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TRN 301 INTRODUCTION TO CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING



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- ✓ HISTORY OF INTERPRETING (ESPECIALLY 20TH CENTURY)
- ✓ TYPES OF INTERPRETING
- ✓ TRANSLATION COMPETENCE(S)
- ✓ SHORT-TERM MEMORY USE IN CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING
- ✓ IMPORTANCE OF NOTE-TAKING

Question:

During the history of interpreting, the role of interpreters has changed from being “mere language mediators” to “intercultural communicators.” Considering this shift, discuss how translation competence today goes beyond language proficiency. In your answer, refer to at least two competences that support this transformation.

The evolution of interpreting from simple language transfer to intercultural mediation has significantly broadened the notion of interpreting competence. In the early stages of interpreting history, interpreters were often perceived (**seen**) as neutral “language conduits (**users**).” However, as international organizations, diplomatic relations, and multicultural encounters expanded throughout the twentieth century, interpreters began to take on more complex roles that demanded not only linguistic precision but also intercultural awareness and strategic decision-making.

Interpreting competence today can be described as a dynamic integration of several sub-competences. Among these, strategic competence and cultural competence are particularly essential (**important**). Strategic competence allows interpreters to manage real-time challenges; such as gaps in memory, ambiguities (**problems**) in the source text, or cultural references that lack direct equivalents. A skilled interpreter must know when to paraphrase, when to omit redundant information, and how to maintain coherence without distorting (**damaging**) meaning. Without this intercultural sensitivity, linguistic accuracy alone would fail to deliver communicative success. Therefore, interpreting competence transcends (**goes beyond, overcomes**) the boundaries of language mastery.

Inger Andersen (2021) - United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

Humanity is an astonishing species. We have made incredible and rapid advances in health, energy, transport, and communication. We have connected the world in ways that previous generations could not even imagine. But in our haste to make life easier, we ignored the long-term consequences of our actions. Our high-carbon, resource-intensive economies have polluted the air, warmed the planet, and placed unbearable pressure on nature. We are now paying the price through droughts, floods, and fires that threaten lives and livelihoods. Yet, it is not too late to change course. We can still choose to be on the right side of history. By investing in renewable energy, protecting ecosystems, and transforming the way we produce and consume, we can build a future that is fairer, cleaner, and more sustainable for every living being on Earth.

Warm-up Texts

- **The government of this country, after years of economic struggle and countless discussions with international partners, has launched a new program to support small businesses and create new jobs across rural areas.**
- **The President, during a ceremony attended by world leaders and representatives of major organizations, announced a new climate initiative aimed at reducing carbon emissions by 40 percent within the next decade.**

Warm-up Texts

- **The Ministry of Education, following extensive consultations with teachers and experts across the country, introduced a digital learning platform to improve access to quality education in rural regions.**
- **The European Union, after months of negotiation and collaboration among its member states, adopted a resolution that promotes sustainable energy and environmental responsibility.**
- **The Prime Minister, speaking at the annual economic forum in Geneva, outlined a national plan to attract foreign investment and strengthen the country's industrial base.**

THE BEGINNING OF NOTES

SEPARATE THE DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE MESSAGE (WHICH OFTEN CORRESPOND TO SENTENCES), USING HORIZONTAL LINES.

LET'S DRAW

- ✓ On one page of your notepad you will have room for two, perhaps three, sections of notes, in which you note the Subject, Verb and Object **diagonally** across the page.
- ✓ Don't try to squeeze **more than this** onto a page, your notes will only become **more difficult to read back.**
- ✓ For this, start by using the boxes then for **further practice get yourself a 10 x 15 cm spiral bound reporter's notepad.**
- ✓ Whether you draw the horizontal line across the whole page, or only part of the page is simply a matter of **personal preference.** Some interpreters do, some don't. You will choose for yourself.

Why note diagonally across the page?

In addition to reflecting our division between ideas, notes taken across the page like this have a number of advantages:

- **EASIER TO READ BACK:** Because there is less writing on a page, so the ideas stand out on the page.
- **VISIBLE STRUCTURE:** The structure of the speech is visible at a glance. Something quite impossible if we note horizontally as we write normally.
- **EYES MOVE FROM LEFT TO RIGHT** in a natural movement, a little like a typewriter, always coming back to the left at the end of each idea.

- **THE BEGINNING OF EACH IDEA**, which is also often the most important part of it, is noted furthest to the left on the page, so we see it first (This pattern will be looked at in more detail).
- **NO SYNTACTIC INTERFERENCE**: Something that horizontal notes encourage. That means using the wrong word order in the target language because you noted something in the source language word order.
- **SPACE FOR ADDITIONS**: Some of the detail you might need to add.

