

# ITA Transcripts

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Title: Economics Recitation with a focus on questioning  
Focus: I admire many features of Seto's teaching style that I admire, but the one I think stands out most brilliantly is his use of questions.  
Contributed by: Elizabeth Axelson, University of Michigan  
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Context Seto, an Economics TA from Singapore, is teaching an honors section of Economics 201, an introductory level course at the University of Michigan. The class has about 25 students. The topic of this lesson is monopolistic competition. In previous sessions, the class has already covered perfect competition, monopoly and oligopoly. After opening announcements, they will construct a table on the board, comparing features of the four kinds of markets and developing a definition of monopolistic competition. They will then discuss some particular issues, such as cost curves, in relation to monopolistic competition. Before the lesson starts, Seto has put some material on the board--announcements set off in a vertical box on the far left, a discussion question in the top center, and headings listed horizontally below the question, like this:

In what ways does Monopolistic Competition different from and similar to Monopoly, Perfect Competition & Oligopoly?

M.C.                      P.C.                      Monopoly                      Oligopoly

Trainer Tips: To focus on questioning, I usually use the chunk from lines 31-99. This and other discussion ideas, on topics such as getting class started, changing topics, and constructing summaries, follow the transcript.

## Transcript

1 T: okay . good afternoon . just a few words about next week . remind you that there's a quiz . ah .  
2 after the quiz we'll do work on chapter 13 . on Wednesday chapter 14 and taking sides number  
3 three . on Friday taking sides number six . now all the stuff in chapters 13 and 14 . are very  
4 readable . u:h . a lot of history a lot of description of things . the . uh . Sherman Act and so on and  
5 so forth . that is . you can read for yourselves . so I will cover the essentials in chapters 13 and 14  
6 I'll go through it faster than a speeding bullet . okay ? now . taking sides number three six and I  
7 think number seven will be for one week . what I'd like you to do: is to go ahead and read that  
8 stuff next week so we can come and have a debate . okay ? we can have a debate . some of you  
9 will be taking one side the other will be . others will be taking another side . and um we'll try to  
0 mimic the uh presidential debate . hopefully . okay . about the quiz . bring pencils calculator rulers  
1 . 'kay ? um . know the stuff very well . know the stuff in chapter nine ten eleven . get them in your  
2 fingertips . okay . get them in your fingertips know where is the profit maximizing . output . price  
3 . how you determine profit . and both perfect competition and monopoly [2] okay . any question ?  
4 any question regarding . yes . you have a question . any question regarding last meeting's talk on  
5 oligopoly . all clear ? all right . look at the question up here . this is the question [2] look at this  
6 question . stare at it . think about it . and we will discuss it in a few moments . if you want to you  
7 can talk to . you can talk to your neighbors . I'll give you about one minute . just talk to your  
8 neighbor . uh how are you going to answer a question like this . you can talk to your neighbor if

9 you want to ? [pauses 30 secondswhile class discusses] **okay [2] opinion [6] opinion ?**  
0 **views . hypothesis ? anyone ?=**

1 S1: =there is similarity among all four . business will always . try to maximize profits and certain .  
2 things like increasing cost factors will always increase price no matter what kind of . opoly =

3 T: =okay . similarities among all . all industry and firms in industry try to maximize their profit . a:nd  
4 all of them have cost curves . and what will affect those cost curves . in the monopolistic  
5 competition the perfect competition will also affect . so okay that that is our basic assumption . let's  
6 draw some differences and similarities in terms of the market . so let's say the basic premise of all .  
7 I don't have to write for all . is to maximize profit [3, writes on board] and be affected by cost  
8 conditions . cost cost curves . **okay . these are our basic premises . draw some more**  
9 **comparisons [6] yes ?**

0 S2: perfect competition is . uh . they're price takers and monopolies are price makers ?  
1 T: **okay . let's . the idea is to compare this . all right ? monopolistic competition**  
2 **with the rest . so: first of all what do we say . of monopolistic competition ?**  
3 **price taker or price maker ? <S2: /yeah/> /it's a/ price=**

4 S2: =maker.  
5 T: price maker . right, price maker . perfect competition ? price .  
6 Ss: taker.  
7 T: taker . monopoly ? price maker . oligopoly ? <Ss: [some quiet discussion; one student says 'half  
8 and half']> okay eeh [makes wavy motion, side to side, with his hand] . you know the way you  
9 move your hand eeh . all right next . next thing [7]

