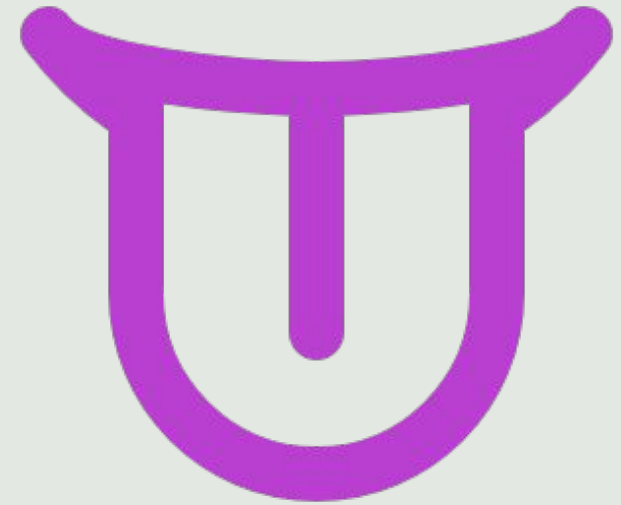


# The process of note-taking. Note Arrangement. When to Note



# Lecture Plan:

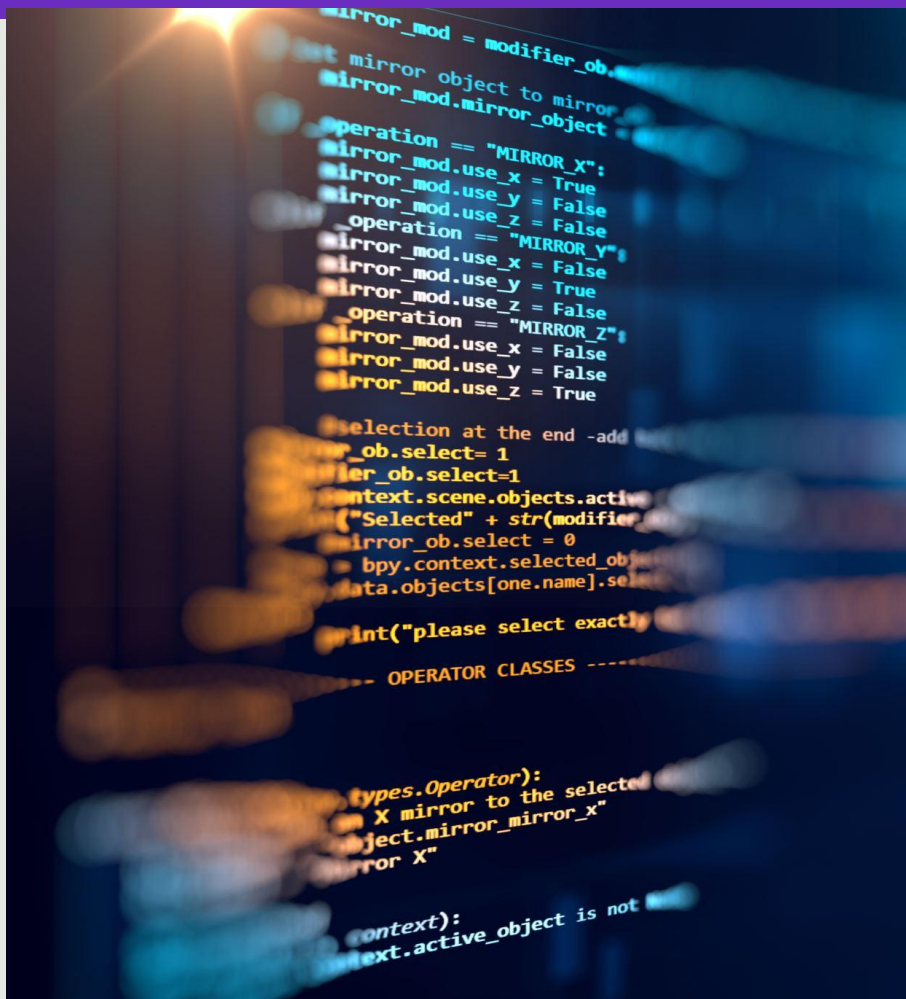
1. Diagonal Layout
2. Left-hand Margin
3. Which Language Used in Notes
4. When to Note



