

TIPS FOR VIVA- VOCE SESSION

What is a Viva-Voce ?

- There are many definitions.
- My definition is as follows...
 - “ It is your **final chance** to save yourself from failing your MSc or PhD ! ”
- Legally...
 - “ It is a required component (you must pass) of the University in order to graduate from your program. ”

Why consider FAILURE ?

- You must be prepared for the worst case scenario.
 - Examiners already have an impression of you.
 - Examiners are probably experts in your field.
 - Examiners already have doubts of your work.
 - Examiners have already made their mind to FAIL you !

So what can you do ?

- 2 possible solutions
 - Change Examiners (never ending story...)
 - Use Viva-voce to solve the problem.
- But...how do you solve a problem when you don't know what the problem is ?
 - Hmm...assume the problem !
 - Ask yourself... “ What could probably be incomplete / vague / wrong / missing / inaccurate etc. in my thesis report ? ”

Frequent Comments & Doubts

- Unclear objectives.
- Oversimplified problem.
- Literature review incomplete.
- Unconvincing methodology.
- Insufficient data or experiments.
- Unclear conclusions (CLOSE THE LOOP !).
- Repeated work.
- Bad language and grammar.
- Plagiarism !

Can you solve all Problems ?

- You CANNOT !!
- Why ?
 - Limited presentation time.
 - Limited personal knowledge.
 - Limited research work.
 - Limited academic assistance.
 - Limited space for demo.
 - Limited supporting evidence.
 - Etc.

So what do we do now ?

- Well... the purpose of this presentation is to give you advice on the most optimum methods to solve most of the problems.
- Let us begin by looking at the structure of the Viva-Voce.

Viva-Voce Panel

- Who will be present ?
 - **You !**
 - **Chairman**
 - Your supervisor
 - Your co-supervisor(s) (if any)
 - **Internal Examiner**
 - **External Examiner(s)**
 - Dean of Engineering School / representative

Viva-Voce Components

- **First deliberation**
 - To confirm recommendations from examiners.
- **Slide Presentation**
 - To listen to the content of the research.
- **Q&A(Thesis)**
 - To clarify doubts and give comments.
- **Final deliberation**
 - To modify and reconfirm recommendations from examiners.
- **Outcome announcement**
 - To inform the student on the results of the viva and the recommendations from the examiners.

What interests you ?

- Presentation
 - 20 – 30 mins
 - Summary of the IMPORTANT parts in your thesis.
 - Opportunity to highlight/add/correct your thesis.
- Q&A
 - ≈ 1 hour ++
 - Opportunity to answer INTELLIGENTLY to clear the doubts of examiners.
 - Each answer must give you more confidence and the examiners less conviction.

Now what is IMPORTANT ?

- You need to present your project.
- You need to start somewhere and end somewhere.
- You need to make sure there is a flow in between.
- You need to communicate with the panel.
- You need to ensure they understand.
- You need to do ALL this in max 30 mins !
- Ahhrrgggg !!!! [You need to be calm ;-)]

Get This Right First

- Be calm. Dress properly.
- Check out the place. Imagine yourself on stage.
- Position yourself. Give some moving space.
- Interact with the audience. DO NOT speak to the screen or to your laptop !
- DO NOT read from any material !
- Use appropriate hand gestures.
- Speak slowly, clearly and correctly.
- Ensure slides are clear and tolerable.

How to present your Project –1

- Introduce yourself. Be humble.
- Outline your presentation.
- Clearly state the overview and scope of your work.
- Describe your motivations.
- State your objectives.
- Present a BRIEF literature review (optional).
- Get to business... (Part 2)

How to present your Project –2

- Present a clear methodology on how you carried out your project. ARRANGEMENT OF MATERIAL.
- Explain the IMPORTANT parts of each section.
- Highlight, explain and discuss some IMPORTANT results.
- Conclude your work (link back to the objectives!).
- Mention some future work (optional).
- DON'T FORGET TO ... (Part 3)

How to present your Project –3

- LINK YOUR SLIDES AS YOU PRESENT WITH APPROPRIATE PHARESES !!!!
- ONLY THEN IS THERE A FLOW IN YOUR PRESENTATION.
- HOW ? DEVELOP LINKING PHRASES.
- IF YOU CAN ARRANGE WELL, LINKING BECOMES EASY.
- REMEMBER – PRACTICE MAKES PEFFECT.

How to handle Q&A – 1

- Anticipate doubts.
 - Prepare answers, video or demo.
- Know your thesis !
 - You should be able to refer to any page.
- Don't beat around the bush !
avoiding the main point
 - Answer the question.
- Answer in depth.
 - No short answers ! Short answers indicate lack of knowledge or doubtful work.

How to handle Q&A – 2

- THINK AS YOU TALK
 - Don't say something that I would not say.
- Be calm.
 - Do not get worked up over examiners remarks.
- Keep you confidence.
 - Each answer must increase your confidence and reduce their conviction.
- Take notes
 - Show that their comments interests you.

How to handle Q&A – 3

- Don't ARGUE !
 - Accept errors, omissions, examiners personal views and criticism (don't be too defensive).
- Address examiners properly
 - Find out who they are (Prof/Assoc Prof / Dr).
- Reply INTELLIGENTLY
 - DEFEND your work. Be AGREEABLE with them, although they DON'T AGREE with you.
 - Remember, AGREE ≠ AGREEABLE

Mistakes of Viva Voce - Presentation

- No interaction with panel.
- Badly prepared slides.
- Presentation not focused.
- Talking too softly or too fast.
- Presentation too long.
- No flow.
- Language problem.
- Monotonous.

Mistakes of Viva Voce – Q&A

- DO NOT SAY “... I do not know. My supervisor only ask me to ... ”.
- DO NOT ARGUE OR BE TOO DEFENSIVE. Accept criticism.
- YES and NO answers !
- Being evasive.

Final Advice

- Practice makes perfect.
- I heard this somewhere ...

“... During your presentation, you are the KING. And if you show the panel you are KING during the presentation, you will remain KING during the Q&A. Otherwise, the panel will become KING and you will be eaten by them ...”

– anonymous