0 S3: quantity output .  
1 T: what about it .  
2 S3: um monopolistic competition will control to keep the prices up .  
3 T: uh huh . monopolistic . that's monopoly you mean ?  
4 S3: yeah.  
5 T: okay correct . the output prices are different . this is . of course . the extreme end in which the  
6 output is very much less than this . and the price for this is much higher than this . okay ? I accept  
7 that . yes, Doug ?=

8 S4: =in monopolistic competition these I'm not sure if there's collusion uh .  
9 T: in oligopoly?  
0 S4: in oligopoly . not in monopolistic competition .  
1 T: nope . yes Darrell .  
2 S5: monopolistic competition is uh is easier to enter into the market . <T: mhm> than oligopoly or  
3 monopoly .  
4 T: okay . okay . thank you . free entry and exit . perfect competition ? <S?: /same/> /free/? same okay  
5 . ditto here . monopoly ? barriers to entry . oligopoly ? barriers . okay . all right good . we are  
6 making progress . what else [5] what else . yes ?

7 S6: the types of goods produced =  
8 T: =all right the types of goods ?  
9 S6: all are pretty much the same .  
0 T: all pretty .  
1 S6: in perfect competition .  
2 T: so what's the term for this ?  
3 Ss: homogeneous .  
4 T: homogeneous yeah [3] this ? are they all the same ?  
5 Ss: product differentiation .  
6 T: there is product differentiation . right . [writing on the board] product . differentiation . monopoly ?  
7 <Ss: mm>the opp . almost no comparison . there is only one product being or one good or one  
8 service being ment . u:h being discussed here . all right . what about oligopoly ?  
9 S?: some differentiation .  
0 T: some form of differentiation . but comparing this and this . which is even more .uh . between here  
1 and here . which is even more differentiated [3]  
2 S?: monopolistic competition =  
3 T: =monopolistic competition . all right ? there is some form . of product differentiation . okay .  
4 maybe one more point for all them ? [4] can you think of any ? [4] how about number of firms .  
5 what about this . few ? one ? many ? a lot ?

6 S?: number of firms you mean ?  
7 T: number of firms in the industry . who say few . [*raises own hand*] who say one . [*raises other*  
8 *hand*] who say many . right . it's many: . many: . perfect competition ?  
9 Ss: many =  
0 T: =many . monopoly ?  
1 Ss: one =  
2 T: = one . oligopoly ?  
3 Ss: few =  
4 T: =few . okay there you are . there you are . looking at the markets . there are four  
5 of them here . perfect competition . monopolistic competition . and monopolistic  
6 competition take on some of the characteristics of the ones we have studied before  
7 . price maker . price maker here . 'kay ? free entry and exit . free entry and exit  
8 here . product differentiation . not here not here . here . number of firms many  
9 firms here and here . okay . can anyone of you give me examples of monopolistic  
0 competition . is this an abstract idea or is it something real . yes .  
1 S6: maybe restaurants .  
2 T: restaurants . why do you think restaurants are monopolistic competition [4]  
3 S6: because they're basically selling the same product . maybe . just slightly different . a specific type  
4 of product . let's say you're going out for a burger . it's generally going to cost about the same  
5 price and generally contains the same ingredients . um . and that's about it .  
6 T: right . so it fulfills all of these . it can affect its own price . not necessarily the whole industry . ah  
7 anybody can open a restaurant and compete for the whatever stake there is . it's differentiated .  
8 Bob Evans is different from Bill Knapps and different from Lobster uh what . what is it . Red  
9 Lobster and etcetera etcetera . uh many firms . okay? so that's it . u:h . you've heard of Angello's  
0 Restaurant ? right ? <Ss: uhuh> every morning I pass by . not every morning . on Sunday  
1 mornings I pass by and I see long queues . it's packed . yeah . it's packed . but uh if you open  
2 another restaurant . will it still . what happens to Angello's Restaurant .  
3 S?: it'll still be packed .  
4 T: it'll still be packed . why is it packed .  
5 S?: they have really good pancakes [*laughter*]  
6 T: and no matter how much discount you can have in a product store next to Angello's . people will  
7 still go to Angello's because the pancakes are great or whatever . okay . so . there is some form of  
8 brand loyalty . every Sunday morning . if it's your habit to go to Angello's . then Angello's it  
9 should be . okay . let's . now . examine . the equilibrium under monopolistic competition [4]  
0 equilibrium . [*writing on the board*] under . monopolistic competition . let's talk about the firm first  
1 of all [2] the monopolistic competitive firm . okay . restaurants being an example . let me give you  
2 other examples . pizza is another example . shampoo . toothpaste . laundry detergent . hair cut  
3 service . all these are examples all right ? so let's talk about the firm . what do we expect the  
4 demand curve of a monopolistic firm to be like . what do we expect ?  
5 S?: negatively sloped ? [other Ss also talking simultaneously]  
6 T: sorry . a lot of competition going on here . sorry .  
7 S?: negatively sloped .  
8 T: negatively sloped . why .  
9 S?: because it's the same as the free market . well less than the [*several syllables*] =  
0 T: =okay . that's a good argument . first we expect the demand to be downward sloping not  
1 horizontal . not horizontal . let's examine why . let's say this is the going price . P zero . if . let's  
2 call this Angello's . since we are . double l or l-o . l-l-o ? down by the medical school . all right .  
3 if Angello charged . say for his pancake for example . a little bit lower . what . what happens .  
4 would the whole Ann Arbor go to Angello ? [*laughter*] /not necessary/ . not necessary . some  
5 will still prefer their Burger King . some will still prefer their McMuffin and so on and so forth .  
6 and some will still rather stay home . so we won't see the whole market . other people closing  
7 shop just because Angello lowered his price just by a little bit . okay ? what if Angello raised his  
8 price just a little bit . say here [2] will all Angello lovers flock run away from Angello on Sunday ?  
9 no . they still will stick around . maybe less now . okay ? so . that's the reason for downward  
0 sloping demand curve some sort of brand loyalty [2, *writing*] brand loyalty [4] yes ?  
1 S5: wouldn't it be downward sloping if there wasn't brand loyalty ? =