This is a speech given by Chris Patten, then European Commissioner for External Relations, to the plenary session of the European Parliament on July 3rd 2000. He is reporting on the European Council of Ministers summit in Feira, Portugal, a few days earlier. In this extract he is speaking about relations with Russia:

In the areas for which I have some responsibility, there were also, as the Prime Minister has mentioned, some important developments at Feira. We took stock of the European Union's relations with Russia and the situation there, including in Chechnya, in the light of the recent EU-Russia Summit, which I think was regarded as fairly successful. It is too early to judge President Putin's economic programme; however, our basic message is that a sound programme will be vital to boost investor confidence. On Chechnya, there have, it is true, been some recent moderately positive developments in response to international and European Union pressure: for example the recent ECHO* mission was able to take place and western humanitarian agencies have greater access to the area.

*** The Humanitarian Aid Office of the European Union**

In the areas for which I have some responsibility, **there (S) were (V)** also, as the Prime Minister has mentioned, some important **developments (O)** at Feira.

We (S) took stock of (V) the European Union's **relations (O)** with Russia and **the situation (O)** there, including in Chechnya, in the light of the recent EU-Russia Summit, which I think was regarded as fairly successful.

It (S) is (V) too early (O) to judge President Putin's economic programme;

however, our basic **message (S) is (V)** that **a sound programme (O)** will be vital to boost investor confidence.

On Chechnya, **there (S) have, it is true, been (V)** some recent moderately positive **developments (O)** in response to international and European Union pressure:

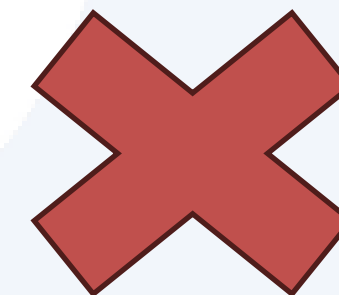
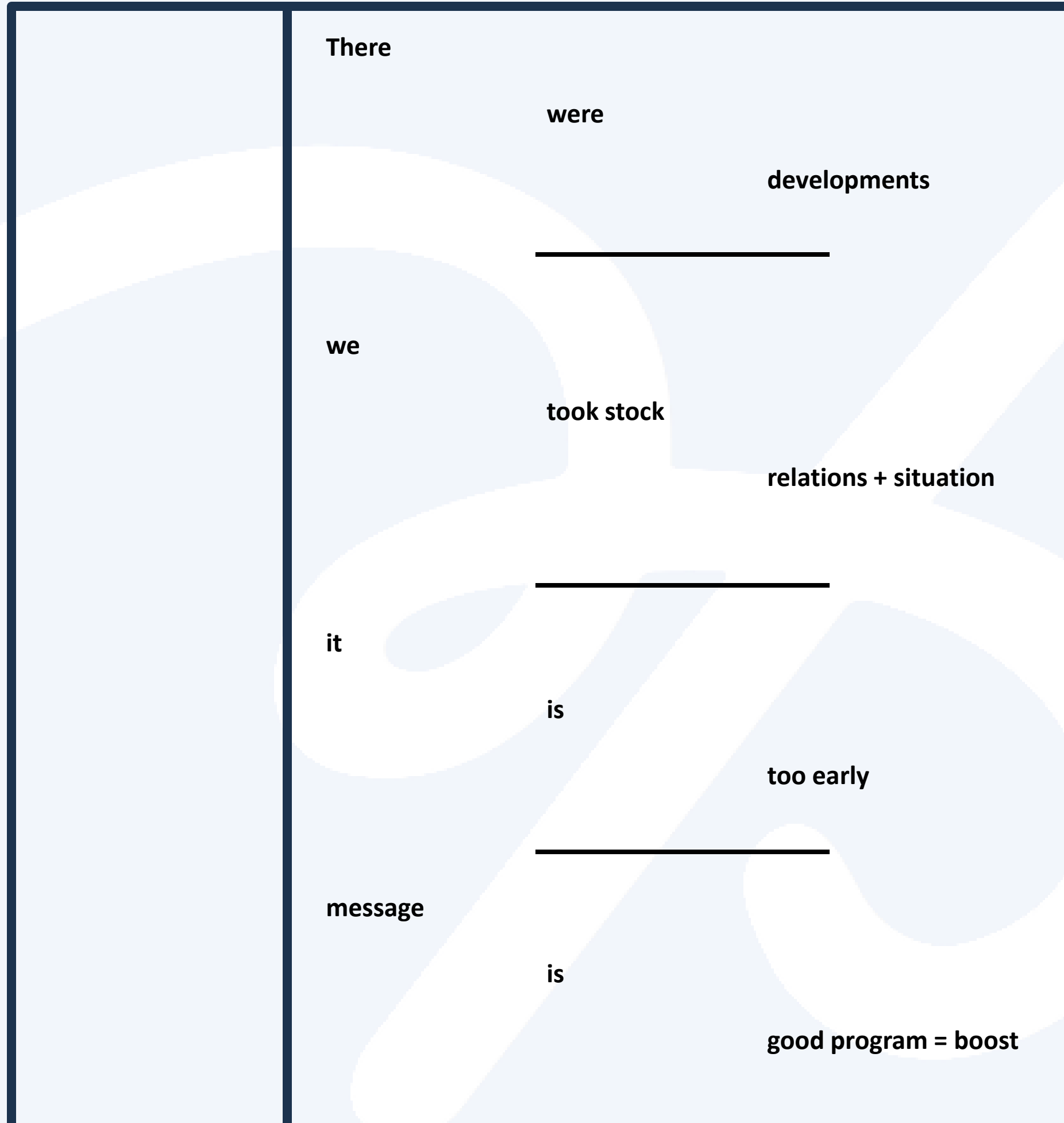
for example the recent **ECHO (S) mission was able to take (V) place (O)**

