

Transcript of Video 1 John's Descriptions of Videos

John's narration (0:00 to 05:10)

In many chapters, you will see an URL address that will connect you to a video clip which illustrates the activities that I write about.

In almost all the videos clips, you will see a teacher with just a few students. When I initially show these clips to teachers, they say that they teach classes of from 15 to 50 students. They say it's easy to do activities with just a few students. And they begin to be a little skeptical about whether the activities will have similar results in large classes.

As you can see in the photograph you are looking at, there are more than a few students. But they're all engaged in one of the many activities I urge you to try.



I and others have done these activities with many large classes. If you want to see a video version of the class that this picture is taken from go to You Tube John F. Fanselow-f a n s e l o w

The participants in the picture you just saw were looking at are completing this introduction.

John's Introduction—Incomplete Information Version

A_ y__ k____, m_ n____ J____.
 I ____ b____ i_ C_____, I____s, t____
 h__e o_ t__ C_____ B__ls b_____
 __ t__m ____ t__ n__e o_ a j__z
 m_____l.

When you look at this picture, which was taken from a video clip, you can see details that it is impossible to see when we look at the whole class as in the first photo you looked at.



If we put a mike close to the students, if we put their cell phone by the students and record what they say, we can hear in detail what they are saying to each other and how they are puzzling out, in this case the introduction.

So details are central to this book. When I talk about **2:10** small changes, we're talking about looking at details of what we do and then looking at the details of the results. And the only way we can do that is to look at a few students at a time and listen to a few students.

William Blake, an English poet, and engraver said this **2:35**
about the importance of details:

**To see a World in a Grain of Sand
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower,
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand.
And Eternity in an hour.**

I think it's important for all of us to put on a different pair of glasses when we look at what we are doing in our classrooms and what our students are doing. And looking at details and listening to details is one way to put on a new pair of glasses.

All of the video clips in this book are short and this is to remind you of the importance of looking at details.
3:38



And I believe it's more important to look at the same video a dozen times with different pairs of glasses on so that each time you can see something new that you didn't see before.

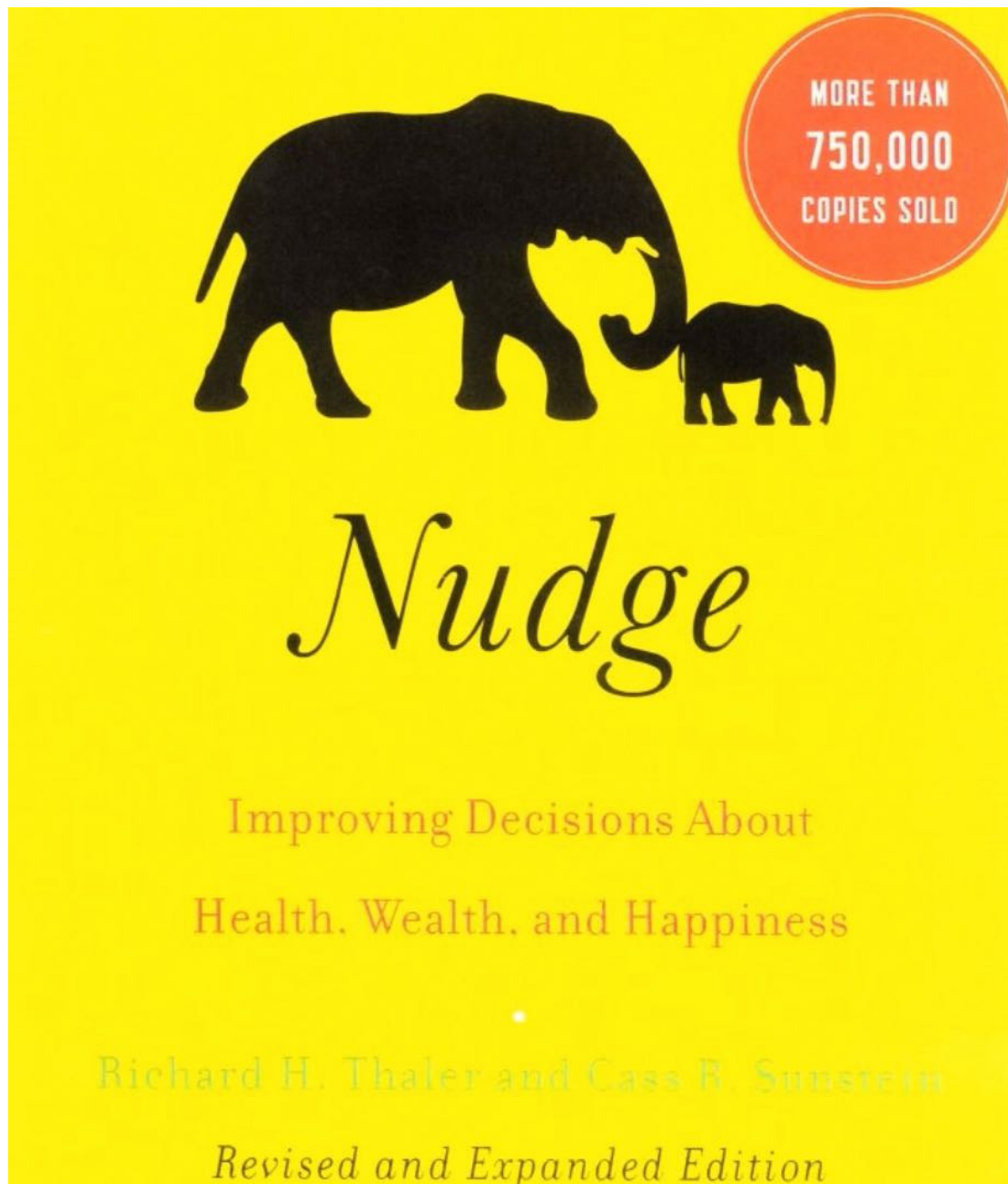
Now some people say "Well, you know we have to look at the whole class to get an idea of the mood, or whatever.