2 T: =yes . but all the more so . by changing his price . not everybody will disappear . not all his  
3 consumers will disappear .  
4 S: so it would be more . <T: yeah> uh .  
5 T: elastic . elastic . inelastic in a [3 syllables] . but here we will not describe the actual slope of the  
6 curve . but we know it's downward sloping . all right . the second thing about the firm is . uh .  
7 can a monopolistic firm affect the market price ? [2] can it affect the market price . say Angello in  
8 terms of pancakes . or: his breakfast . his big breakfast . yes ?  
9 S1: he can in terms of Angello's but not for pancakes in general =  
0 T: =okay . thank you . That is he cannot affect the over-all market price . but he can determine his  
1 own price . right ? a:nd . there is no collusion because there're so many of these firms . these small  
2 firms . so collusive behavior . strategizing . is out of the question . not like oligopoly [4] okay .  
3 short run equilibrium [9, writing] okay . we have already established the fact that it has a  
4 downward sloping demand curve . and what happen to the margin of revenue curve ? [3, students  
5 speaking, not intelligible] it is still . right there . it's there nevertheless . downward sloping . but  
6 any firm . monopolistic competitive firm has cost curves . so we have ATC ? we have AVC . and  
7 we have . margin of cost [4] looks familiar ? [2] what does this remind you of . [3] something we  
8 came across at the beginning of the week . looks like what .  
9 S?: monopoly ?  
0 T: looks like a monopoly . and what is the perfect maximization rule here ?  
*approximately 16 minutes*

### Some Possible Questions for Materials:

These questions can be used in small group discussion of segments of the transcript. Groups can discuss different aspects of Seto's performance and then share out their thoughts.

1. What words would you use to characterize Seto's style of presentation or interaction? Choose three adjectives to describe him:

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2. Give some examples of things he does that create the impression you described above.

a. 

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b. 

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c. 

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3. What features of his teaching do you like? What do you think he could improve?

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4. Look at the opening line of the transcript, in which Seto starts the class. How does he get the attention of the class? What is the first key word, or substantive word, of his talk, and how many words has he said before he gets to it? What do you think of this strategy? What are some other examples of things you could say to start a class?