and western humanitarian **agencies (S) have (V) greater Access (O)** to the area.

It is going to be crucial here, and during the rest of your interpreting career, to be able to fish the core ideas out of a more detailed source speech. Here because we are only just getting started we cannot be expected to get everything right, but what we want to commit to the notepad is the basic skeleton of the speech, the Subject Verb Object arrangement for each of the ideas expressed.

**THE TEMPTATION WILL ALWAYS ARISE TO TRY AND NOTE EVERYTHING
DOWN. RESIST IT!**

Later we will not be able, nor will we want, to note all of what we hear, but we will be able to recall much of the detail from a speech thanks to the structured notes we have taken. That structure comes from first having heard and established what is the most basic message of a source text.



The detail that you have not noted may come back to you when you look at the basic structure you have noted. But if it doesn't, don't worry. **At this stage we are not trying to get everything right, we just want the main ideas.**

For example, at this stage it would be **a mistake** to note the *economic programme* and not the *too early* because **it is too early which makes the point**, without it the rest is **meaningless**. If you ask yourself, *too early for what?*, you will probably be able to remember the detail, that it is too early to judge the *economic programme*.

Note *economic programme* and you are less likely to make any association.

The conflict nevertheless continues and we still have considerable concerns. In particular, we want to see much greater access for humanitarian aid agencies. We want to see genuinely independent investigation into reports of human rights abuses, and we want to see a real dialogue between the Russian government and the Chechens.

Conflict

continues

We

concerned

We

want

more Access for agencies

You can see how incomplete these notes are compared to the full text but look at them again. Is there any doubt in your mind about the missing information? Try to answer the following questions using only these notes and see if the structure has helped you remember the information that we did not note above.

We took stock of relations with whom, and the situation, where?

Too early to judge what?

A “sound programme” for what?

Developments in Chechnya as a result of what?

What type of agencies have more access?

Independent investigations into what?

Dialogue between who and who?

You don't have to have answered all these questions correctly to demonstrate that already at this early stage your memory is really quite good when it is given the **RIGHT PROMPTS**.

Those prompts are to be found in **CONSISTENT AND STRUCTURED NOTES**.

Not noting the word

In the same way as you have begun to break down the speech into its basic units, now is the time to start thinking about the words used to represent each Subject, Verb and Object in the original. You are not obliged to use the same words in your notes as the speaker uses in their version. In fact it will be very useful if you can note **something shorter but synonymous**. Shorter to save time; synonymous, to avoid being trapped into using a word similar to the word the speaker has used, when it may not be appropriate, or worse it may be just plain wrong, in target language.

“Take any French text and give it to 10 excellent English translators. The result will be ten very well translated texts, but ten very different texts in as far as the actual words used are concerned. The fact that we have ten good translations, but ten different texts, shows that what is important is the translation of the **underlying meaning 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. It is through the analysis and notation of the underlying meaning that the interpreter will avoid mistakes and a laboured delivery.” (Rozan, 1956)

LINKS

We looked at identifying ideas and used the Subject Verb Object group as our basic unit. Identifying the ideas is a major step towards understanding and recreating a speech as an interpreter, but just as important as the ideas themselves are the relationships between them: **the links**. Links signal the way the speaker wants the listener to relate what is about to be said to what has been said before.

A speech is all about two things: the ideas and the links between them.

