

VOICING THE SILENCE: THE TRANSFORMATION OF QUESTION-AND-ANSWER DYNAMICS AS A CATALYST FOR THE COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE OF OFFICE ADMINISTRATION EDUCATION STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformation of question-and-answer dynamics as a catalyst for developing communicative competencies among Office Administration Education students. The "silent classroom" phenomenon has become a significant challenge in higher education, particularly in developing professional communication skills that are vital for graduates in the field of office administration. Through a descriptive-analytical qualitative approach, this study dissects the complexity of dialogical interactions in learning spaces and analyzes their impact on students' communication abilities. Data collection was conducted through interviews involving 15 student respondents. The data were analyzed through stages of reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing with an interpretative-constructivist approach. The results show that structured and continuous question-and-answer activities serve as significant catalysts in building idea articulation, active listening skills, and students' communicative confidence. This research identifies three crucial factors that form an effective dialogical ecosystem: (1) a supportive psychological classroom atmosphere, (2) dialogue-centered teaching methodologies, and (3) students' mental frameworks in facing academic interactions. The findings suggest a pedagogical reorientation that places dialogue at the center of the learning experience to prepare graduates with communicative competencies that are vital needs in the professional world of office administration. The "voicing the silence" approach offered in this research provides an innovative conceptual framework for transforming communication dynamics in academic spaces while bridging the gap between graduate competencies and workplace demands.

Keywords: dialogic transformation, learning catalyst, communicative competence, question-and-answer dynamics, academic interaction, participatory learning.

1. INTRODUCTION

The era of globalization and the industrial revolution 4.0 has fundamentally changed the landscape of the world of work, where communication skills are no longer just complementary soft skills, but have transformed into core competencies that determine a person's professional success. In the context of Indonesian higher education, the challenge of preparing graduates who are competent in communicating is becoming increasingly complex, given the dynamics of learning that are often still conventional and have not fully optimized the interactive potential of students.

Effective communication is a fundamental skill that must be mastered by higher education students, especially for students of the Office Administration Education Study Program who will later have a career in a work environment that demands the ability to communicate professionally. The phenomenon of the "silent classroom" or a class dominated by silence has become a persistent challenge in higher education in Indonesia, especially in the context of developing communicative competence which is a prerequisite for professional success in the digital era. One method to overcome this challenge is through the transformation of the dynamics of questions and answers in academic spaces that not only function as cognitive assessment tools, but also as catalysts for the development of complex communication skills.

1.1. Literature Review

Previous research shows that the question-and-answer process has a significant impact on the development of communication skills. Albergaria-Almeida (2010) emphasizes that questioning is a key element in the learning process, where questions help guide students' learning as they attempt to combine existing knowledge with new information. Students' questions also play an important role in meaningful learning and motivation, and can reveal the quality of their thinking and conceptual understanding.

Research conducted by Tan et al. (2018) showed that international students often face challenges in communicating in the classroom, especially in a new environmental context. This study investigated the willingness to communicate (WTC) among international students, focusing on the influence of the classroom environment. The results showed that self-confidence and motivation directly influenced WTC, while the classroom environment had an indirect influence through motivation and self-confidence. These findings emphasize the importance of creating a supportive classroom atmosphere to increase international students' participation, which is in line with the results of previous studies. Darling & Dannels (2003) which highlights the role of oral communication in the professional practice of engineers. They found that communication skills, both oral and written, are essential in the workplace, and that many engineers spend more than half of their time communicating. This suggests the need for integration of communication skills into higher education curricula.

Knight & Yorke (2003) emphasized that in higher education, the biggest challenge is not in the transmission of knowledge alone, but in the development of complex skills that support graduate employability, including communication skills. They underlined the importance of designing learning environments that encourage interaction and exchange of ideas between lecturers and students.

Although Q&A has been shown to be effective in increasing students' active participation and communicative confidence, research by Ozuem & Lancaster (2015) revealed that there are still significant gaps in its implementation in the context of higher education. It was found that most interactions in class are still dominated by lecturers (teacher-centered), and students tend to adopt a passive role as recipients of information. This is caused by various complex factors, such as the lack of wait time given by lecturers after asking questions, the dominance of low-level questions that do not encourage critical thinking, or even communication apprehension experienced by students in responding to questions in front of their peers.

