

NHỮNG VẤN ĐỀ SINH VIÊN NĂM THỨ BA CHUYÊN NGÀNH TIẾNG ANH - TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC CÔNG NGHIỆP HÀ NỘI THƯỜNG GẶP KHI GHI CHÉP TRONG DỊCH ĐUỔI

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Bài viết trình bày những khó khăn mà sinh viên năm thứ ba Khoa Ngoại ngữ - Trường Đại học Công nghiệp Hà Nội (ĐHCNHN) thường gặp trong quá trình ghi chép khi dịch đuổi. Kết quả của nghiên cứu cho thấy sinh viên phải đối mặt với rất nhiều khó khăn trong kỹ năng ghi chép trong thực hành dịch đuổi, đặc biệt là việc xác định từ khóa chính, khả năng nghe và liên kết ý để truyền tải thông tin sang ngôn ngữ đích. Nguyên nhân là do sinh viên không thực sự hiểu bản chất của kỹ năng ghi chép trong dịch đuổi, thường ghi chép quá nhiều và phụ thuộc chủ yếu vào bản ghi chép khi dịch thông tin sang ngôn ngữ đích. Qua đó, tác giả cũng đề xuất một số giải pháp để nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học kỹ năng ghi chép trong dịch đuổi tại Khoa Ngoại ngữ, Trường ĐHCNHN.

Từ khóa: kỹ năng ghi chép, dịch đuổi, vấn đề, giải pháp.

This research was conducted to identify note-taking problems in consecutive interpreting encountered by the third-year English majors at Faculty of Foreign Languages, Hanoi University of Industry (FFL, HaUI) and to provide some suggested solutions. The findings of the study indicated that the most common problems for students include defining keywords, listening skills and linking ideas to interpret information into target language. These problems resulted from students' insufficient understanding of the nature of note-taking in consecutive interpreting. They noted too much and mainly depended on notes while interpreting. Accordingly, the researchers proposed some ways to higher quality of teaching and learning note-taking skill in consecutive interpreting at FFL, HaUI.

Keywords: note-taking, consecutive interpreting, problems, solutions.

NOTE-TAKING PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED BY THIRD-YEAR ENGLISH MAJOR STUDENTS AT HAUI IN CONSECUTIVE INTERPRETING

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Rationale

Globalization has increased the

public's demand for more qualified translators and interpreters. Apart from basic requirements of linguistic competence, background knowledge, culture sensitivity, full awareness of working code of ethics in various social settings, there are quite a few skills that need to be acquired for qualified

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interpreting. One of them is note – taking skill. During the interpreting process, the interpreter has to adopt both note-taking and memory as an effective tool to convey the message fully, accurately and naturally. While memory is of crucial to interpreters, note-taking can be of certain support.

However, the fact is that student interpreters often take notes freely, which may cause failure in transferring the information. The researchers have identified that those problems are also confronted by the third-year English major students of HaUI. Therefore, with the aim of improving interpreting performance, the paper will discuss the third year English major students' common problems that often occur in learning English – Vietnamese consecutive interpreting and suggested solutions. The study is hoped to give the students a more thorough understanding about note taking skills and make them be better awareness of some common mistakes in note-taking in consecutive interpreting and learn to deal with the problems accordingly.

1.2. Literature review

Interpreting plays a key role in bridging the gap between two different languages and cultures, which is to help people to fully understand each other in communication. Like other terms, there are various definitions of interpreting; however, the researchers agree that “interpreting is rendering information and

ideas from one language into another language by means of speaking” (Bui & Dang, 1999: 36). Based on working mode, interpreting is classified into two main models: simultaneous and consecutive interpreting. In simultaneous interpreting, an interpreter has to interpret nearly at the same time with the speaker, so his task of interpreting is very demanding and challenging. Due to the high level of difficulty, simultaneous interpreting is briefly introduced for students' information rather than being part of the training course for the third-year students at FFL, HaUI. Unlike simultaneous interpreting, in consecutive interpreting, an interpreter starts interpreting as soon as the speaker stops after completing some utterances. It means that consecutive interpreters have time to take notes which serves as an effective tool of the interpreters. Some students may get familiar with note-taking in their lecture in class, but note-taking in consecutive interpreting is entirely different in terms of the way they make and use it. As for Nguyen (2005: 20) stated that note-taking is the process of storing information of speakers. Meanwhile, Fiona (2012: 6), “note-taking is a strategy for making information meaningful”. Under those two definitions, the researchers propose that note – taking in consecutive interpreting be the act of jotting down strategically what is said on the basis of memory and good comprehension so that interpreters can render information and ideas into the target language.