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In lines 1-15, Seto makes announcements. Notice some of the language he uses:

line 6 faster than a speeding bullet

What does this phrase mean and why is it funny?

line 3 all the stuff in chapters 13 and 14  
line 7 go ahead and read that stuff next week  
line 11 know the stuff very well . know the stuff in chapter nine ten eleven  
What does *stuff* mean and what impression does it make on the listener?

line 12 get them in your fingertips  
What does this phrase mean? Could you rephrase it more colloquially?

5. In lines 15-21, Seto starts the topic of the day's lesson. What device does he use to get students involved in the topic? Do you think this strategy is successful? Why or why not? Is there anything you think he could do differently to improve the opening of this lesson? What are some other strategies he could use to create interest in the topic?
6. After the initial warm-up, Seto wants the students to compare the 4 market systems, identifying the dimensions along which they can be compared and their similarities and differences within those dimensions. It takes him three tries to get the activity to run the way he wants it to, first in lines 19-20, then in lines 28-29, and finally in lines 31-33, at which point students start to contribute in the way he wants them to. Compare the text in bold in these lines. What strategies does Seto use in these three tries to clarify what the task is? How does he modify his approach in response to the answers he gets from S1 and S2? Could he indicate more clearly what he wants? How could he express it?

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7. How does Seto respond to, manage, and use student responses and contributions? Consider the following examples in the transcript and then describe the strategies he uses.

lines 51-54  
lines 57-66  
lines 89-92  
lines 101-107  
lines 137-141

Some teachers use a 4-part model of responding to students' questions or comments; they acknowledge, repeat or rephrase, respond, and confirm. Does Seto follow this model? Give some examples of what he says for each of the 4 steps. If he doesn't do one of the steps, write what you think he could say to accomplish it.

Acknowledgement: \_\_\_\_\_

Repetition/Rephrasing: \_\_\_\_\_

Responding: \_\_\_\_\_

Confirming: \_\_\_\_\_

8. Look at the passage in bold type, lines 84-90. In this passage Seto provides a summary of what the class has generated so far. He then moves on to elicit and discuss an example. What are some of the features of his summary and introduction of new topic? Is there anything you think he could have done differently?
9. When Seto asks for an example of monopolistic competition, S6 suggests restaurants (lines 89-91). Seto uses this example to review the characteristics of monopolistic competition (lines 96-99). At line 99, he then shifts to discuss a particular well-known campus restaurant in Ann Arbor, Angello's (lines 99-109). How do students respond to this specific local example? What does the

use of this example add to his lecture? You may also consider lines 123-130 and 137-141, in which he makes further use of Angello's.

Think about the topic of your last practice teaching in this class. Did you use an example? If so, was it a general example, like restaurants, or a specific one, like Angello's? In the spaces below, either write down the examples you used, or ones you could have used to enrich the discussion of your topic. If you have trouble thinking of examples, talk it over with your neighbor.

Topic: \_\_\_\_\_  
General Example: \_\_\_\_\_  
Specific Example: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Look through lines 99-114, in which Seto introduces and talks about Angello's. Focus on his use of pronouns. When does he use *I*, when *you*, and when *we* or *let's*? What is the effect on the listener of using each of these pronouns?

I: \_\_\_\_\_

You: \_\_\_\_\_

We: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Here are some examples of points at which Seto shifts to a new topic.

Line 15: all clear ? all right . look at the question up here . this is the question [2] look at this question . stare at it . think about it . and we will discuss it in a few moments .

Line 55: okay . all right good . we are making progress . what else [5] what else . yes ?

Line 109: okay . let's . now . examine . the equilibrium under monopolistic competition [4] equilibrium . [writing on the board] under . monopolistic competition . let's talk about the firm first of all [2] the monopolistic competitive firm . okay .

Line 136: all right . the second thing about the firm is . uh . can a monopolistic firm affect the market price ? [2] can it affect the market price . say Angello in terms of pancakes . or: his breakfast . his big breakfast . yes ?

Does Seto follow a kind of pattern in making these transitions? If so, what is it? That is, what steps or moves are characteristic of his transitions to new topics? Is this a good model to follow or would you do it differently?

The moves: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What you think and/or would do differently:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

12. Other things that can come up in discussion:

the hand gesture and noise *eeeh* in lines 38-39

the shift from *I see long queues* to *it's packed* in line 101

Both of these examples, along with some others already mentioned, show Seto as engaged in, interested in, enjoying learning colloquial American English.