In the Indonesian context, especially in the Office Administration Education study program, effective communication skills are a vital competency considering that graduates of this program are projected to become professional educators and competent administrative practitioners. The transformation of question-and-answer dynamics can be an effective catalyst for developing these skills, especially in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum which emphasizes improving communication skills as one of the main learning outcomes. However, the communication ecosystem in the academic space still faces various structural and cultural barriers that need to be addressed through systematic and sustainable pedagogical interventions. The main problem in learning is the

low intensity and quality of questions and answers in class due to the lack of interest in asking questions from students, the non-conducive classroom atmosphere, and the lecturer's teaching style which is still one-way. This can hinder the development of students' communication skills, even though these abilities are very relevant to the demands of the office administration profession.

Based on the research gap, this study aims to: (1) examine in depth the transformative role of question-and-answer dynamics in improving the communication skills of students in the Office Administration Education Study Program, (2) identify effective question-and-answer interaction patterns as a catalyst for developing communicative competence, and (3) analyze the ecosystemic factors that influence the effectiveness of dialogic interactions in academic spaces. Through a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach supported by quantitative data, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework regarding the use of question-and-answer dynamics as a transformative strategy in improving students' communicative competence that is relevant to the demands of the contemporary work world. Study Elder & Paul (1998) On Socratic questioning, it is asserted that critical thinking is driven by meaningful questions, not simply by factual answers. They argue that critical thinking and deep learning can only occur when intellectually challenging questions are asked in a supportive dialogical context. In line with this, Dhawan (2020) in his research on online learning in the pandemic era, he emphasized that even in distance learning situations, interaction and structured question-and-answer processes remain vital components in creating meaningful learning experiences and developing students' communicative competence.

This research has a very important significance in the development of learning theory and practice in higher education. Theoretically, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive conceptual framework regarding the use of question-and-answer dynamics as a transformative strategy in improving students' communicative competence, which can enrich the scientific treasury in the field of pedagogy and educational communication. Practically, the results of this study will provide concrete and implementative recommendations for educators and educational institutions to improve interactive learning strategies, so as to create a more conducive learning environment for the development of students' communication skills that are in accordance with the needs of the office administration work world.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

2.1. Research Design

This study applies a qualitative descriptive-analytical approach. This research design was specifically chosen to capture and analyze the complexity of socio-pedagogical phenomena that occur in dialogic interactions in academic environments, especially in the context of learning in higher education. Through this approach, researchers seek to gain a deep understanding of the dynamics of communication that are formed in the learning process.

2.2. Participants/ Sample

The research participants consisted of 15 active students registered in the Office Administration Education Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Surabaya State

University. The determination of the research sample was carried out using the purposive sampling technique, which is a sample selection technique based on certain criteria that are relevant to the research objectives. The criteria set for research participants include status as active students in the Office Administration Education Study Program, having completed at least two semesters of education to ensure sufficient experience in classroom interactions, and willingness to participate voluntarily in this study without any coercion or pressure from any party.

2.3. Data Collection

The data collection process was carried out through interviews that had been systematically designed to measure students' perceptions regarding the dynamics of questions and answers in the classroom and their impact on the development of communication skills. The interview instrument consisted of 16 questions that were divided equally between 8 questions with positive formulations and 8 questions with negative formulations to avoid response bias. This process allowed researchers to explore students' views in depth, both from positive and negative perspectives, so that the results of the study could reflect a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon being studied.

2.4. Data Analysis

Interview data were analyzed using an interpretive constructivist approach through three systematic stages referring to the Miles and Huberman analysis model. The first stage is data reduction, where all interview transcripts from 15 respondents were read in their entirety to identify information relevant to the research objectives, then data that was not related to the dynamics of question and answer and students' communicative competence was eliminated to focus the analysis on substantial aspects. The second stage is data presentation, where the reduced information is organized into thematic categories based on patterns that emerge from students' responses, including aspects of idea articulation, active listening skills, communicative self-confidence, and ecosystemic factors that influence the effectiveness of question and answer in class. The third stage is drawing conclusions, where researchers conduct in-depth interpretations of the categorized findings to identify causal relationships between the dynamics of question and answer and the development of students' communicative competence, and formulate theoretical and practical implications of the research results. The analysis process was carried out iteratively by involving data triangulation through comparison of responses between participants to ensure the validity and reliability of the research findings, resulting in a comprehensive understanding of the transformative role of Q&A as a catalyst for developing communication skills for students of the Office Administration Education Study Program.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to reveal the role of question-and-answer dynamics transformation as a catalyst in the development of communicative competence of students of the Office Administration Education Study Program. The study was conducted using a descriptive qualitative approach through an in-depth interview method. A total of 15 active students of the Office Administration Education Study Program, Faculty of Economics and Business, Surabaya State University, were selected as respondents through interview techniques. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner, allowing for in-depth exploration

of students' perceptions, experiences, and reflections on question-and-answer activities in class and their influence on their communication skills. The interview process lasted for 5 to 10 minutes for each respondent and was recorded for thematic analysis. The results of the interview data analysis showed that the majority of respondents felt significant benefits from their involvement in question-and-answer activities. This activity was considered not only a means to understand the material, but also as a place to practice speaking in order to increase courage, fluency, and clarity in conveying ideas.