Regarding the role of note-taking in consecutive interpreting, Myers (1985: 28) stated that “the notes are useful to the interpreter as a supplement to his memory”. According to Jones (2002: 39), note taking is a part of the whole process of consecutive interpreting: understanding, analysis and re-expression, and if these activities “are not done correctly, the best notes in the world will not make a good interpreter”. Furthermore, note-taking was proved to be “a necessary helper” in consecutive interpreting (Zhang, 2012: 178). In sum, note-taking is really an essential skill for interpreters transfer the full and accurate message to the target listeners.

However, proper taking notes needs a lot of practice, and the gap between “theory of note-taking” and “actual notes” can be very large. Up to now, there are no certain principles of note-taking, so it can be said that note-taking is not an easy task for student interpreters. There are a lot of studies done to investigate note-taking skill in consecutive interpreting. For example, a case study titled “Challenges of note-taking in consecutive interpreting training at the university of Nairobi” conducted by Lusenaka (2011) found out that students had experienced challenges in note-taking which highly affects the quality of consecutive interpreting. She also indicated that from the observation of the note, it became clear that student interpreters need to learn the most effective ways of note-taking. Moreover, Yuliasri (2014) carried out an action

research under the title “Note-taking in interpreting class” and showed that for majority of the students, note-taking was helpful. In Vietnam, Nguyen, (2012) also investigated that the most frequent problems third-year English major students at Hai Phong Private University faced in note-taking are quick speed of speaker and time limit of taking note before interpreting into the target language. The researchers see that the third year English major students at HaUI also have the same troubles. They seem not to know what to note, how to note and when to note. Additionally, little research focusing on note-taking problems in English-Vietnamese consecutive interpreting has been conducted in Vietnam in general and at HaUI in particular as well. Hence, the investigation into this area should be taken into consideration.

1.3. Aim and objectives of the study

The study firstly aims to identify common problems in note-taking in consecutive interpreting encountered by the third-year English major students at HaUI, and then seek appropriate ways to solve these problems.

In order to achieve these objectives, the following research questions are raised:

Question 1: How do the third-year English major students at HaUI often take notes in consecutive interpreting?

Question 2: What problems do they encounter while taking notes in consecutive interpreting?

Question 3: What are possible solutions to help students improve their note-taking performance in consecutive interpreting?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

To address those questions, the quantitative method was used to analyze the data related survey questionnaires. The study also employed qualitative method to investigate participants' answers to the open-ended question in the questionnaire and the results of consecutive interpreting test along with students' notes observation. The participants of the study were 48 students chosen from two English classes of intake 8 and four lecturers of interpreting at HaUI, FFL. In general, there are three major phases of data collection procedure.

Phase 1: 48 students were asked to do interpreting test in the laboratory 305 and 306 – A2 building. The test included 2 parts in English and Vietnamese, respectively. Students were provided with recording audios and note papers. They listened to the 15-20 second recording once through headphones and then had 45 seconds to record their interpreting.

Phase 2: The researchers delivered the survey questionnaire to students. The questionnaire was designed with two main parts; the first part including 6 questions about the common performance of students' note-taking in consecutive interpreting, the second one related to their problems in note-taking.

Phase 3: All the students' recordings and note-taking paper were collected. The researchers analyzed data in groups of common performance and problems. Finally, an interview with four lecturers of interpreting at FFL, HaUI was conducted to have an understanding about the actual situation of interpreting practice teaching and learning in general as well as students' note-taking difficulties in consecutive interpreting in particular and causes of those problems; then to get lecturers' suggestions about what the students should adopt to improve their note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting. The interview questions were designed basing on the results from questionnaires for students, consecutive interpreting tests and observing students' notes.

The data collected from the survey were both counted and transferred into percentage, then they were shown in tables, bar chart or pie chart to easily compare.

3. RESULTS

The major results of the study are summarized as follows:

Question 1: How do the third-year English major students at HaUI often take notes in consecutive interpreting?

