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How to present a seminar

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Introduction

seminar is a kind of presentation , and presentation skills are required in professional life.

Seminar is a way to explain a subject which has an academic content either scientific or literary , and the explanation is for an audience who is interested in the idea.

In this research…. I'm going to talk about the basic steps to perform a good and successful seminar which is a big deal for the students and for the people who are teachers or professors .

Chapter 1

What is a seminar

A- The seminar method :

The seminar method is the most modern and advanced method of teaching. A seminar is an advanced group technique which is usually used in higher education. It is an instructional technique it involves generating a situation for a group to have a guided interaction among themselves on a theme. It refers to a structured group discussion what usually follows a formal lecture or lectures often in the form of an essay or a paper presentation on a theme.[1]

B-Seminars with a group : [2]

A seminar brings together an interested group of learners who have done some preparation, including having read, thought about and written about a particularly good book.

The solitary preparation should include marking the text for interesting passages, reviewing those sections, organizing one's

[1] Lecture notes on Teaching of Science (Part: Methodology)., Source Book., D.T.Ed., First Year.

[2] Harnish,J 1995. NSCC

thoughts on paper and producing significant questions that need to be explored.

In the seminar the group is responsible for exploring the text and probing the ideas people have brought from their individual reading of the text.

It is a time to "mine" the text, to work it over as a group, to think aloud about it, and to test some ideas against the group.

For example, the following might be overhead in a seminar: "I don't know if this is valid but it seems that the author is saying. . . ." Or: "Here on page 15 at the bottom of the page there is this passage [read from text].

This seems to be an important passage.

It is worth looking at closely. . . ." Or: "This part connects interestingly with this other part."

A seminar is not an arena for performance to show you've read the text or a reporting session to read your papers.

It's more than a class discussion and it definitely is not a time for a lecture from an expert who will tell the group what they should get from this book. There may be places for those activities but not in seminar.

Seminar is a special time for a unique intellectual activity. The exchange of ideas is focused on a source (a book, play or film) and is aimed primarily at getting more deeply into the source.[3]

[3] Washington Center for Improving the Quality of Undergraduate Education
The Evergreen State College
L-2211
Olympia, WA 98505

Chapter 2

The goal of seminars

The overall goal of the seminar is to create a space and time for students' engagement on the idea level (the intellect, the intuitive, the emotions). the individual level (unique perceptions), and the social level (community). Intellectually, the seminar serves to help students explore a diversity of perspectives, to see the complexity and ambiguity of the content, to help them recognize the underlying assumptions of their habitual ideas and behaviors, to develop higher level critical thinking ability, and to encourage active listening. Emotionally, the seminar serves to increase students' affective
connections to the content, to show students they are heard and that their voices matter and their experiences and thinking are valued. On the individual level, the seminar helps students to test, expand, revise, create their individual meanings in the context of the group. Socially, the seminar serves to build relationships with other learners in a way that creates a community of learners who bring knowledge to life with mutual exploration, both consensus and mismatch ';\' ("an agonistic framework of conflict and difference . . ."
(609). In this community, knowledge emerges, is brought to life in the social interaction of the learners. The total engagement of the learners-intellectually, individually and socially-leads to the learning.
The seminar has no expected formal product. The product is meaning, not an answer or a task accomplished. In fact, more questions may be raised than answered. If there is a product, it is inspired learners: learners who are developing a habit of inquiry that transforms the way they approach issues, knowledge, others. These are habits of mind and heart, a search for connectedness and relatedness.

[4] Teaching of Science, First Year Source Book (D.T.Ed.) Tamil Nadu Textbook Society, Chennai-600006. p74-78

Chapter 3

The presentation

[5]

1- Organization

Your presentation should be well-structured , and the audience should be able to follow the structure you have chosen .
In particular , respect the following guidelines .

1.1 Title slide

The first slide of your presentation (called title slide) should contain the title of your presentation , followed by your name and affiliation .
If other researchers were involved in your name and affiliation too.
Optionally , the title slide can show the data and place of the presentation .
No actual content of your presentation must be shown on the title slide.

1.2 Outline

Close to the beginning of your presentation , include an outline slide that sketches the structure of your presentation , similar to a "table of contents" .
(Often the outline slide is the first slide after the title slide, but sometimes it is shown a little bit later, if a couple of slides are needed to "set the stage" and to help the audience understand your outline better) Make sure that your outline slide is helpful.
For example, if you give a presentation on feature reduction in high-
dimensional data, the following content of an outline slide could be helpful:

[5] Bennett, N., Dunne, E. and Carre, C. (2000)

Outline
1. Feature Reduction and the Curse of Dimensionality
2. Background:
(a) Feature Reduction in Low-Dimensional Data
(b) Recent Methods for High-Dimensional Data and their Limitations
3. Our Approach: Feature Reduction via Subspace Sampling
4. Experimental Evaluation of Our Approach
5. Conclusion and Future Work

