

TRN 215 - LISTENING AND NOTE-TAKING TECHNIQUES



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WARM-UP TEXTS

The Internet, which started as a small research project in the late 1960s, now connects billions of devices around the world and allows people to share information, work, and communicate instantly.

The Eiffel Tower, which was designed by the French engineer Gustave Eiffel for the 1889 World's Fair in Paris and later became a symbol of France, attracts millions of visitors from all over the world every year.

In 1969, after years of preparation and several failed missions, NASA's Apollo 11 successfully landed two astronauts on the Moon, marking one of the greatest achievements in human history.

The printing press, invented by Johannes Gutenberg in the 15th century, changed the way knowledge was shared and made books available to people far beyond the reach of monasteries and scholars.

The human brain, which controls our thoughts, emotions, and actions, uses billions of neurons to send electrical signals across complex networks that allow us to think, feel, and move.

The Solar System, consisting of the Sun, eight planets, and countless moons and asteroids, moves together through the Milky Way galaxy at an incredible speed of about 800,000 kilometers per hour.

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.

There

were

developments

we

took stock

relations + situation

it

is

too early

message

is

good program = boost

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)