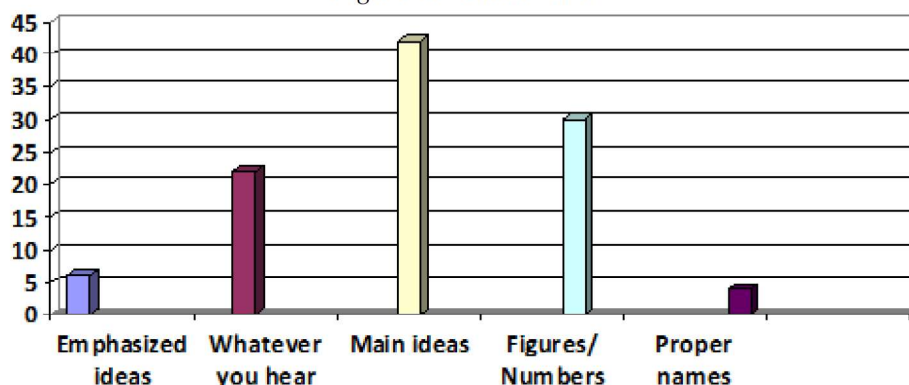
Even though most of students are aware of the purpose of note-taking in consecutive interpreting is to recall memory, being asked when to note, 92% of participants admitted that they often

took notes at the same time with the speaker's speech rather than taking notes after the speaker said. However, observing students doing interpreting test in two classes, the researchers saw that that 100% students tried to jot down their notes as soon as possible. This led to the fact that students noted everything they could hear, even they did not understand.

Regarding the question what to note, 42 out of 48 students had awareness of

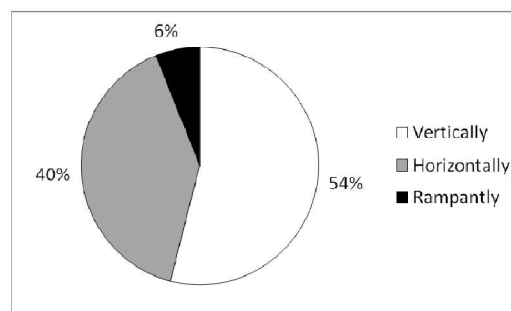
noting main ideas whereas 30 participants said that they took figures, numbers or statistics in their notes. Nearly a half of the students assumed that they were more likely to note whatever that could hear from the speaker (see Figure 1). Only 4 and 6 students chose proper names and emphasized ideas to note. On the contrary, by observing students' notes the researchers realized that most of them noted down words, not ideas.

Figure 1: What to note



In addition, being asked how students often took notes on the note paper, a significant proportion of the students folded the paper into two parts and then took notes vertically while the rest wrote horizontally and rampantly. This was clearly seen during their interpreting test phase (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: How to note



In sum, the third-year English major students have understanding about the purpose of note-taking, techniques of taking notes and how to take a good note. However, they failed to apply all into practice or real situation when words are taken rather than ideas. The reasons for

that might originate from the fact that students could not identify keywords or main ideas, and they just noted what they could hear.

Question 2: What problems do the third-year English major students face while taking notes in consecutive interpreting?

Table 1: Students' problems with note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting

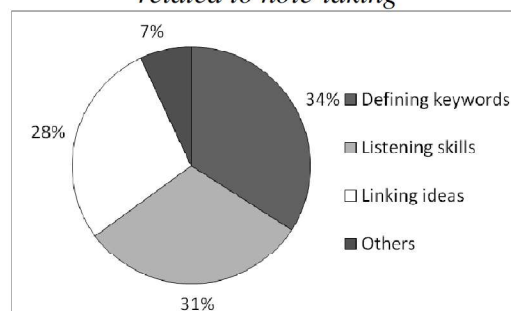
	Frequency (%)				
	Always	Usually	Often	Sometimes	Never
While taking notes in consecutive interpreting, you have problem with:					
A. Limited vocabulary	17	29	34	20	
B. Listening skill	19	49	22	10	
C. Speed of speaker	7	32	31	27	3
D. Handwriting speed	5	18	38	39	
E. Defining keywords	16	52	28	4	
F. Worrying about some missing information	26	18	30	24	2
G. Others	0	0	0	0	0
After taking notes, you have problem with:					
A. Re-reading your handwriting (abbreviation, symbols, etc.)	3	19	39	28	11
B. Linking ideas to make sense	20	38	25	17	

From table 1, it can be seen that problems with listening skill, defining keywords, and linking ideas to make sense accounted for a great number at the fourth level of frequency. The vast majority of participants found it difficult to handle with such these matters during taking notes in consecutive interpreting. More than 50% participants agreed that they had problems with defining keywords, while the figures for problems with listening skills and linking ideas to make sense were at 49% and 38%, respectively.