But you know when you go to get a blood test, they take a couple of vials. If they take it all, you know, you're going to die.

So you can get a lot by looking at a grain of sand and looking at the palm of your hand. **4:10**

I'm hardly the first person or the only person to talk about change in general or small changes in particular.

This book called *Nudge* (By Thaler and Sunstein), describes ways that small changes can affect health care, can affect employee's feelings about their work, about unemployment.



There are many books about change. The most succinct description of the importance of change was made I think by Charles Darwin.

It is not the strongest species that survives nor the most intelligent but the one most responsive to change.

Charles Darwin

5:10

PS Remarks after the fact

I usually begin courses, classes and workshops by asking teachers to write at least two questions they would like to explore together.

In the last fifty years, no teacher has written a question about recording classes or analyzing recordings. You might wonder why before this book in which I urge us to record, transcribe our interactions, I wrote two previous books with the same theme—*Breaking Rules* (1987) and *Contrasting Conversations* (1992).

If I were a chef and after I asked potential clients what they would like to eat and they all said pasta dishes and when I opened my restaurant I served only rice and potatoes with meals it would seem a crazy decision.

So why do I write about what no teachers have asked me about? I share reasons in Video 1 which you just read the transcript of as well as in the *Forward*, *Preface*, many chapters and *Part 2*.

But I think that inviting you to read about the value of recording and analyzing what we do by a person who has experienced what I write about might be more convincing.

Thirty ish years ago, I did a two-week workshop at a language school that was part of ESADE, a graduate school of business in Barcelona. One of the teachers who participated was Geoff Jordan.

Whether you read his reflections before or after you watch Video 1, remember that the fact that teachers do not record and analyze what they do makes them outliers. Coaches, surgeons, counselors plus almost all service providers like banks, airlines, regularly record what they do. We have all heard this recording: “This call might be recorded so that we can better understand the needs of our clients.”

Here are Geoff's comments from decades ago:

“Here's a question for those of you whose professional life is mostly devoted to classroom ELT:

In the past 12 months, how much time have you spent getting feedback about your teaching?

My guess is that it's less than three hours. And I further guess that any feedback you got came from a trainer or a superior. If I'm right, then you have almost no recent experience of examining data about what you and your students actually do in class.

Leaving aside the evaluative, judgmental kinds of feedback you've had during training courses, or when a superior observes your class with the aim of assuring that you're doing what they consider to be a good job, you've probably spent little or no time whatsoever on looking at real data about what's going on in your classes. And yet, examining recordings of your classes with colleagues or with your students can do wonders.

An aside.

In a 2014 article, Fanselow quotes three teachers who reflect on what Fanselow helped them to observe, and it makes very interesting reading. In the same section, one of the teachers comments about other training courses he'd attended:

I was shown some video clips of teachers that were produced alongside methods books for the course. The teachers and the authors sounded like cosmetics salespeople. They were absolutely certain of their claims, but there was no evidence in the videos. The camera focused primarily on the teachers and just occasionally panned the students. I could not hear what they were saying or see what they were writing. This prevented me from evaluating the outcome. Without seeing results, how could I accept or verify or believe the author's assertions?

