

CHAPTER 12

Communicating in seminars

Task 1: Read the transcript from a seminar (below), and answer the following questions.

1. Who starts the seminar off and how?

The tutor starts the seminar off by showing the task on the screen, putting students into groups and asking them to discuss their answers for five to ten minutes.

2. Do you think the language the students use is threatening or non-threatening?

The language is non-threatening, showing agreement or understanding as well as appreciation.

3. Find examples of language that is collaborative.

Tutor

OK, so now that we've all introduced ourselves, let's get started. Let me remind you of the instructions for this seminar: I asked you to read this paper by Cheung and research answers to the questions on this slide. In small groups of 4 I'd like you to discuss your answers to these questions for about five to ten minutes and then we'll share key ideas as a whole group.

...

Student A	<p>Shall I start us off? I don't know if anyone else found this, but I found the paper quite hard to follow in a few places, and I wasn't sure about question 1 and how to relate what I read to what Dr Lee said in the lecture. So, that said, my initial thoughts about Scott's research on the issue of shy performativity are that it seems quite obvious in a way, if you know what I mean. I mean, the research didn't seem to throw up anything particularly exciting. Do you know what I mean? Did anyone else think this, or is it just me? (Laughs)</p>
Student B	<p>I think I get what you mean. I wrote down a few questions when I was reading the paper, because I didn't think I could really find the answer to the question of what the real purpose of the research was. I mean, it's interesting that performers sometimes self identify as 'shy', when most people would be surprised to hear that, but I wasn't sure exactly what the author was trying to find out, and even after reading the whole paper I still wasn't clear. What do you all think about it? What did she actually gain from the research?</p>

Student C	<p>I guess you are both saying something really interesting that I hadn't even thought about actually. I really enjoyed the paper - it was easy to relate to the ideas, especially because she talked about famous performers who say they are shy. I thought the findings were interesting in that different participants had different views of which part of their 'self' was the authentic 'them', and I liked the way the author used the terms 'I' and 'me' to distinguish the two personas. I did have some questions, however, about the research methods, so I suppose I'm going on to question 2 here. Shall we move on to question 2 now, or does anyone want to talk about question 1 a bit more?</p>
Student D	<p>Oh, can I just say something about question 1 and the point of the study? I just wanted to say that I didn't really notice the 'obviousness' of the research when I was reading it, but now that you say that, I can see what you mean. Mind you, I think sometimes it is useful to find out more about something without necessarily having to have an outcome, if you know what I mean. But I think you have made some really good points and I want to reconsider how I felt about the paper now. I do, though, think it was interesting to read about this research having heard Dr Lee talk about Goffman's research into self from way back in 1959.</p>

Student C	<p>We probably ought to consider this study in the context of Goffman's book. Anyway, sorry, what was it you wanted to say about question 2 and the research methods?</p> <p>Well, yeah, I just thought that the sample itself was a bit unreliable - I know this was acknowledged, and I thought it was odd to choose face-to-face interviews as the first way to communicate with people who have identified themselves as shy.</p>
Student B	<p>Yes, I agree about that, but wasn't this discussed by Scott when she talked about the two participants who used email? Don't you think?</p>
Student C	<p>Yes, I know, but I was just surprised that this was the first choice of method. Anyway, I guess it's a minor point. What do you think about the findings - shall we go on to number 3?</p> <p>Discussion based on the following paper: Scott, S. (2015) Transitions and Transcendence of the Self: Stage Fright and the Paradox of Shy Performativity. <i>Sociology</i> 51 (4): 715-731.</p> <p>See all articles by this author Search Google Scholar for this author</p> <p>First Published August 7, 2015</p>

Task 2: The following contributions are unacceptable and are likely to lead to conflict in the seminar. Rephrase the following contributions to be more appropriate.

1. I really don't think that's true. I think you have got the wrong end of the stick completely.

Possible rephrase: *Although there are interesting aspects to what you have just said, I'm not sure I agree, as I don't think it's really what the author intended.*

2. That kind of view is exactly what I have come to expect from you.

Possible rephrase: *I can see why you may think that, but I don't really agree entirely with what you have just said.*

3. How can you possibly say such a thing?

Possible rephrase: *That's an interesting way of looking at it. Can you explain a bit more about why you think that?*

4. None of the rest of us agree with what you have just said.

Possible rephrase: *I don't think any of us had thought about it like that. Could you clarify exactly what you mean?*

Task 3: Look at the three following interactions which include some kind of misunderstanding caused by cultural differences. What is the underlying misunderstanding?

1. *Student A:* Shopping habits have changed so much recently, and most people do a lot of their shopping online. Interestingly, people still seem to like the Argos approach though.

Student B: Oh, was there some kind of special way that the ancient Greeks bought their goods?

This student does not know what the shop Argos is, and how it has a special way of purchasing goods, whereby you pay for what you want to buy and then wait for the product to be collected and given to you.

2. I have done all the talking. Why doesn't anyone else say anything?

There are probably students in the group who are reluctant to put forward their view and interrupt someone who is speaking.

3. *Student A:* I understand what you mean about that, but don't you think it might be possible to look at it a different way?

Student B: Oh, no I don't.

Student B is very direct and this is not expected in UK culture.