As opposed to that, the following outline slide would not be helpful, since it is too general:

Outline
1. Introduction
2. Background
3. Our Approach
4. Experimental Evaluation of Our Approach
5. Conclusion and Future Work

Similarly, the following outline slide would not be helpful, since it is probably hard to understand for the audience and/or sometimes gives unnecessary detail:

Outline
1. Feature Reduction and the Curse of Dimensionality
2. Work by Fitzpatrick
3. Work by Mueller
4. Using the Law of Large Numbers
5. Performance of the Approach on 5 Data Sets with 30{60 Numeric Features
6. Conclusion and Future Work

1.3 Introduction

Use the first minutes of the presentation to introduce the problem you have been working on and to motivate it properly. The audience needs to understand :

1- what the problem is that you focus on,
2- why this problem is important or interesting,

3- why this problem is non-trivial.

Use simple language and avoid unnecessary technical terminology where possible; keep in mind that the audience does not have the same background knowledge that you have.

1.4 Background Material

Before you explain your own approach, introduce the relevant background material. Add brief citations (like [Case, Smith 1983]) to attribute work done by others appropriately. Make sure the audience understands which of the presented material reacts your own ideas and work, and which is based on ideas/work done by others. After introducing the background material, you can explain your own approach, how you evaluated it, etc.

1.5 Conclusion

After the main part of the presentation (containing your own contributions or thoughts), use a brief conclusion section (often only one or two slides) to summarize the main points stated before and to include your interpretation of the results obtained. Focus on the few main points, in particular, think of a \take-home message" that you would like to give to the audience.

1.6 Future Research

After your concluding summary, add brief hints concerning your ideas for future research (again often only one slide). You should not go into detail here, just show the audience that you have already thought further than what you just presented and that your research topic is open-ended.

1.7 Slide Numbering

Include slide numbering on your slides (in a clearly readable way). This has some advantages:

1- It helps you to stay organized during the talk { for example, you have

an easy way to check which portion of your slides you have covered

after a certain amount of time has passed. If after half of the available

time you see that you are too slow (fast), you can gently speed up (slow

down) without the audience noticing it.

2- It makes it easier for people in the audience to ask questions at the end of the talk, since they can directly refer to a slide number.

2- Content

The content of your talk should be logically organized and understandable for the audience. You should also try to make the talk interesting for the audience. Try not to lose their attention. This can be done when illustrative examples and intuitive explanations are used, rather than \boring" technical details. Keep in mind that the audience has less technical knowledge about the topic than you, and they might find different things interesting than you.

2.1 Problem Statement

Clearly state what the main problem is that you focus on. There might

be a bunch of little detail questions or side tracks that you are working

on, but try to boil it down to one general problem that can be explained

easily. Formulate this problem clearly on the slides, not just when speaking.

Sometimes a good effect can be achieved by having a single slide that only says, in simple words, what your main research problem is.

2.2 Motivating Example

Think of a simple example that would help the audience to understand why your problem is important or interesting; include this example in your presentation.

2.3 Intuition Explained

Explain the underlying idea of your approach, as well as other difficult content, by appealing to intuition. Before you go into details with your approach/method (see next subsection), give the audience an intuitive idea of weaknesses of previous approaches that will be remedied by your approach, or of properties of the problem that will be exploited by your approach.

2.4 Approach/Method

Your approach to solving the stated problem is the core of your presentation.

Make sure that it is clearly and logically explained. Relate it to the back-ground work you introduced earlier. Make sure the audience understands what the main contribution of your approach is.

2.5 Results

Present the results of applying your approach. For a theory topic, this could be theorems, some analysis etc. For more

applied research, this could be an empirical or analytical evaluation.

2.6 Analysis

Analyze and interpret the results obtained. Explain the significance and the consequences of your findings to your audience.

2.7 Novelty

Your talk must have some novel content, and it should be made clear what the novelty in your contribution is.

3- Style

People may disagree in various little style questions, but there are some general points that should be respected. Your slides are a visual medium, and you should think about how to best make use of that. Include graphics and modest animation where appropriate. However, do not overload the slides with too much content, too many different colors , too many different fonts, too much fancy animation, etc. Otherwise you will likely confuse the audience.

3.1 Font Scheme

The font size should be large enough at all times. In small rooms, 20pt might be sufficient, but often 22pt is safer. People in the last row of the seminar room should be able to read your slides.

Most suitable for this kind of presentation is a simple sans-serif font. You can use bold or slanted font for emphasis, but do not use too many different kinds of fonts (the latter could look messy).

3.2 Color Scheme

Color is often useful for highlighting.

Avoid the common mistake of using colors that are hard to see when

projected. For example, if you use a white background, then yellow, light gray, or light green color is often not visible (even if you can see it very well on your computer screen). The projected colors often look different than the ones on your screen.

By the \don't overload" principle, avoid the use of too many different

colors in a single slide.