Fanselow cites another of the 3 teachers who says that she now uses the transcriptions she makes of recordings of her classroom teaching to help plan her lessons, and that planning based on what she had actually asked her students to do and on the results was less time-consuming than her former lesson planning. Fanselow suggests that teachers make a regular feature of transcribing, sometimes alone and sometimes with their students, one to three minutes of a class, or enough interaction to fill one sheet of A4 paper. He stresses

You cannot just do this only once a term. You have to do it regularly and often in order for you and your students to learn anything from it – a couple of times per week, as a minimum.

Each of us learned different things about ourselves and about our learners, but all of us went away determined to make observing and analysing classroom recordings a regular, on-going feature of our work.

For myself, I found a friend at work who was even more of a Fanselow fan than I was. We recorded ourselves doing classes right the way through the term, and we spent a couple of hours a week watching the recordings together and analyzing them. In our viewing sessions, a habitual refrain was “Stop judging!” We were lucky to be in a school that encouraged such stuff, and we were lucky to have each other. But anyway, it’s difficult to overestimate the positive effect those sessions had on our motivation and, I dare to say, our teaching.

If you want to do your own recording feedback sessions, here are a few suggestions:

1. Involve the students. Tell them what you want to do and why. Never record anything without their permission.
2. Try out different places for the recorder in the classroom when nobody’s there. You know better than I do about the techy stuff, but I understand that modern video recorders

can be placed just about anywhere. Make sure you record the students, not just you.

3. Play down the fact that you're recording.
4. Choose somebody you like and trust to watch the recording with you. Of course, it could be a group.
5. Limit the clip to 10 minutes maximum
6. Watch the video recording a few times without comment.
7. Don't just do it once!
8. Emphasize John's golden rules—analyze, don't judge or evaluate."

Back to my reflections after the fact!

I wanted to share comments from a few other people here, as I do in most parts of my book, so you get less tired of hearing my voice alone over and over. A range of voices I think is richer than one voice over and over.

So now, back to my voice. After teachers see my description of *Nudge*, they ask if I can provide any examples of the claims of the authors. One of the examples that Thaler and Sunstein described that has stuck with me is one about job counselors who help people find jobs.

They describe an unemployment office in which the usual practice had been for the counselors to meet the unemployed person each week and write down what the person had done each day to look for a job. The rate of finding jobs was dismal. And the job counselors as well as those seeking jobs were very distressed.

At a meeting one job counselors suggested that rather than review what each unemployed person had done the previous week they write down a plan for the coming week. They jointly wrote down a place the unemployed person would visit each day of the next week. Some days they decided to visit two sites when they were close together.

Well, when the job counselors and unemployed person planned visits more of the unemployed found jobs and in a much shorter period of time. The teams employed a theme of one of my books: *Try the opposite*.

Another common question teachers have after viewing Video 1 is for examples of small changes in teaching.

One of the smallest changes I suggest is for teachers to write the articles with nouns on the board. Universally, teachers say “a book” as they hold up a book and then write *book* on the board without the article. Students then copy *book* in their notebooks. Writing *a book* rather than *book* takes no planning and can be executed in a heartbeat.

Another small change, which is the central theme of this book, is to ask students to write what we say, either as we give the direction or make the comment or from a recording.

Every day for 10 days, a teacher said, either, “These two key words are easy to understand.” Or “These two/or four/or six/ key words are difficult to understand. On the 11th day, she asked the students to listen to a recording of her direction and transcribe what she had said.

Here are the renditions from the students.

99. Twose key words other understand.

97. Key words very easy understand.

95. Two have very easy key word.

93. To the key word is the understand.

91. Tou the easy key word is understand.

89. To the key word is understand.

In a class on tourism, as the teacher prepared his students for a field trip he said, “The hotel has a dress code.” Here are what 7 students wrote:

1. The hotel have dress paud
2. The hotel
3. The hotel has a dress cort
4. . . .
5. The Hotel has dress court.
6. The Hotel has. . .
7. the hotel is gre cool.

What we say and what others hear are totally different events.

Recording and having students transcribe or asking students to write each sentence or question you say is another option. If we walk around the classroom we can see what students heard and what they did not hear. If we only have them write what we say of course they we cannot know how much they catch from their fellow students though.

One reason I transcribed the interactions and my reflections of the 29 video clips because some found it very difficult to follow the audio alone. Now, everyone has the option of reading what was said on the videos alone, listening alone or listening and following along looking now and then at the transcriptions. If viewers and readers print out the transcriptions of course they can add comments to embellish *My reflections* and my *PS Remarks after the fact*.

Another reason is that in Video 16 Transcribing, I urge teachers to introduce transcriptions. The activities in Video 16, illustrate some of the suggestions I make in Chapter 2 *Mastering*

speaking, listening, writing and reading by starting to listen to materials in ways a bit different from the usual ways.