Jonathon Hartman

Critical Review of Seminar for Communication Skills I

On October 15th, 2019, K.C. Park held the seminar titled "Data-Driven Engineering Modeling: Is it a Reinvention of Old Techniques or a Genuine New Paradigm?" at the International Center for Numerical Methods in Engineering in Barcelona, Spain. Due to the political riots taking place and the uncertainty about his arrival to the airport, the seminar was spontaneously re-scheduled for an hour earlier than planned. Park could be described as a good story-teller, with a presentation technique that captivates the audience, however his attempts at visualization often fell flat.

Park maintained a volume appropriate for the room and size of the public so that every word was able to be heard even in the back of the space. He maintained good eye contact with the audience although he did occasionally look at his slides for reference. He has given this seminar before; however, it was done many years ago, and he often had to jog his memory about the content by reading the slide quickly before continuing with his presentation. Park's enthusiasm for the subject he was talking about was apparent from the first interaction with the audience. His tone was varied and gave the impression that he enjoys talking about the subject. He also kept the audience's attention by varying his volume when appropriate. He did not move around in a distracting manner, but his posture was often worsened by the fact that he kept his hands in his back pockets.

Despite the positive aspects of his presentation techniques, the seminar was negatively affected by the poor quality of his visualizations. Starting on the introduction slide, each slide hosted a wide variety of text sizes and colors with no apparent reasoning. Often, some slides would use a font that was different from the slide before, which was also distracting. While some slides contained few words, others were completely full of text that was hardly legible for the audience in the back. An additional visualization technique he used was that of metaphors. These metaphors were never fully explained, and because of this were not effective in contributing to the quality of his seminar. One such example is when he said: "[The mechanics institutes] didn't adapt to the waves". Although this offers a striking image of waves hitting the ideology of institutes, he never completely explained what exactly was being tested in that ideology through the waves and which ideas specifically should have been changed through these waves. The incoherency was further propagated through his discontinuity throughout the entire presentation. He would often start a story and without ending it, move to the next slide, and start talking about a completely different topic. This could also be noticed in his incoherent PowerPoint organization. After approximately 40 minutes of a 60-minute presentation, Park finally finished his introduction to the topic "data-driven modeling". Apparently unprepared for the presentation, he rushed through the core of his topic and his conclusions. He could have achieved a more thorough explanation of the core ideas has he better timed himself and spent less time on the introduction to the topic.

K.C. Park, although a captivating story-teller, was unsuccessful in portraying his ideas due to the incoherence of his presentation and the poor attempts at visualization.