A nice feature of colors is that they can be useful for logically grouping content. Just as an example, when you evaluate a method, you could use green color for advantages and red color for disadvantages, if appropriate.

This way, color can \encode" content.

3.3 Short Points

Text on the slides should be brief. Avoid full sentences when they are not necessary. For example, rather than writing

The advantages of our method are that it is very efficient and that

it produces accurate results.

you may want to write:

advantages of our method:

1- efficiency
2- accuracy

As a rule of thumb, think of the text on your slides as brief keyword

reminders for yourself of what you are going to explain.

3.4 Examples

Include illustrative examples whenever you think they would be helpful (with-out distracting from the main ow of the talk).

3.5 Figures

A figure can often explain more than many words. Include graphical illustrations whenever appropriate; they can

sometimes also replace formal definitions or algorithm descriptions.
However, if you have to use figure material that is not your own, cite the source.

3.6 Graphs

Graphs are often more helpful than tables with many numbers. Use them whenever helpful.
If you use a graph, provide a proper legend. For example, when plotting
2-dimensional graphs, include the measure and the scale on x-axis and y-axis,
as well as helpful names for the curves you plot.

3.7 Spelling/Grammar

Ask for help in checking spelling and grammar of the text on the slides. The more professional and well-prepared your slides seem, the more you signal to the audience that you care very much about this presentation.
After all, who would like to listen to presentations if they got the impression the presenters themselves don't really care about them?

4- Delivery

The way you deliver a talk is crucial for whether your audience follows you.
In particular, show the audience that you yourself are excited about the topic you are talking about. Even a talk with perfect slides and perfectly arranged content can be poorly presented unless you follow the guidelines below.

4.1 Adequately Rehearsed

Rehearse your talk ahead of time. This means to pretend you are actually giving the presentation, without interruption, and to speak out aloud as if there was a real audience (you might even ask a couple of friends to sit in as a test audience). This will help you to get the timing right, to notice mistakes in the logical ow of your presentation, and to find the right words
for explaining complex material. Note that you might need several rounds of rehearsal to be well prepared.
In most cases, the actual presentation takes a little less time than the
rehearsal, because during the rehearsal you sometimes stop to correct yourself etc.
In your actual presentation, signs of inadequate rehearsal could be that
your timing is not right, that you keep switching back and forth between slides (i.e., a mistake in the logical ow), that you seem yourself surprised at the order of slides coming up, that you have to think for a long time before
explaining a slide, etc.

4.2 Loudness

Speak loud enough for everyone in the room to hear you. There won't be a microphone in the room.

4.3 Clarity

Speak with a clear voice and use clear formulations.

4.4 Look at Audience

During your presentation, you may sometimes briefly have to look at the screen. However, don't turn towards the wall or look at the screen for too long. Don't look at your feet, the ceiling, or out the window. Always focus your eyes on the audience. Let your eyes wander between people in the audience. This gives the audience the impression you are talking to them,

and thus it is easier for them to follow. It also helps you to notice whether your audience can follow you. If they look puzzled, it might be that you need to clarify something that you recently explained.

4.5 Did not Read

Speak freely. Do not read of the slides word for word and do not recite
a text that you learned by heart. Otherwise your presentation will sound monotonous and the audience may stop paying attention.

4.6 Speed

You need to find the right speed of talking and changing slides. If you are too fast, the audience cannot follow you. If you are too slow, the audience will get bored and may stop paying attention.

Chapter 4

The Do's and the Don'ts

DO'S:[6]

1- Practice
2- Look professional
3- Preview your slides
4- Clearly state your objectives and goals
5- Speak clearly and at a good pace. Rule of thumb: about 1 slide per minute
6- Always identify your axes, define all technical terms and spend time on your data (graphs , tables)
7- Quote appropriate references and distinguish your work from literature sources
8- Make a lot of eye contact with your audience
9- Conclude your talk with statement that address your objectives and finish your story

Don't :

1- Wait until the last minute to prepare
2- Make slides that are impossible to read or understand , e.g. complicated figures , large tables , Picasso-like graphs.
3- Read your talk verbatim , either from notes or from your slides!! Know your material well without reading .
4- Make distracting gestures when you talk (play hair , rock back and forth , play with your hair , pick your nose , etc. …..)
5- Speak too rapidly , too slowly , too quietly or loudly , and don't speak in a monotone and try not to mumble.
6- Talk to one person or the screen .
7- Panic . staying calm and focused is very important, especially if you hate speaking publicly .
8- Try to be too funny . humor has its place in your seminar , but use it judiciously .

[6] Gardner, H. (1993) Frames of Mind. London

Summary

In the end of this research I conclude that for presenting a good and successful seminar you should focus on these following things :

1- A good seminar requires significant planning .
2- There are many rules to consider, but they are simple and common sense .
3- With a well thought-out visual presentation, the words will follow.

Seminars take a lot of work

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