From Panel to Presence: An Observational study on Communication Styles in Online Courses

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Abstract
The advent of online classes via internet platforms, known as MOOC (Massive Open Online Courses), has radically changed the means of teaching and learning by transferring the means of interaction from physical classrooms to those of digital, online systems. This research looks at the relationship between the way MOOC presenters communicate with learners and how this affects learner participation within the courses. A qualitative observational design was utilized to watch and analyze the four MOOCs purposely chosen from four different platforms. The observations involved a systematic examination of the verbal and non-verbal communication behaviors of course presenters, i.e., the clarity of speech; tone variation; question method; facial expressions; gestures; visual cues, etc. The study was conducted by using of Galloway Interaction analysis; this analysis framework assessed the communication patterns evident within the interactions and means of teacher presentation and was used to assess patterns of interaction between course participants. From the study results, it can be seen that presenters demonstrating a strong positive verbal style (i.e., clear explanations, encouraging language, and effective questioning practice) and positive non-verbal presentation style (i.e., maintaining eye contact, and gestures) produce a greater amount of perceived interactivity by course participants. In conclusion, the communication style has several implications for maintaining learner engagement and enhancing interactivity in large, digital classes. Based on the results, there is a need for targeted communication skills training for MOOC presenters to improve their presentation styles in order to enhance learner-interactive participation in MOOCs.
Keywords: digital courses, communication style, galloways interaction components, learner engagement and observation method

Introduction

Through the Digital India initiative, the Indian Government has put emphasis on using the internet to improve higher education by providing access, equity and quality via various online initiatives. The SWAYAM (Study Webs of Active Learning for Young Aspiring Minds), e-PG Pathshala and SWAYAM Prabha initiatives are examples of some of the major online platforms established by the Government of India to promote the Digital India programme (NEP 2020). SWAYAM serves as a national hub for quality higher education by combining expert-led material, structured pedagogy, and accessible digital access for students across India (Devaki N et.al., 2021) Effective communication is crucial for academic performance, employability,

and civic engagement in today's digital age (Chuah Bee Peng, et.al., 2025). Despite the significance of effective communication, many people around the world lack access to adequate training. This is particularly true for who do not attend school or reside in low-income areas sometimes face financial constraints, distance, or rigid schedules, hindering their ability to gain essential skills (UNESCO 2020). They provide open access to many high-quality online courses and educational broadcasts, which makes it possible for learners from all economic levels and geographic locations to access high-quality learning resources outside of a traditional classroom setting (Deivam M & Devaki N, 2024).

Though these initiatives have successfully helped to improve both access and scalability for many learners, they do pose certain Pedagogical Challenges in regard to engagement and interaction with learners. Digital learning is less engaging or interactive than traditional learning because while instructors and learners are able to communicate directly with each other in real-time during a course, the majority of communication takes place via a computer screen (Dixon, M & Syred, K, 2022). The Communication Patterns Between Instructors & Learners (GIA) Framework, developed by Galloway, is a research-based methodology used to evaluate the types of communication patterns present in one-on-one instructional settings through verbal and non-verbal behaviours. When used to analyse MOOCS (Massive Open Online Courses), this tool enables us to assess the impact of the way in which presenters communicate on how learners interact with each other and the presenters in an online environment (Khatreja, K., 2023). The GIA Framework provides important information related to developing effective communication strategies to promote increased learner engagement & perceived interactive learning in digital learning environments that use a large number of learners (Jarial, P et.al., 2025).

In Open Educational Resources, communication plays a crucial role by facilitating and delivering high-quality educational content to a wide audience across the national level through direct-to-home (DTH), websites and applications. Communication is an essential part of online learning, and the content presented by an instructor is fully reachable to the learners with clarity and understanding. In this modern technological era, there are many digital repositories developed by the Indian government for the improvement of the quality of education (Chakrabarti, A., & Maharana, B., 2025).

Open educational resources facilitate the learners to access the contents and educational videos anywhere and anytime across the world. These digital repositories comprise the sequence of the digital content, video lecturing, and e-assessments. It is a fully opposite version of the face-to-face traditional mode of learning. It also promotes the learner's self-learning/ pace ability. The video programs are not only taught theoretical content they also make a complex topic in science and technology in the laboratory practices like virtual reality and augmented reality with good communication. In this study, the observer analyzes and critiques the communication skills of the presenter in four different videos in the different educational digital repositories.

Figure. Digital Learner engagement pathway (Bond, M., & Bergdahl, N., 2022)

Objective of the Study

To analyze MOOC presenters' communication styles on learner engagement and perceived interactivity in digital courses using an observational approach.

