

Addressing Seminar Questions Gracefully

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Great presenters see seminar questions as an opportunity for improvement and making friends. But it is really an art. I am definitely not qualified to provide examples. This short note is to summarize some cases where I didn't address the question on retrospective. For each case, I want to have some conjectures on the better to address the question and will follow up next time giving seminars.

I only write down the situations I feel challenging to address. And I will put the words I feel comfortable to say. As a non-native speaker, **I don't think I can improve myself unless I write them down and practice them repeatedly.**

- Out-of-Context Questions: The audience asks out-of-context questions either because my statements are misleading or they are curious. Being engaging is important.
- Different Framework: Economists develop different frameworks by imposing different assumptions to study the questions. Using a different framework focuses on different frictions. That means focusing on one friction by shutting down other channels. The interaction between frictions is a completely new question.
- Unpolished Framing: The audience does not have time to polish their questions. It is the presenter's responsibility to be aware of that and help the audience figure out the concern. That is why they spend time listening.
- Cite and Challenge: When people bring up some papers, it is possible that I am not aware of them. Being specific is the most efficient way for both sides. It has to **narrow down** to one or several papers that both sides are aware of. It could be very inefficient time use to just generally bring up some people's name and summarize their work with ambiguous statements.

I. How to interrupt and move on

It is the presenter, not the audience, to keep track of time and balance being polite and being efficient. I can speculate how the audience feels about interruption. But to make it less rude, **interruption by lowering the voice**, maybe, is less aggression.

The last but not the least, it is professional to treat academic interaction and personal interaction separately. Your response and their comments are never personal.