# Note Arrangement. Diagonal Layout

It would seem that whenever the question of how to take notes arises, a technique named “diagonal presentation” would come up. Diagonal presentation was introduced by Rozan in 1956. Also regarded as vertical arrangement, diagonal has been widely used by professional interpreters. The creation of diagonal layout is based on the fact that subject, verb and object are the most important elements of a sentence which contain nearly all information or meaning of the sentence, then they should be clearly represented in notes. Applying this technique, the subject, verb and object are arranged diagonally, from left to right and from top to bottom of a page. However it does not mean that the interpreter only notes the subject, verb and object elements. Based on the structure, the interpreter can add other details in the notes if he or she wants.

# Diagonal Layout



Diagonal layout is highly recommended because of its clear presentation of notes. Notes in diagonal arrangement are concise and succinct; focusing on ideas rather than words, unlike notes in horizontal form which often tempt the interpreter to write as many words as possible. Diagonal layout is described by Jones as:

Subject

Verb

Object



# Diagonal Layout

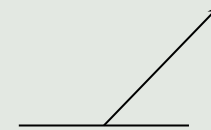
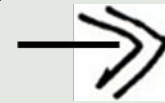
Let's take an example; "*Prime Minister Pham Van Khai's 2005 visit to Washington reflected the significant improvement in bilateral relations*".

- Based on the diagonal layout, this could be noted:

- 05 PM PVK's visit



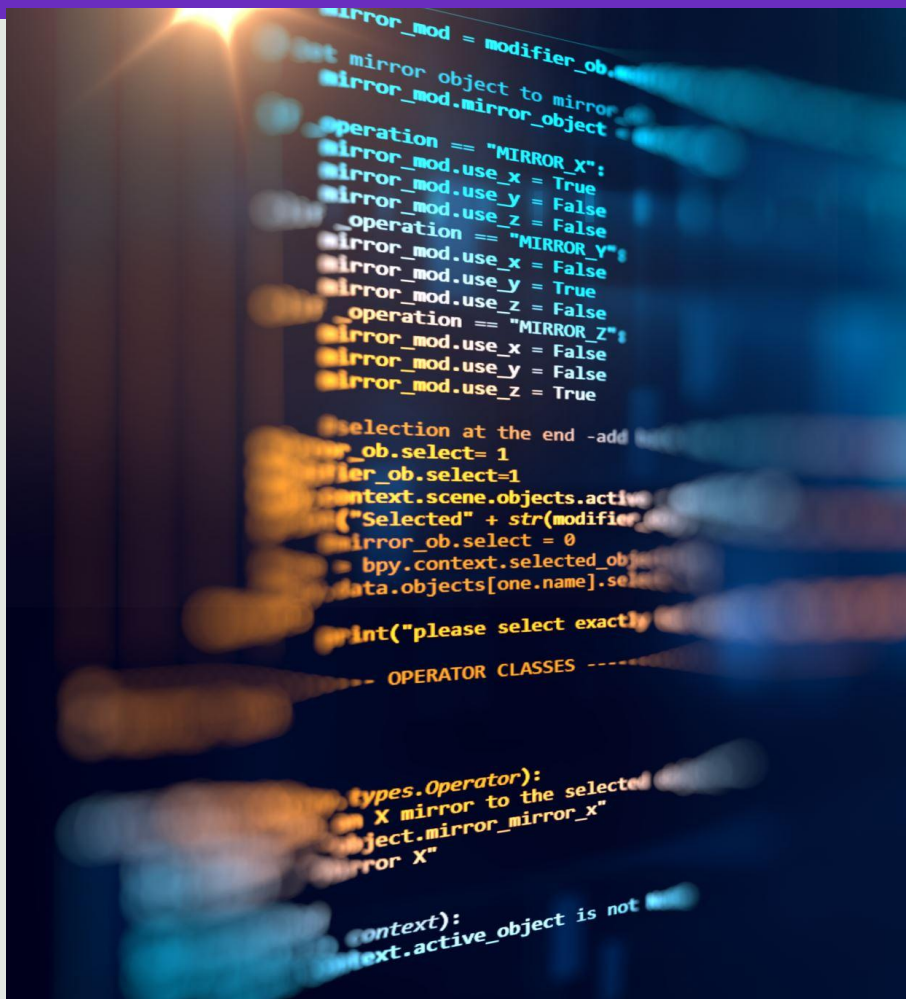
WA



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# Diagonal Layout



- Diagonal layout is also called-
- “*décalage*” which is translated into English as “*shifting*”, figuratively referring to “*gap*” or “*discrepancy*”. According to Rozan, “shift means writing notes in the place on a lower line where they would have appeared had the text on the line above been repeated”.

# Diagonal Layout

The following example is one of them. “*Over the course of 1954, prices rose, although not to the same extent as income, thus the population’s net income increased*” is noted as follows:

1) 54, prices

2) but ——— no = income

(3) so ——— Pop<sup>on</sup>

# Diagonal Layout

Word for word on the first line: *Over the course of 1954, prices rose,* Word for word on the second line: *although not to the same extent as,*

Word for word on the third line: *thus the population's net income increased.*

With diagonal presentation or shift, notes are arranged vertically, running from the left to the right of a paper in a slanting way, which come along with the natural movement of human eyes from left to right and from top to bottom (Jones, 2002, p. 45). Moreover, information is also organized logically and clearly in diagonal form. The interpreter seems to be able to immediately see the connections between the ideas. All those things together show that diagonal layout can accelerate the interpreter's review of notes.



# Left –Hand Margin

The way in which ideas are connected to each other is as important as the ideas themselves. In terms of meaning, idea is a single unit. It is only when they are linked together that a complete message is formed. Thus the crucial role of the links between ideas is never denied. As mentioned above, one of the most major elements that must be reflected in notes is the link. In other words, the interpreter when taking notes cannot afford to ignore “*link words*”, for instance: *therefore, consequently, nevertheless, as a result, on the other hand, however, but, or, and, yet etc.*

# Left –Hand Margin

There is already diagonal layout for ideas to be put in logical order, then there should be some spaces “dedicated to” the links only. It is best to leave a left-hand margin of one or two centimeters for links to make sure that they are not confused with the other parts in notes. Obviously left-hand margin will make links stand out and easy to identify. That is the reason why a left-hand margin is frequently found in the notes of professional consecutive interpreters.

# Left –Hand Margin

Furthermore, a left-hand column is ideal for marking missing ideas or denoting any change in the flow of speech. The following example extracted from *Conference Interpreting Explained* written by Jones shows how successfully left-hand margin works. “*Hungary has complained that its steel exports to the European Union are not able to develop because of excessively restrictive tariff quotas. But the Union representative pointed out that quotas are still underused by Hungary by a large margin, so the tariff quotas themselves didn’t appear to be creating the difficulties*” could be noted:

# Left-Hand Margin

HU

to EU  
tariff quotas

steel export

cannot develop

because

too restrictive

but EU:

HU

underused a lot

• not problem

quotas

SO

## Left –Hand Margin

- The example is purely given to show the function of left-hand margin; hence it has not been abbreviated and symbolized. However, as a matter of fact, because of frequent appearance of link words in notes, it is prudent to have a system of symbols for them. The following table shows some symbols for link words.

*Table 5. Symbols for Link Words*

<p>1. because/ the main reason for/ on account of/ due to/ thanks to/ owing to/ since/as</p>	<p>COZ / →</p>
<p>2. therefore/ consequently/ as a result/ that's why/ for that reason/ hence/ thus</p>	<p>so</p>
<p>3. so as to/ in order to/ with the aim of/ with the intention of/ with the purpose</p>	<p>to</p>
<p>4. however/ nevertheless/ on the other hand/ although/ despite/ conversely</p>	<p>But/ &gt; &lt;</p>
<p>5. in addition/ furthermore/ moreover/</p>	<p>and</p>



# Which Language Used in Notes

The question of consecutive interpreters' choice of language for their notes is still open for debate. A large volume of literature and research papers have been written on the issue. There are diverse opinions about which language should be used in notes by the interpreter: the source language or the target language. The source language means the language in which a speech is made in the original, and from which an interpretation is to be made. The target language is the language into which a speech spoken in another language is to be interpreted.