Instances of getting students over some hesitation to answer--he does this very engagingly, getting them to vote on the issue, in lines 74-84, when their interest in the task appears to be flagging. He does it by rephrasing, waiting, hinting about last week's topic, in lines 147-148.

### **Materials Using This Transcript, Winter 2000**

I used this tape this term to introduce some techniques of interactive teaching in my course for prospective ITAs. I gave a brief introduction and then broke them into 4 groups as described below:

Each of you will be assigned to one of the groups below. As you view the tape, focus on the topic assigned to your group. You will have time to discuss it, including both what you like about it and what you think could be improved, and then you will get to share your observations with the rest of the class.

**Group 1**    **Teacher - Student relationship:**            As you view the tape, focus on the relationship between the TA and his or her students. Consider the following points:

- \* atmosphere (relaxed? uncomfortable?)
- \* humor
- \* expressiveness in teacher's voice (bored? enthusiastic?)
- \* relationship (hostile? indifferent? supportive?)
- \* level of content (appropriate to the students?)

**Group 2.** **Non-verbal Communication:**            As you watch the tape, pay attention to the TA's use of non-verbal communication. Consider the following points:

- \* eye contact (5 seconds each time? different people?)
- \* silence and wait time
- \* facial expression
- \* body posture
- \* body movement (pacing? rooted feet?)
- \* gestures (use of hands, arms, feet)
- \* visual aids (board, overheads, etc.)

**Group 3.** **Asking Questions:**            As you watch the tape, pay attention to the TA's questions. Focus on the following:

- \* the purpose of the questions he asks--information seeking, probing, clarifying, checking
- \* the forms of the questions--yes/no, right-wrong, open-ended, fill in the blanks

- \* ways he encourages students to respond

**Group 4. Responding to Student Input:** As you watch the tape, focus on the way the TA responds to comments and answers from the students. Consider the following points:

- \* how he addresses the students
- \* how he receives their answers--what he says after they have spoken
- \* how he handles answers that aren't exactly right
- \* how he follows up on answers

I showed the segment of the tape from line 31 to line 109 and gave them the transcript for that section, so they could scrutinize it during their group discussions. The groups discussed their topics for 8-10 minutes, during which time I helped them observe specific features of the transcript related to their questions. They then reported out to the group as a whole, with input from the rest of the class. We followed up by considering some of the questions listed above in the section called Some Possible Questions for Materials. The ones I included in their class handout were a version of question 6, focusing only on the 3 lines of text they had seen on the video:

1. Look at the text highlighted in lines 1-3. What strategies does Seto use here to clarify what the task is and to get students to do what he wants?

I also included question 8, about the summary and transition to discussing an example, and the question on shifting to new topics, number 11. I didn't include the questions on asking questions and responding to student input, because those were the focus of the group activity and had already been thoroughly investigated. I finished up with the following questions on expressions used in the class and noises and hand gestures. As you will see, the line numbers do not correspond in these questions to those in the transcript given above, because they were renumbered for the shorter excerpt used in the handout. However, I think you will be able to find the items without much trouble.

### Expressions

4. In lines 10-11, when the student says, "quantity output", Seto responds, "What about it?" What does what about it mean?
5. In line 24-25, he says, "same okay . ditto here". what does ditto here mean?
6. In line 54, he says, "okay there you are . there you are ". What does there you are mean?
7. In line 71, Seto rephrases his idea this way: "I see long queues . it's packed . yeah . it's packed". What is the effect of this shift to it's packed ?
8. Seto uses his voice dramatically on two occasions in this talk. In lines 8-9, he makes the sound eeh, along with a wavy side-to-side motion of his hand. What does this mean? In lines 59-60, he raises his voice pitch high on the words abstract idea and contrastingly low on the word real . what

is the effect of this pitch change? Overall, what do these vocal gestures contribute to the interaction?

No doubt there is more to be mined here, and I'm very interested in any experiences you may have in using this transcript. I hope you will try it out and communicate with me about what happens, sharing any further ideas you develop for the use of the transcript.

Elizabeth Axelson  
Lecturer, English Language Institute  
University of Michigan  
Ann Arbor MI 48109-1057  
(734) 647-0477  
eaxelson@umich.edu