

## **Lecture 06 :**

### **How to present during the Viva Voce**



**1- Definition of Viva voce :** other terms are used, such as the ‘oral defence’. This word is useful in that it reminds us that the primary function of the viva is to give students an opportunity to defend their work.

### **2- Purpose of the viva :**

- ☐ Did you do the work yourself?
- ☐ Have you done the reading?
- ☐ Do you have a good general knowledge of the field?
- ☐ Did you write the thesis yourself?
- ☐ Can you do research independentl
- ☐ Have you contributed to new knowledge?

### **3- Pre-viva:**

#### **A- Putting a strategy into practice :**

- ☐ How can you practice for the viva?
- 1- With friends, with anyone
  - 2- With postgraduates in your area.
  - 3- With a postgraduate who has had a viva.
  - 4- With your internal examiner and supervisor (mock viva).

In this respect, you prepare a practice session. Ask them to ask specific and general questions, easy and hard questions, to interrupt you, to challenge you, and to give you feedback.

#### **B- Practice session:**

1. Aims: discuss what you want to achieve.

2. Which skills do you want to develop or improve?
3. Which strategies do you want to practice?
4. Prepare questions.
5. Run the 'viva' for real, for one hour, without stopping.
6. After this, have a full debrief: how did you do?
7. How do your colleagues feel you did?
8. Where do you need more practice?
9. How can you practise this again?

### **C- Anticipate the questions :**

It is not enough simply to recite sections of your thesis. You have to develop convincing answers to the questions asked. You have to answer probing questions that you may have answered more than once in your thesis. You have to rehearse.

#### **C-1- General questions:**

- 1- Would you please summarise your thesis for us?
- 2- Who would you say are the key people in your field?
- 3- Would you say that your thesis has any weaknesses?
- 4- Surely it would have been better to use a different method?

There will also be more detailed questions, possibly working systematically through each chapter. You can anticipate questions about each of your chapters. These may be general or specific, but can be challenging.

#### **C-2- Questions the literature review should answer:**

- 1- Why is this subject important?
- 2- Who else thinks it is important?
- 3- Who has worked on this subject before?
- 4- What had not been done before?
- 5- Who has done something similar to your topic?
- 6- What is your contribution?

### C-3- Questions about your methodology:

- 1- You will be asked about the link between your research questions and hypothesis.
- 2- Is the methodology for data collection appropriate?
- 3- Has the candidate given an adequate justification for the design used?

### 4- During the viva :

- You can **take your dissertation** with you, so that you can refer to it and follow the discussion when someone else refers to it.
- **Writing down the questions** asked by the examiner is a good technique instead of forgetting it and asking him to repeat it.
- You remember to speak in **the past tense**. This means that you are talking-throughout- your viva about work that you have completed .

Your examiner may change **to the future tense in** order to discuss what might be the next step in your research, what you will do next, where you see the field is going in the future.

- The use of **the passive form** would be much better than using the pronoun “I”. At some stage, you need to make it clear that the work is yours, then it is absolutely fine to **use “I”**. If you do not use it at all, you give the impression that you did not do it yourself.
- Another verbal strategy to practice over and over again is “define” and “defend” helps students answer difficult questions without becoming defensive. For instance, “do not you think it would have been better to.....” the tendency is to start an answer with a defense of what was done.
- A strong strategy is to define what we did first, and why, and then say how it was. You can show that you understand both the strengths and the limitations of the approach you chose.

Above all, it saves you from appearing defensive. Your role is to defend not become defensive when faced with challenging questions.