As a result, more than a third of students made interpreting mistakes in terms of the final product because of

listening and jotting down incorrect information. On the basis of notes observation compared with the final interpreting product from students' recording, interpreting mistakes caused by problems when taking notes were counted, calculated and presented in the following chart:

Figure 3: Interpreting mistakes related to note-taking



As seen that the data collected from survey questionnaire quite matched those from notes paper observation. Results from the observation showed that the causes of these problems are that students did not know what to note and how to take notes. They took down individual words rather than ideas. Moreover, their notes had no emphasis, so the main ideas of speech were not realized. Nearly a half of students took notes horizontally and rampantly, which made them difficult to re-read the notes and identify links between ideas.

In general, it can be concluded that the third-year English major students confronted numerous problems of note-taking in consecutive interpreting. Due to limited regular practice, they felt it tough to apply what they understand or they have learned in their final interpreting products.

Question 3: What are possible solutions to help students improve their note-taking performance in consecutive interpreting?

Table 2: What students should do to improve their note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting

What should students do to overcome note-taking performance in consecutive interpreting?	Total (%)
A. Practice as much as possible at home and in language laboratories	95.8
B. Practice listening skills, pay attention to listening and understanding main ideas rather than taking notes	91.2
C. Use a system of signs, symbols, abbreviations created by yourself or anyone else	83.3
D. Watch online videos of professional interpreters to see how they work with notes in real situations	66.7
E. Read books on interpreting theory and search online information related to learning and teaching note-taking skills	62.5
F. Work in pairs or groups	25

As shown in table 2, practice as much as possible at home and in language laboratories is the way most of the students do to enhance their note-taking skills (95.8%), followed by practicing listening skills, understanding main ideas rather than taking notes and using a system of signs, symbols, abbreviations created by themselves or anyone else with

91.2% and 83.3% respectively. However, only 25% chose working in pairs or groups to improve their note-taking skills. Once again, it is clear that students have awareness of the importance of note-taking skills and make great efforts to overcome their difficulties with consecutive interpreting.

Table 3: What lecturers do to help students improve note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting

What do you do to help your students improve their note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting?	Total
A. Teach students some basic note-taking symbols and abbreviations of terms that occur in most speeches as well as strategies in noting down numbers, links, tense and how to separate ideas	4
B. Give students examples and exercises to practice note-taking skills during the course of Interpreting and Translation Theory, and Interpreting Practice 1 and 2	4
C. Provide videos of professional interpreters to watch how they work with notes in real situations	4
D. Recommend students that note-taking should always be done on the basis of memory and good comprehension	4
E. Ask students to use various techniques like different kind of signs, symbols and abbreviations during taking notes	4
F. Encourage students to follow some basic guidelines such as having a proper layout, noting down keywords, idea reminders, and figures	4
G. Tell students to develop their own note taking system through practical experience and keep practicing	4
H. Recommend more reference sources	4

In the interview, all lecturers of interpreting claimed that the major causes of students' problems in note-taking include misunderstanding the purpose of note-taking in consecutive interpreting, lacking practice and poor listening skills. They also shared a lot of valuable ways in an attempt to improve the situation (see Table 3); and all of them agreed with the given suggestions during the interview. Thus, it is strongly recommended that interpreting teachers should adopt those methods in order to achieve the best quality in teaching and improve students' note-taking skill in consecutive interpreting.

4. PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

The results of the study partly illustrated that the problems with defining keywords and linking ideas to make sense when taking notes were the obstacles to their success in consecutive interpreting. These problems can be considerably improved through more regular practice. Thanks to great advice of experienced teachers of interpreting, the researchers may give some implications for the teachers and students of as follows:

For the teachers:

- The teachers should teach students note-taking skills systematically during the course of translation and interpreting theory and design more

exercises/ tasks/ activities for students to have opportunities to practice note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting.