Review of Related Literature

The MOOC 'Communicate with Confidence' designed by Chuah Bee Peng and others (2025) focuses on developing students' lifelong learning skill set by creating an environment where students can learn how to effectively communicate from campus to career. This article focuses on how the design and development of this MOOC supports students in developing skills that can be used throughout their lifetime, providing flexibility and a structured approach to the MOOC. The authors also highlighted the role of MOOCs as a means of developing sustainable skills and employability for students because they come from formal education. Chakrabarti and Maharana (2025) present a study of the role of open educational resources (OER) in Indian digital repositories, mapping OERs from repositories such as SWAYAM, e-PG Pathshala, and the National Digital Library (NDL). The authors emphasized that these platforms have contributed to the democratization of access to quality education for diverse groups of learners. In their review of the benefits and challenges of OER, Swain and Pathak (2024) identified many benefits of using OER in higher education, including lower costs, flexibility, and learner autonomy. However, they also identified several obstacles faced by institutions, faculties, and students related to quality assurance, infrastructure, and faculty preparedness. A case study conducted by Muniyandi, Devaki, and Nandhinidevi (2024) evaluated the awareness and the barriers to prospective teachers' use of SWAYAM courses in Tamil Nadu, revealing a lack of awareness of SWAYAM and its potential benefits, as well as the insufficient level of digital readiness and institutional support needed to facilitate the use of MOOCs in teacher education and training.

Observational Context

Instruction including that imparted through media involves communication. Studying how an educational message is communicated is hence important. Communication is verbal as well as nonverbal. Verbal communication can be critiqued in terms of the style of presentation, the quality and authenticity of the content, the pace of delivery, the ability to inform and explain, and other such factors. Nonverbal communication may be critiqued in terms of body posture, gestures, eye contact, facial expression, and so on based on Galloways interaction analysis components.

Method of Study

In this study, the observation method was adopted by the researcher.

Study Design

Table: Selection of different topics from the digital repository(s)

No. of videos	Name of the digital repository	Topic	Duration of the video
1.	Swayam Prabha DTH (channel 4)	Technology and knowledge- the changing paradigms	21.24 Minutes
2.	e PG pathshala	Psychology of learning and development- motivation its meaning and importance	27.47 Minutes
3.		Educational administration and management- theories of administration	26.57 Minutes
4.	SWAYAM	e Assessment	20.21 Minutes

Observational Critique

The following critique was based on the observer's perspective. The critique is only on the communication style of the video presenters.

Video 1:

In this video, the presenter has very good verbal communication skills in the English language. The verbal communication of the presenter is well grammatical, clear voice, and audible, making the attention of the learners. The language skill was highlighted in this presentation. This gives a better

understanding of the content knowledge to the learners. Particularly the presenter using verbal communication is synced in their video progress. There is no lack of presentation in the entire duration (21.24) of the video program. The communicator/ presenter fully understands how to speak and gain the attention of the learners in mass media communication. The pronunciation of the presenter is pleasant audio and uninterrupted sequence. From this observation, there is no language (verbal) barrier from the presenter. The quality and authenticity of the content are very clear and reflect the real experiences without embellishment. The pace of delivery was followed in the standard speed of time; it makes learning without rush. The presentation style depends on the content delivery and audience, in this video presenter follows the style of presentation as an 'Instructor'. This instruction helps the presenter's explanation was well in a manner to reach the learners.

According to Galloway's system of interaction analysis, comparatively nonverbal communication/ interaction is more powerful than verbal communication. Nonverbal communication gives a learner more understanding of the content and remembering in the long last. The learner's attention and confidence are gained from the instructor/ presenter's body movements and direct eye contact. The level of confidence in the content should be increased by the instructors' relevant gestures. In the entire video, the presenter follows the same kind of facial expression and there is a lower level of eye contact. The body posture was well in manner. The presenter using the gestures was done with appropriate content delivery. Based on the observation, the nonverbal communication of the video presenter is moderate.

Video 2:
In this video, the presenter has very good verbal communication skills in the English language. The verbal communication of the presenter is well grammatical, clear voice, and audible, making the attention of the learners. The voice modulation was followed by the presenter is highlighted in that

presentation. This gives a better understanding of the content knowledge for the learners. Particularly the presenter using verbal communication is synced in their video progress. There is no lack of presentation in the entire duration of the video lecture. The presenter fully understands how to speak and gain the attention of the learners in mass media communication. The pronunciation of the presenter is pleasant audio and uninterrupted sequence. From this observation, there is no language (verbal) barrier from the presenter. The quality and authenticity of the content are very clear and reflect the real experiences without embellishment. The pace of delivery was followed at a high speed of time; it makes a learning rush. The presentation style depends on the content delivery and audience, in this video presenter follows the style of presentation is 'motivational'. In this method, most, of the duration of the presentation only focused on content delivery and promoting self-motivation.

