

Clarity Tags (aka "info-bytes")

From the English 1 workbook

Sometimes the reader will get confused because a little piece of information is missing. We have to tell the reader exactly what we want to say. Provide cohesion bytes (reminding pieces of information) generously.

Now he is responsible for the camera. Just as he did in college, he will probably try to carry out his work successfully.

Or:

Now he is responsible for the camera. Now, too, he will probably try to carry out his work successfully, just as he did in college.

An example of missing clarity tags

The missing pieces of information are provided in *italics*:

David will show up for the appointment with Professor Daniels in consideration of his responsibility and his goal. First of all, *when he was in college*, he had full responsibility for everything. Because he had to produce shows all by himself when he was chief of the camera crew. *Later, when he started working at WNYN-TV*, David did the whole thing *for the special on hospitals* that he and Marsha were supposed to do on Tuesday because he mistook his position and a sense of responsibility as an assistant to the reporter, *which is different from the more responsible position he had in college*. David will keep a promise with Professor Daniels as long as he realizes his role at WNYN-TV *as assistant to the reporter*. Though he hasn't had a paid job, he has kept on working for the college as a volunteer for his *long-range goal of working in television*. Like this [Change: *Because he has this long-range goal*], it's possible for David to reluctantly keep his words with Professor Daniels to recover Marsha's mistrust *from the hospital incident* because he won't be able to be moved up by Marsha's disagreement for promotion *if he doesn't keep the appointment for the interview with Professor Daniels*. In addition to these reasons, David knows the exact time and place for the promise, *and will therefore be able to show up on time, at the right place*. So David will show up for the interview with Professor Daniels.

From the English 4 workbook

"Clarity tags" (or "Info bytes") have two functions. One function is to provide information so that the reader doesn't have to stop and wonder exactly what you (the writer) are referring to. Another function is to remind the reader of the point you're trying to make. A good writer actively shows the reader the relationship that supporting details have to the point that they are supporting.

As we have a world lingua franca, probably we will need one, because the world is becoming one global community. The reason why we need a lingua franca is that there is worldwide lots of economic, political, cultural, exchanges – interdependence – among countries. A country can not survive by itself. And this trend will probably continue because the developing scientific technology is making one global society. The developing industry of information and communication will help every country come into contact with each other more easily. Also, the developing transportation will enable people to come and go to other countries more easily. Hence, if we see the future according to this expectation, we will still have the necessity of the world's lingua franca. Like this, probably we'll still have a lingua franca in the 21st century – in one global community.

Note the clarity tags (underlined) that we have added to make it easier to understand this paragraph.

As we have a world lingua franca in the twentieth century, probably we will need the one in the twenty-first century, because the world is becoming one global community. The reason why we need a lingua franca now is that there is worldwide lots of economic, political, cultural, exchanges – interdependence – among countries. A country can not survive by itself. And this trend will probably continue into the twenty-first century because the developing scientific technology is making one even closer global society. The developing industry of information

and communication and a common language will help every country come into contact with each other more easily. Also, the developing transportation will enable people to come and go to other countries more easily. Hence, if we see the future according to this expectation, we will still have the necessity of the world's lingua franca. Like this, probably we'll still have a lingua franca in the 21st century – in one global community.

The following passage (“Content Schema”) is taken from the chapter “Coherence in the English Compositions of Korean College Students,” which Mr. Holstein wrote for the book *Teaching English to Koreans* (Seoul: Hollym; 2003)

Content Schema

Content schema is background information that is essential for understanding a text (Martin, 1995; Carrell, 1982; Enkvist, 1987). Carrell states that if the reader does not have the schema required for understanding a text, “all the cohesive ties in the world won't help that text cohere for that reader” (p.485). That is, in order to be able to understand the writer's line of development of an idea, the reader must be able to follow a given idea to its completion. If the development of an idea is “interrupted” by a missing piece of essential information, the reader may have difficulty moving on to the next step in the development. Carrell gives this example and further explanation:

“The picnic was ruined. No one remembered to bring a corkscrew.” This mini-text coheres, I maintain, not because there is a necessary linguistic lexical cohesive tie between picnic and corkscrew but rather because we can access familiar schema for interpreting it in which picnics and corkscrews go together. For anyone who cannot access such a schema the text will fail to cohere. (p. 484)

If the reader does not have the schema of a picnic with wine in his mind, or if the reader does not know what a corkscrew is used for, he will have difficulty seeing the connection between a picnic and a corkscrew and will, therefore, not be able to understand why the picnic was ruined. In the following paragraph (English 1, second paragraph), coherence is weakened because lack of background schema for “Love-Ticket” prevents the reader (American college students were the assigned audience) from understanding why “Love-Ticket” makes it “easy to approach a play.”¹¹

Sample 6.

Arts and culture in Seoul is getting better thanks to effort of government. First of all . . . Second, there are getting easy to have a chance that is had experience of arts and culture in Seoul. For instance, government put a system of “Love-Ticket” in operation to popularize culture of play. In result it's easy to approach a play. . . .

More experienced student writers also often fail to appreciate the fact that different readers bring different schema to what they read. The following paragraph (English 4, paragraph 3) is the first supporting paragraph in an expository essay of a total of four paragraphs. The essay was written after the writer and her classmates read an article that included the concept of “descriptive pacing.” The audience for the essay was American college students; our student writers expected that the Americans would know what “descriptive pacing” (in sentence 3) is, and the writer did not define the term in sentences 4 or 5, with the likely result that the American reader would probably get stuck somewhere after sentence 3.

Sample 7.

1) A lot of Korean salespeople have a tendency to slight using “hypnotic pacing” but they are still successful. 2) According to DRS, the best salespeople first try to establish a mood of trust and rapport by means of “hypnotic pacing”: statements and gestures that play back a customer's observation, experience or behavior. 3) Based on my sales pitch observation, the Korean sales agents tend to neglect using “descriptive pacing” when they first meet their customers. 4) For instance, when the Korean salespeople first meet their customers, they usually jump immediately into their sales pitches with , “What brought you here?” or “Are you looking for something special?” 5) To be more specific . . .

Providing background information has to do with audience. According to Kim (2001), it is difficult for Korean student writers of English at all levels of training to consistently focus on the audience: “less skilled writers” have “little sensitivity to the audience of their writing” (p. 66). Neglecting

the audience probably has something to do with egocentricity, which in turn has to do with cognitive maturity, and the difficulty of paying consistent attention to audience is reduced as the student progresses from one level of writing training to the next. Odell (1983, pp. 98, 99), writing about native English speaking student writers, says that the range of audiences to whom a writer is able to direct a piece of writing expands as the writer grows from immature egocentricity to mature consciousness of the world around himself. As a student learns more about other ways of thinking, they recognize and consider the existence of more audiences, and therefore is better able to address a greater variety of audiences.

The writer of Sample 7 probably had it in her subconscious that her teacher was the actual reader, and did not consider the assigned audience. This raises the question of whether the writer is being truly egocentric in not supplying the necessary background information, or simply forgetting the assigned audience and writing for the real audience, her teacher, who knew what descriptive pacing was. The latter seems to be the case here, but in the "Love-Ticket" paragraph (Sample 6), the reader had no way of knowing whether the real reader knew about love tickets.