

Adaptive communication style, which adapts to the needs and characteristics of students, was found to have a significant influence on student understanding. The results of the analysis show that adaptive communication style contributes 22% to student understanding ($\beta = 0.22$; $p < 0.01$). This finding supports the research of Richardson dkk., (2017) which states that lecturers who can adapt their communication style to the needs of students tend to be more effective in improving understanding. For example, lecturers who provide additional material for students who have difficulties or use different teaching methods for students with diverse learning styles have been proven to significantly improve understanding.

6. Factors that Moderate the Effect of Communication Style on Understanding

This study also identified several factors that moderate the effect of communication style on student understanding, such as students' educational background, experience using technology, and duration of online learning. For example, students with a strong educational background tend to find it easier to understand the material, regardless of the communication style used by the lecturer. On the other hand, students with limited technological experience tend to have difficulty following online learning, even if the lecturer uses an effective communication style. These findings are in line with research

by Dhawan, (2020) which states that the digital divide can be a major obstacle to online learning.

The findings of this study provide new insights into the importance of lecturer communication style in improving students' understanding of online learning. In general, the results show that verbal and non-verbal communication styles and the use of technology have a significant influence on students' understanding, with verbal communication style being the most dominant factor. This is in line with the Instructional Communication Theory which emphasizes the importance of clarity and structure in learning communication (Gayle dkk., 2009). However, this study also revealed several challenges that need to be overcome. For example, the limitations of online platforms in optimally displaying non-verbal communication are a major obstacle to improving learning effectiveness. In addition, the digital divide among students is also an inhibiting factor that needs attention. Therefore, educational institutions need to provide training for lecturers in using learning technology effectively, as well as ensuring that all students have adequate access and skills to participate in online learning.

The findings of this study also emphasize the importance of a collaborative and adaptive communication style in improving student understanding. Lecturers who can adapt their communication style to the needs of students, and involve students in the learning process, tend to be more effective in improving understanding. This is in line with research by Kuo et al. (2014) which states that quality interaction and feedback are the main keys to online learning. Overall, this study makes a significant theoretical and practical contribution. Theoretically, this study reinforces and develops the Instructional Communication Theory in the context of online learning. Practically, this study provides recommendations for lecturers and educational institutions in optimizing communication styles to improve the quality of online learning. For example, lecturers are advised to use simple and structured language, make creative use of technology, and involve students in the learning process.

CONCLUSION

This study successfully identified that the lecturer's communication style has a significant influence on students' understanding in online learning. Verbal communication style, which includes clarity of material delivery and the use of easy-to-understand language, was found to be the most dominant factor in improving student understanding, with a contribution of 35%. In addition, non-verbal communication styles, such as facial expressions and voice intonation, also contributed 20%, although the limitations of online platforms in displaying non-verbal communication present a challenge. The use of technology in communication, such as multimedia and interactive tools, contributed 25%, indicating that the right integration of technology can improve student understanding. However, the digital divide among students is an inhibiting factor that needs attention.

Collaborative and adaptive communication styles were also found to be effective in improving student understanding, with respective contributions of 18% and 22%. Lecturers who are able to adapt their communication style to the needs of students and involve students in the learning process tend to be more successful in improving

understanding. Overall, this study confirms that a combination of verbal and non-verbal communication styles, the use of technology, and a collaborative and adaptive approach can create an effective online learning environment. Thus, this study provides practical recommendations for lecturers and educational institutions to optimize communication styles in online learning, such as improving the clarity of material delivery, utilizing technology creatively, and actively involving students. In addition, educational institutions need to provide training for lecturers in the use of learning technology and ensure equal access for all students. With the implementation of this strategy, the quality of online learning in Indonesia can be significantly improved.

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