As many as 12 out of 15 respondents stated that the Q&A activity actively helped them to organize and express ideas more systematically. They mentioned that when they were used to answering or asking questions, they were encouraged to think about the content of the conversation more deeply and to organize it in clear sentences. This activity trained them to think critically and convey arguments coherently. One respondent stated that,

"At first I was afraid of making mistakes when giving my opinion. But over time I became more accustomed to it, because I participated in Q&A and followed the discussion. So I got used to formulating reasonable answers and was no longer nervous." (Informant 1, Office Administration Education Student)

From the interview results, 10 respondents emphasized that the question and answer process also improved their listening skills. When students ask or answer, they are required to understand the context of the conversation in order to respond appropriately. This process strengthens active listening skills, information analysis, and the ability to provide relevant feedback. This is reinforced by a respondent's statement,

"Students must understand the context of the questions that will be asked. Most students dare to ask questions if they are in accordance with the context being discussed. So this can help students to learn to be more careful in thinking quickly." (Informant 2, Office Administration Education Student)

As many as 11 respondents admitted to experiencing increased self-confidence when communicating in an academic context. They felt that verbal interactions in class gave them space to practice public speaking without great pressure. The repetition of this activity made them braver and less likely to panic when they had to speak spontaneously. One respondent said,

"Students must be forced to ask questions frequently if there is material that they do not understand. In order to build self-confidence and become accustomed to discussions or Q&A." (Informant 3, Office Administration Education Student)

Based on data mining, there are three ecosystemic factors that are consistently mentioned as determinants of the success of question and answer activities in improving students' communicative competence, namely, the psychological atmosphere of the class, the lecturer's teaching methodology, and the student's mindset towards academic interaction.

All respondents emphasized the importance of an open and stress-free classroom atmosphere. Classes that are full of jokes, empathy, and non-judgmental are said to encourage students to dare to ask or answer questions. Conversely, rigid or overly formal classes make students afraid of making mistakes. As many as 13 respondents appreciated lecturers who used a participatory approach and gave students enough time to think before answering (wait time). Lecturers who encouraged open discussions and did not

immediately correct mistakes loudly were also considered effective in creating a dialogue-friendly atmosphere. One respondent stated,

"Lecturers should provide open questions, give time to think before answering, and create a comfortable classroom atmosphere so that students are not afraid of making mistakes. To increase question-and-answer activities that support students' communication skills, lecturers can use open questions, encourage active participation, and provide constructive feedback. So that lecturers can create a safe and comfortable discussion environment."
(Informant 4, Office Administration Education Student)

Another important factor is the mindset of the students themselves. Respondents who have the view that every interaction is a learning opportunity tend to be more active in the Q&A process. Conversely, students who are too afraid of being judged or afraid of being wrong tend to close themselves off from active involvement.

Although the majority of respondents showed a positive attitude towards classroom interactions, this study identified several barriers that still limit students' optimal participation. First, public speaking anxiety is one of the main obstacles, with 9 out of 15 respondents admitting to feeling nervous when having to speak in front of lecturers or classmates. This anxiety often stems from fear of making mistakes, fear of being laughed at, or feelings of incompetence. Second, the dominance of lecturers in the learning process is also an obstacle, with several respondents complaining that lecturers tend to talk too much or only ask rhetorical questions without giving students the opportunity to answer, thus creating a one- way learning pattern that discourages students from being more actively involved. Finally, the lack of consistent practice in question-and-answer activities also hinders the development of communication skills, as these activities are only carried out sporadically and are not enough to form a habit. Students suggested that question-and-answer activities be carried out routinely and in a structured manner to support the improvement of their communication skills.

The main findings of the study revealed that structured and ongoing Q&A activities serve as a catalyst in building three fundamental aspects of students' communicative competence. First, the ability to articulate ideas showed measurable improvements when students were consistently involved in Q&A dynamics, allowing them to organize their thoughts and convey ideas in a more structured manner. This finding is in line with the results of the study Albergaria-Almeida (2010), which emphasizes that the questioning process encourages students to integrate knowledge and express understanding more systematically. Second, active listening skills develop through the responsive process of academic dialogue, where students learn to process information, analyze peer perspectives, and provide relevant responses. This is supported by Elder & Paul (1998) which states that meaningful question-based dialogue can improve critical thinking and two-way communication skills. Third, communicative self-confidence shows gradual improvement through repeated exposure to formal and informal communication situations in academic contexts. Research Ozuem & Lancaster (2015) also confirmed that active involvement in dialogic interactions can increase students' self-confidence in academic communication.

