

BASIC NOTE-TAKING METHODS

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Abstract: Consecutive interpreting is one of the two working modes used in conference interpreting. Unlike simultaneous interpreting where, as the name itself says, the interpretation simultaneously follows the speech that is being given; consecutive interpretation follows after a certain segment of the speech was delivered, the interpreter listened to it and took notes from which he/she could later reconstruct the speech in the source language. Although there are various approaches to how notes should be taken, all scholars highlight the same thing: note-taking plays a key role in consecutive interpreting, being an indispensable aid to the interpreter.

Key Words: note-taking; consecutive interpreting; principles; methods.

Introduction. Considering the way in which consecutive interpretation takes place, it is clear that an interpreter could not possibly remember a speech lasting from 10 up to 60 minutes without writing down something that will revive his or her memory. According to Gilies, "notes taken in consecutive interpreting are a representation of the skeleton structure of the speech" [2005; 6]. „The aim of note-taking has often been described as the process of capturing some abstract, global-level conceptual sense on the notepad" [Albi-Mikasa 2008; 203].

Taylor- Bouladon [2011; 68] agrees: „the aim is to take notes which represent ideas, so that they may serve as memory-joggers." In order for notes to be functional, they must be personal, and also enable easy retrieval of the speech that has to be interpreted. For this reason, even though many books on note-taking have been written, the fact remains that interpreters have to develop their own note-taking systems to be able to use them efficiently.

Noting ideas and not words is one of the most important principles in the literature on note-taking. Rozan [1956;15], as one of the pioneers of note-taking indicates: «what is important is the translation of the idea and not the word. This is even truer of interpretation since the interpreter must produce a version of the text in another language immediately. He must be free of the often misleading constraints that words represent.»

There are various forms of taking notes, and which one you choose depends

on both your personal style and the instructor's approach to the material. Each can be used in a notebook, index cards, or in a digital form on your laptop. No specific type is good for all students and all situations, so we recommend that you develop your own style, but you should also be ready to modify it to fit the needs of a specific class or instructor. To be effective, all of these methods require you to listen actively and to think; merely jotting down words the instructor is saying will be of little use to you.

The Outline method. The outline method places most important ideas along the left margin, which are numbered with roman numerals. Supporting ideas to these main concepts are indented and are noted with capital letters. Under each of these ideas, further detail can be added, designated with an Arabic number, a lowercase letter, and so forth. The Outline method allows to organize notes in a structured form, helping to save a lot of time for further reviewing and editing. As the name suggests, this method requires you to structure your notes in form of an outline by using bullet points to represent different topics and their subtopics. Start writing main topics on the far left of the page and add related subtopic in bullet points below using indents.

The advantage of the outline method is that it allows you to prioritize the material. Key ideas are written to the left of the page, subordinate ideas are then indented, and details of the subordinate ideas can be indented further.

To further organize your ideas, you can use the typical outlining numbering scheme (starting with roman numerals for key ideas, moving to capital letters on the first subordinate level, Arabic numbers for the next level, and lowercase letters following.) In the early stages you should use your syllabus to determine what key ideas the instructor plans to present. Your reading assignments before class can also give you guidance in identifying the key ideas.

The Cornell Method. This is a very graphic method of note-taking that is especially good at capturing the relationships among ideas. Concept maps harness your visual sense to understand complex material "at a glance." They also give

you the flexibility to move from one idea to another and back easily (so they are helpful if your instructor moves freely through the material).

To develop a concept map, start by using your syllabus to rank the ideas you will listen to by level of detail (from high-level or abstract ideas to detailed facts). Select an overriding idea (high level or abstract) from the instructor's lecture and place it in a circle in the middle of the page. Then create branches off that circle to record the more detailed information, creating additional limbs as you need them. Arrange the branches with others that interrelate closely. When a new high-level idea is presented, create a new circle with its own branches. Link together circles or concepts that are related. Use arrows and symbols to capture the relationship between the ideas. For example, an arrow may be used to illustrate cause or effect, a double-pointed arrow to illustrate dependence, or a dotted arrow to illustrate impact or effect.

The Cornell method uses a two-column approach. The left column takes up no more than a third of the page and is often referred to as the "cue" or "recall" column. The right column (about two-thirds of the page) is used for taking notes using any of the methods described above or a combination of them. After class or completing the reading, review your notes and write the key ideas and concepts or questions in the left column.

The page is divided into three or four sections starting from one row at the top for title and date (optional) and one at the bottom along with two columns in the center. 30% of width should be kept in the left column while the remaining 70% for the right column. All notes go into the main note-taking column. The smaller column on the left side is for comments, questions or hints about the actual notes.

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Effective note taking is important because it

- supports your listening efforts,
- allows you to test your understanding of the material,
- helps you remember the material better when you write key ideas down,
- gives you a sense of what the instructor thinks is important,
- creates your "ultimate study guide."

Conclusion. You will have noticed that all methods end with the same step: reviewing your notes as soon as possible after class. Any review of your notes is helpful (reading them, copying them into your computer, or even recasting them using another note-taking method). Make your review of notes a thoughtful activity, not a mindless process. When you review your notes, think about questions you still have and determine how you will get the answers. (From the next class? Studying with a friend? Looking up material in your text or on the net?) Examine how the material applies to the course; make connections with notes from other class sessions, with material in your text, and with concepts covered in class discussions. Finally, it's fun to think about how the material in your notes applies to real life. Consider this both at the very strategic level (as in "What does this material mean to me in relation to what I want to do with my

life?") as well as at a very mundane level (as in "Is there anything cool here I can work into a conversation with my friends?").

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