Why are links important? Let's look at some very straightforward examples.

1. The economy is struggling. The Central Bank has left interest rates unchanged.

In this example we have two ideas, represented by two SVO groups but we have no link between them. The ideas form a list of factual statements perhaps, but with no links between they are tell us very little. But what happens if there are links between the ideas?

2. The economy is struggling. However, the Central Bank has left interest rates unchanged.

We now have a very different message. See how much more these ideas say than Example 1. The links bring the ideas into relation with one another AND in doing so implicitly give us more information about the situation. In this example we are led to believe that the Central Bank had been expected to change interest rates (and basic economics suggests downwards) but that it has not done so.

But what if a different type of link had been used?

3.The economy is struggling. Consequently, the Central Bank has left interest rates unchanged.

In Example 3 the situation is the opposite. The Bank, we infer, would normally have raised its rate, for one reason or another, but because of the economic situation it did not (in order not to stifle growth, for example).

A speech without links is a meaningless list of ideas – and this, by the way, **is why we have not tried to reproduce speeches from our notes before now**. Here we will try to identify some links and the words and expressions that are used to represent them and also develop a technique for noting them that reflects their importance within a speech.

British Ambassador, Sir Peter Torry is speaking on 20th January 2004 at a function of the British Chamber of Commerce in Germany, at Duesseldorf Industrie Club. He had been in his post 6 months at the time and was speaking to an audience of around 300 business people, some of whom had the opportunity to put questions afterwards:

Britain and Germany are among those countries pushing most for an ambitious new WTO round. So, for both the UK and Germany, the failure of the trade talks in Cancun was a huge disappointment. A successful trade round would be a massive prize. If we could halve world tariffs, then that would add as much as \$400 billion annually to world incomes, of which at least 150 billion will flow to developing countries. That's more than 3 times what they currently get in aid. But to achieve this we need to reform the CAP.

WTO Round: World Trade Organization/Dünya Ticaret Örgütü (müzakere turu), Cancun: Meksika'da bir şehir, CAP: Common Agricultural Policy (Ortak Tarım Politikası)

S

1

Britain and Germany are among those countries pushing most for an ambitious new WTO round.

2

So, for both the UK and Germany, the failure of the trade talks in Cancun was a huge disappointment.

3

A successful trade round would be a massive prize.

V

4

If we could halve world tariffs,

5

[then] that would add as much as \$400 billion annually to world incomes, of which at least 150 billion will flow to developing countries.

O

6

That's more than 3 times what they currently get in aid.

7

But to achieve this we need to reform the CAP.

Idea 2 is a consequence of idea 1. The word that shows that link is **so**. Idea 5 a consequence conditional on Idea 4. Idea 7 is a counter argument to 4, 5 and 6. The speaker has left Idea 3 without any specific link to the other ideas, although clearly it is not out of place where it is. The speaker probably felt that the lack of link served to make the statement more emphatic.

Remember there is no one right way to do things, and this is not an exhaustive list of links or link words. Nor should you feel obliged to use the symbols proposed here. But they serve as examples.

Symbol	Examples of Link Words / Expressions	Function / Meaning
B	but, however, nonetheless, on the other hand, in spite of this, all the same	limitation or contradiction following an idea
THO	although, despite (the fact that), even though, while, whilst, notwithstanding	limitation or contradiction preceding both linked ideas
COS	because, the main reason for this, what is causing this, what's behind this	effect → cause
→	hence, this means that, the result of this is, the consequence of this is, so that, because of this, therefore, this is why, not surprisingly then	cause → effect
TO	(in order) to, in such a way as to, so that, with the aim of, the purpose being to	purpose

Symbol	Examples of Link Words / Expressions	Function / Meaning
IF... →	if ... then ... (or inversion of same), had I known, were this to happen, provided that, given a ... then b	condition and consequence
eg	for example, in particular, i.e., e.g., amongst other things, inter alia, like, not least the, and for announcing lists	examples of the preceding idea – often in the form of lists
+	also, in addition, and, not only, on top of that, there is, furthermore	addition
//	The paragraph mark: no link, end of section, end of idea	no link

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That's more than 3 times what they currently get in aid. But to achieve this we need to reform the CAP.

Why note the links on the left of the page?

☑ **VISIBILITY:** Things in the margin stand out. **Links are important so we want them to stand out.** This will help us later when we give back the speech. It is also an idea to note links slightly larger than your other notes for the same reason.

☑ **READABILITY:** The SVO groups together with the margin help the eyes to come back to the left hand side of page to start each new idea with its link to the previous one*. This makes fluent production easier.

* or right to left if you are noting in a language that reads in that direction.