- It is also necessary for the teachers to control time for the students' interpreting practice in the laboratories.
- The teachers ought to suggest useful websites with tons of videos about familiar topics such as culture, economy, education, environment, health, tourism and technology so that students can practice note taking skills and interpreting at home.
- It is essential that the teachers upload more exercises to train note-taking, memorizing skills and consecutive interpreting with time management on computer system in the laboratory in order that students can practice those tasks by themselves.

For the students:

- The students are hoped to train their short-term memory and language skills.
- The students are expected to be developed their own systems of symbols, signs, abbreviations and know how to apply them in reality.
- They should spend time as much as possible practicing consecutive interpreting in the laboratories.

5. CONCLUSION

This study is an attempt to investigate problems of the third-year English major students at FFL, HaUI in consecutive interpreting and to suggest some possible solutions. The researchers discover that defining keywords, listening skills and linking ideas to make sense are the most serious problems of the third-year English major students at FFL, HaUI in term of consecutive interpreting. The major cause of those problems is that the students failed to understand the purpose of note-taking in consecutive interpreting, the lack of practice, and the fact that they noted too much, individual words rather than ideas and depended too much on their notes to produce their interpreting. From the results of the study, research questions were respectively dealt with.

In conclusion, taking notes in consecutive interpreting is one of the most required skills of successful consecutive interpreters. It involves a variety of techniques that should be systematically learnt and regularly practiced. However small scale, this study is expected to contribute to an overview of the importance of note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting, particularly note-taking problems often faced by student interpreters and suggested solutions. Therefore, the teaching staff of interpreting can take it into consideration to help students of Faculty of Foreign Languages education at HaUI and other higher education institutions in Vietnam improve this skill.

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SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

The survey questionnaire is designed for our research entitled “Note-Taking Problems Encountered by Third-Year English Major Students at HaUI in Consecutive Interpreting”. It aims to find out some common problems the third-year English major students at FFL, HaUI may encounter in their performance of note-taking in consecutive interpreting. It is highly appreciated if you could spend your time completing truthfully the question. Please be assured that you will not be identified in any discussions of the data.

Please give some general information:

- Your name:
- Your group:

Please circle the appropriate answers for the following questions. You may choose more than one option.

1. What is the purpose of note-taking in consecutive interpreting?

- A. To recall memory
- B. To remember all information
- C. To understand what is said
- D. Others (please specify)

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2. **When do you take notes?**
 - A. Right after the speaker said.
 - B. At the same time with the speaker's speech.
3. **Which of the following system(s) do you often use while taking notes?**
 - A. Abbreviations
 - B. Map and arrows
 - C. Symbols created by yourself
 - D. Others (please specify)

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4. **What language do you use to take notes in consecutive interpreting?**
 - A. Source language
 - B. Target language
 - C. Any languages
5. **How do you take notes on the page?**
 - A. Write horizontally
 - B. Write vertically
 - C. Write rampantly
6. **What kinds of information do you mostly take notes in consecutive interpreting?**
 - A. Main ideas
 - B. Figures/ numbers
 - C. Proper names
 - D. Emphasized ideas
 - E. Whatever you hear
7. **While taking notes in consecutive interpreting, you have problem with:**
 - A. Limited vocabulary
 - B. Listening skill
 - C. Speed of speaker
 - D. Handwriting speed
 - E. Defining keywords
 - F. Worrying about some missing information
 - G. Others (please specify)

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8. **After taking notes, you have problem with:**
 - A. Re-reading your handwriting (abbreviation, symbols, etc.)
 - B. Linking ideas to make sense
9. **What should you do to improve your note-taking skills in consecutive interpreting?**
 - A. Practice as much as possible at home and in language laboratories
 - B. Practice listening skills, pay attention to listening and understanding main ideas rather than taking notes
 - C. Use a system of signs, symbols, abbreviations created by yourself or anyone else
 - D. Watch online videos of professional interpreters to see how they work with notes in real situations
 - E. Read books on interpreting theory and search online information related to learning and teaching note-taking skills
 - F. Work in pairs or groups

Thank you for your cooperation!