On the other hand, the nonverbal communication was followed by the presenter very well. The eye contact of the presenter is good it makes it more attractive to the learners. As per the topic of 'Motivation' the presenters' gestures and postures are appropriate time syncing in that video. The psychological topic was explained by the video presenter with nonverbal communication makes more understandable in nature. The overall presentation the nonverbal communication carried well by the presenter is appreciated.

Video 3:
Based on the observation, this video program shows the presenter has good verbal communication. Because the verbal communication of the presenter follows grammar and a clear voice. There is no language barrier. The topic presented by the presenter has clearly explained the concept of administration and management using appropriate sentence sequences. The quality of the verbal language and authenticity of the content are reachable and understandable by the learners through the presenter's verbal communication. The pace of delivery of the content is defined. There is no lack of

flow of delivery of the content. This is very helpful for large amounts of content delivered in a particular time duration (26.57). The presenter adopted the style of presentation 'lecturing'. The lecturing method narrates the content to the learner with good verbal communication.

In the entire video, the presenter follows different kinds of facial expressions and there is a high level of eye contact. The body posture was well in manner. The presenter using the gestures was done with appropriate content delivery. Based on the observation, the nonverbal communication of the video presenter is very good.

Video 4:

In this module, the speaker possesses excellent verbal communication abilities in the English language. The speaker's verbal communication is grammatically correct, has a clear tone, and is loud enough to capture the learners' attention. This presentation emphasized the language skill. This enhances the comprehension of the subject matter for the students. Specifically, the speaker utilizing verbal communication is in sync with their video advancement. The video program features continuous presentation throughout its entire duration. The speaker/presenter comprehensively grasps how to engage and capture the interest of the audience in mass media communication. The presenter's pronunciation is enjoyable to listen to and flows smoothly. This observation indicates that the presenter faces no language barrier. The content's quality and authenticity are evident and portray genuine experiences without exaggeration. The delivery speed adhered to the normal time standard; it facilitates learning without haste. The manner of presenting varies based on the content and audience, and in this video, the presenter adopts the 'Instructor' presentation style. This guidance ensures the presenter's explanation is effective in engaging the learners. According to educational psychology, comparatively nonverbal communication/ interaction is more powerful than verbal communication. In the entire video, the presenter follows the same kind of facial expression and there is a lower level of eye contact.

The body posture was well in manner. The presenter using the gestures was done with appropriate content delivery.

Findings and Discussion

A Study found that when a MOOC presenter effectively delivers their material using the following verbal communication style: (1) articulates clearly; (2) utilizes proper grammar; (3) has a pleasant voice that varies its inflection and volume; (4) presents information in a logical manner, this enhances a learner's ability to comprehend what is being presented and also increases their focus on the presentation. Additionally, researchers found that a MOOC presenter's non-verbal communication style is another important factor affecting a learner's ability to understand and retain the information being presented. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and body positioning. It makes a positive interaction and active engagement of learners throughout the course journey.

The findings of the research show how much a presenter's method of communicating (how they communicate) affects a learner's level of interest in a digital learning environment as well as how involved they feel in it. In examining presentations made on four different video platforms: SWAYAM (the Indian version of Coursera), e-PG Pathshala (an online course from India), and SWAYAM Prabha a collection of over 140 educational programs created by educators in India. Additionally, researchers found that a MOOC presenter's non-verbal communication style is another important factor affecting a learner's ability to understand and retain the information being presented. Non-verbal communication includes facial expressions, gestures, eye contact, and body positioning. Overall, the research supports that both verbal and non-verbal components of a presenter's communication style, when combined, improve the interactivity and engagement of learners in an online learning experience. As such, MOOC presenters need to receive specific training on how to use both types of communication effectively to create an engaging learning environment, increase the quality of course

instruction, and help digital repositories deliver on their promise as inclusive and effective places for higher education in India.

Conclusion

Through this observational study, it has been shown that communication styles are essential to the transformation of MOOCs from one-dimensional to engaged and interactive learning environments through effective communication. Using Galloway's Interaction Analysis model, the research found that MOOCs have presenters who employ clear structured communication verbally as well as nonverbally with supportive actions such as eye contact, facial expressions, gestures, and modulation of their voice. These nonverbal strategies significantly improved the perceived interactivity and sustained engagement of learners. While all four presenters showed a high level of content knowledge and a clear way of communicating verbally, the differences in the use of nonverbal strategies greatly affected the level of involvement of the learner in the course. This shows that being effective in communication within a digital learning experience is more than just what you say but includes how you present what you say. The research has shown that having very few or no expressive nonverbal behaviors will limit the interactive potential of an online course, even if the verbal delivery was done effectively. In order to provide effective communication from the "screen to engagement" level of MOOC presenters, the research shows there is a need for focused professional development training on verbal and nonverbal communication. Thus, strengthening the communication competencies of MOOC presenters will improve their instruction quality, promote active learner participation, and help facilitate India's efforts to provide inclusive, engaging, and high-quality digital education.

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