

Transcript of Video 7 Incomplete or Complete Information

John's Narrative (0:00 to 2:23)

The week before this video clip, I had introduced the students to an introduction of me, which looks like this:

(0:15) John's Introduction—Incomplete Information version

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_ l_ s_ b_ t_ m_ t_ n_ e_ o_ a_ j_ z
m_ l.

We had practiced both with the version with some sketches in it and a lot of blanks and also this one with the complete information and two other versions.

John's Introduction--Complete Information

Hello! As you know, my name is John. I was born in Chicago, Illinois, the home of the Chicago Bulls basketball team and the name of a jazz musical.

John's Introduction--Incomplete Information

He ___! As y_u k__w, m_ n__e
_s J___. I _as b__n in C____o,
l____s, t__ h____ o_ t__
_hic__o B____s b__k____l te_m
and t__ n____ of a j__z m____l.

John's Introduction--Saving Paper and Ink

haykmnijiwbicit
hotcbbtatnoajm

Each of the students had then experienced this introduction around half a dozen times. First, they worked out the fill in the **(1:06)** blanks together. Then one would read it aloud and the others would write it and then they would go to the complete version. One of them would read it aloud. The person reading it aloud would write it and then would go to the cloze test and then they went to the passage where I just had the first letter of each word and then they wrote the complete version.

In other classes, I also had them introduce themselves following the pattern: “So, as you know, my name is Tomoki, I’m from blah, blah, blah. As you know, my name is Eishin, I’m from Bangkok, blah, blah, blah.”

But the point is not just to learn anything about me but for them to learn the way to introduce themselves and some patterns.
(2:03)

Now, I'd like you to look at Tomoki as he renders the introduction. And try to note a couple of changes he makes from the original text.

Interactions (2:24 to 3:08)

Tomoki: Hello. As we know.

John: (Points to Tomoki to indicate he should be looking at his fellow students.)

Tomoki: As we know . . . his name is John. Ah, he was born in Chicago, Illinois, ah, the Chicago, the famous basketball team?



John: (whispers) the home

Tomoki: Ah, Chicago is the home of the basketball,

John: (mouths) famous

Tomoki: famous **(3:00)** bulls basketball team.



John's Reflections (3:09 to 7:50)

So, you probably noticed that he didn't say, "As you know my name is John." He said, "As we know, his name is John. He was born in Chicago, Illinois."

But in spite of the fact that he and the others had experienced this more than half a dozen times, and used it in their own experience, he still had difficulty with "the home of." It's an unusual pattern. It's infrequent.

But anyway, I gave him some silent feedback by mouthing and then he remembered and then he said "the home of".

I suppose you also noticed that when he said *bulls*, he put his two hands up as if he had horns on his head. I had never done that in class. We had never drawn bulls in class with horns on (4:00) them. And, of course, I didn't demonstrate the gesture of playing basketball by putting my hand up and down either.

So, to me, this shows more than any so-called comprehension test. And I think that this kind of, kind of, kind of evidence is much more powerful than a score on a TOEFL exam or a TOEIC exam which of course they wouldn't in any way be able to capture this kind of thing.

So if you video tape a few of your students on different days you will see them doing things that will surprise you and show you the level to which they understand or don't understand something.

(4:52) To me, one of the purposes of a teacher is to modulate or adjust the amount of information we give a student. If we give total information, like the complete reading passage, the complete introduction, with all the letters in it, there's nothing for the people to think about. They can read it; maybe they can memorize it.

But if you give some sketches and some blanks, they have to make predictions. They have to look at the first sentence and the third sentence and see, oh, is it this? You'll see them pointing all over the place and then filling in and producing from the partial information.

So, if you don't give enough information, they'll be bewildered. But I think that if you give too much information, it decreases the chances for people to learn.

Incomplete information is not only novel, but it requires as I said, prediction. And to me, learning is prediction.

I've shown this introduction to literally hundreds of students in different countries and teachers as well and then I of course I show them the normal text. And I ask them which is more difficult which is a stupid question because it's obvious that this one is more difficult than the other one.

(6:28) But then I ask them which do you prefer? And 90% of the people prefer this one.

John's Introduction—Incomplete Information Version

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A_ y_ k_ , m_ n_ J_ . I_ b_

i_ C_ , I_ s, t_ h_ e_ o_ t_ C_



B_ l_ s_ b_ t_ m_ t_ n_ e_ o_ a_ j_ z

m_ l.

I say, "Why do you prefer this one?" if it's more difficult. They said, "Well, it's more difficult to understand but it's more difficult to forget. The complete text is very easy to understand and very, very easy to forget."

Another way to look at video clips is with the sound off. And I've done this many times with this particular clip. And this picture from the clip shows me using my hand to tell the student to pause.



And I wanted him to pause because I wanted him to look at my mouth because I was mouthing, “the home of, the home of.” I didn't say it; I mouthed it because if you mouth it requires more thinking, more prediction to figure out what I'm doing.

So in Chapter 9.2, I talk about ways to classify the means of communication—gestures, tone of voice, mouthing, tapping. So, another way to look at video clips as I said is with the sound off and then you can see a lot of mediums we use that have nothing to do with speaking which is very critical in helping us understand.

PS John's Remarks after the fact

Many teachers say that if they were to show their students a passage similar to John's Introduction with sketches and

blanks, they would be confused. There is no question that they are right!

But to me, confusion is the beginning of learning. If we do not have a problem we cannot learn. And as I pointed out, when I ask students which version they think they learn more from it is the one with incomplete information.

Plato said that teaching is reminding people of what they already know. When we provide incomplete information we are telling they students that they can discover meanings by using what they already know.

Examinations around the world are designed to show students what they do not know. They are designed to eliminate people not to grow people. In the US for decades, standardized tests have been used to show proof that blacks and other minorities are inferior.

But when whites were asked to understand Black English by William Labov, a sociolinguist at Columbia University, few could.

Mysteries are one of the most popular kinds of literature, movies and television. You can see re-runs of Columbo and Agatha Christie mysteries 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in most parts of the world on You Tube and other sources on the internet.

While there are many reasons for the popularity of mysteries one is that we can observe clues, which are the same as incomplete information, and then try to put them together to discover who is the guilty person.

Young people these days play games on their smart phones. Most games require us to eliminate what is not important from what is important. We match our wits with the

people who created the games who provide clues but not answers.

People who play poker or bridge know what cards they have and in the case of bridge can find out what cards their partner has. They then have to predict, using incomplete information, what to bid.

So in many areas of our life we relish predicting based on incomplete information.

Consider other areas of your life in which you enjoy and feel challenged by incomplete information and then re-consider the fear that your students might be confused by incomplete information.

Enjoy, enjoy.

John