



Story Telling with Data

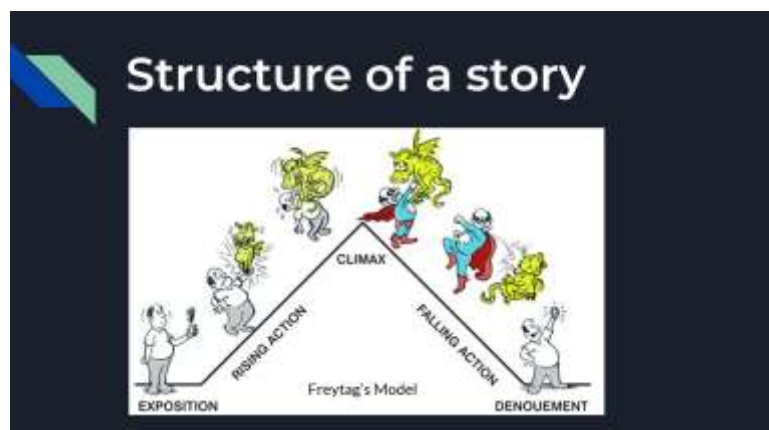
by Dr Ivan Ling

Dr Ivan Ling is currently an assistant professor at the University of Southampton Malaysia.

Data science is a complex and often dull subject. Communicating data to technical and lay-person requires different strategies, and often, it is hard to gauge the level of detail that needs to be presented. Therefore, a well-structured narrative is important to convey the insights to the desired audience. However, weaving an interesting and engaging story based on numbers and graphs is not easy. Data storytelling is more than just creating the best-looking graphs, or the perfect excel sheet. It is about taking the insights from data, and transforming it into a series of plots, using the same tools and frameworks that makes a story engaging.

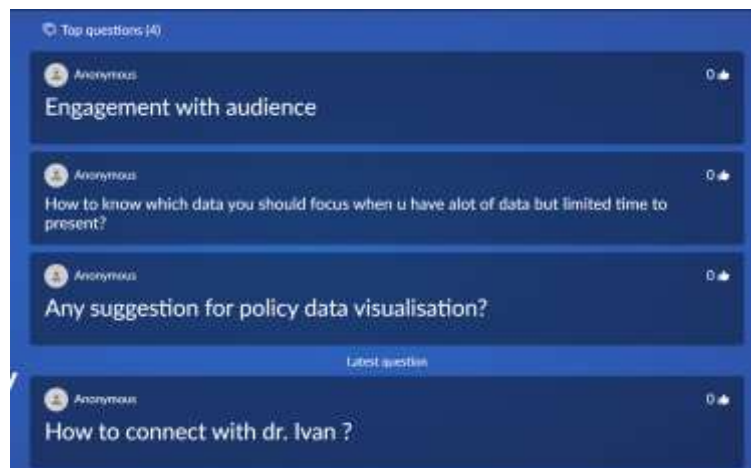
In view of this, the IEM Electronic Engineering Technical Division (eETD) organized an online webinar entitled “Story Telling with Data” by Dr Ivan Ling on the 6th June 2020. Dr Ivan is currently an assistant professor at the University of Southampton Malaysia. His research interest centres around the development of sensors for environmental and pollution monitoring, as well as sustainable technologies to reduce such pollutions. The workshop was conducted virtually via Zoom due to the COVID 19 pandemic.

During the talk, Dr Ivan shared his experience in using story telling methods, such as the Freytag’s model in order to maximize audience’s attention during a data presentation. He explains that humans evolve to consume narratives, and that plot structures and mental visualization allows humans to remember better than pure data.



Dr Ivan explaining the use of Freytag's model in data presentations

Throughout the talk, participants are given the chance to interact directly through the use of Slido. Slido is an online platform which allows participants to post messages up on the presentation screen and to answer polls posted by the presenter. Dr Ivan also showed some great examples of websites with great data stories.



Slido for Q and A

During the workshop, there are 13 active participants, with 75% of the participants coming from Penang, and 25% from Johor based on the participant's feedback survey. In terms of demographics, 50% of the survey respondents works in the industry, 25% are academics, and the remaining 25% are students. Majority of the participants felt that the workshop was insightful but will need longer time to cover more details.