# Which Language Used in Notes

An ideal “language-independent system” for note-taking was proposed by Matyssek. However, up to now, this suggestion has not come into reality for the reason that such “complicated system of ciphers” would definitely place a big burden on the interpreter’s memory. Except for Matyssek, most writers about note-taking in consecutive interpreting tend to adopt one of two contrasting positions:

# Which Language Used in Notes

some advocate the use of the target language, e.g. Herbert 1952; Rozan 1956; Seleskovitch 1957; Déjean Le Féal 1981; Laplace 1990 while others like Ilg 1988; Alexieva 1993; Gile 1995 argue that the source language may be a better choice (as cited in Dam, n.d, p.4). Those who recommend using the target language basically have two reasons: first, the target language logically forces the interpreter to put aside the surface form of the incoming speech, instead, to concentrate on the meaning layer,

# Which Language Used in Notes

- that means the interpreter can avoid “intellectual laziness”, following the speaker and noting their words passively; second, taking notes in the target language is thought to effectively facilitate the re-expression phase. For others who doubt the benefits of using the target language for taking notes defend their point of view that writing notes in the target language, the interpreter has more activities to deal with during listening, understanding and analyzing phase.

# Which Language Used in Notes

The activity of language transformation from the source into the target makes the interpreter's concentration divided. Moreover, taking notes in the target language, the interpreter cannot have "a full set of notes at the end of a speech" as he takes notes in the source language (Jones, 2002, p.60). However, some recent findings from a research paper conducted by Hellen V. Dam (n.d) have showed that "the choice of language in note-taking is governed by mainly the status of the language in the interpreters' language combination,

# Which Language Used in Notes

- i.e. whether it is an A-language or B-language (A-language is also called mother tongue and B-language is the language of which the interpreter has perfect mastery), and much less than by its status in the interpreting task, i.e. whether it functions as the source language or the target language”. This would seem to be true because in an attempt to save processing capacity for other requirements throughout the whole process of note-taking, the interpreter is likely to take notes in whichever language is easier.



# Which Language Used in Notes

- Obviously, writing in the first language (A- language) is always faster and easier than writing in another language (B-language) which is not mother tongue.

# When to Note

In the process of note-taking, the interpreter is burdened with making decisions all the time. When to take notes is a very important and also tough decision that requires the interpreter to arrive at properly and wisely. Interpreters should start the notes as soon as possible without having to wait for a complete “unit of meaning”. If he or she waits too long, there is danger of not being able to jot down sufficiently what has come earlier.

# When to Note

- Therefore, when the interpreter can sense the meaning of a sentence which might have not been completed, he or she should note it down. Here the interpreter has the ability to “forecast” or “feel” upcoming things. Besides the interpreter is not required to take everything exactly the same way as the speaker, his or her notes are not presented in exact order as they were said by the speaker, so there is no need for the interpreter to wait until the speaker finishes an utterance to take note.

# When to Note

It is also worth mentioning that as soon as speakers finish their utterance(s), the interpreter should stop taking notes instantly and start reproducing ideas. If the interpreter is too preoccupied with notes, he or she will delay the interpretation, which is not wanted. The interpreter cannot afford to take longer than the speaker. He or she is expected to react immediately after the speaker has finished.

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, firstly it can be seen that interpreters' notes are different from the notes taken by students for study, secretaries for drafting memoranda and minutes or by shorthand typists who record everything almost word for word, without critically analyzing the meaning. For interpreters, they need notes that can help them reproduce the full message content with the speaker's intention or point of view as faithfully as possible. Interpreters' notes are for short-term use only, unlike students' notes for later review or long-term use.

# CONCLUSION

A good note should give the main ideas of a speech, the links between those ideas, tenses of verbs figures, and numbers, lists of things, proper names, if mentioned, so as to relieve interpreters' memory. A good note should also be as economical as possible with abbreviations and graphic symbols; then should be unequivocal and logical with diagonal layout, separating lines between ideas, and an useful left-hand margin. Which language used in notes and when to note are also important issues that should be taken into consideration by interpreters.