Research by Dallimore et al. (2004) revealed that the strategies used by lecturers in facilitating class discussions greatly affect the quality of student participation. It was found that cold calling techniques and clear participation assessments can increase student engagement in discussions. In addition, this study showed that creating a supportive

environment and providing constructive feedback also contributed to the effectiveness of discussions.

In-depth analysis identified three ecosystemic factors that influence the effectiveness of Q&A dynamics in the learning space. A supportive psychological atmosphere of the classroom is the main foundation, where a conducive, open, and intimidation-free atmosphere creates a safe space for students to express their thoughts without fear of negative judgment. Knight & Yorke (2003) emphasize the importance of a learning environment that supports interaction and exchange of ideas for the development of employability skills, including communication. The lecturer's dialogue-centered teaching methodology showed a positive correlation with the level of student participation, especially when the lecturer applied adequate wait time techniques, asked open-ended questions that stimulate critical thinking, and facilitated multidirectional discussions rather than instructional monologues as suggested by Dhawan (2020). The mental framework of students in facing academic interactions is the third determinant factor, where students with a growth mindset and positive learning orientation show more active and consistent participation in question-and-answer activities, in line with theory. Durik et al. (2006) about the growth mindset.

Despite showing positive impacts, this study also identified structural and psychological barriers that still hinder the optimization of the potential of Q&A as a communicative catalyst. Communication anxiety or communication apprehension is still experienced by most students, especially in situations of asking or responding in front of a peer group. This phenomenon is supported by the findings Barker (2007) which states that academic culture factors and formality hierarchy can increase students' communication anxiety. Lecturer dominance in class discussions is also a persistent challenge, where the teacher-centered learning pattern still dominates the interaction, limiting students' opportunities to develop communicative initiatives and independent thinking, as confirmed by research Ozuem & Lancaster (2015).

The response distribution data showed significant variation in the level of participation and perception of students towards Q&A activities. Approximately 60% of students showed a positive attitude towards the benefits of Q&A in developing communication skills, while 40% still showed doubts or anxiety in actively participating. Further analysis revealed that students who were consistently active in Q&A showed more significant improvements in communicative competence indicators, including verbal fluency, argumentation skills, and confidence in academic presentations, as confirmed by the study Fithriani et al. (2021). In contrast, passive students tend to stagnate in the development of communicative skills, indicating the importance of interventional strategies to increase universal participation in dialogic activities.

The findings of this study confirm the hypothesis that the transformation of question-and-answer dynamics can serve as an effective catalyst in the development of students' communicative competence, with the note that its effectiveness is highly dependent on the quality of implementation and the support of a holistic learning ecosystem. Dhawan (2020) emphasizes the importance of interaction and structured question-and-answer processes in creating meaningful learning experiences and developing students' communicative competence. These results provide an empirical basis for developing pedagogical strategies that are more responsive to students' communicative needs in the digital era, while also providing a conceptual framework for "voicing the silence" in the context of Indonesian

higher education.

4. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that the transformation of structured and continuous question-and-answer dynamics acts as an important catalyst in the development of communicative competence of Office Administration Education students. Through active involvement in the question-and-answer process, students experienced significant improvements in their ability to articulate ideas, active listening skills, and confidence in academic communication. These findings reinforce the results of previous studies that emphasize the importance of interactive dialogue in learning to build communication skills that are relevant to the needs of the modern workplace.

The effectiveness of Q&A activities is greatly influenced by three main ecosystemic factors, namely a supportive psychological atmosphere in the classroom, a dialogue-oriented teaching methodology of lecturers, and a mental framework of students who are open to academic interaction. These three factors complement each other in creating a conducive learning environment, where students feel safe to ask questions, express opinions, and develop critical thinking skills. However, this study also found obstacles in the form of communication anxiety and the dominance of one-way learning patterns that still need to be overcome to optimize the dialogic potential in the classroom.

Practically, the results of this study recommend the need for a reorientation of learning strategies that place dialogue as the core of the higher education process, as well as pedagogical interventions to strengthen active student participation. Thus, the transformation of question- and-answer dynamics not only bridges the gap between graduate competencies and the demands of the workplace, but also builds a more inclusive, collaborative, and adaptive academic culture to the times. Further research is recommended to explore specific intervention models that are effective in improving the quality of question-and-answer interactions in various higher education contexts in Indonesia.

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