

The Teaching of Note-Taking to the Learners of English as a Second Language

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Abstract

There is a good rationale behind teaching of note-taking to the learners of English as a second language that learners can not get chance to listen a lecture again. Note-taking is one of the study skills. It amalgamates listening, reading, writing, and comprehension skills for academic achievement and performance. Notes may be defined as the main points of any topic written in symbolic and abbreviated form. The main purpose of note-taking in academic life is to remember whatever is important either in lectures or in textbooks for passing tests/examinations. Hence the teaching of note-taking to the learners of English as a second language is pivotal, and purposive in teaching learning process. There are various methods of note-taking such as Cornell Method, Outline Method, Mapping Method, Charting Method and Sentence Method etc. However, note-taking makes studies of learners systematic, organized, easy, and well-remembered.

Introduction

Note-taking is done for all sorts of studies at all levels. Note-taking may be introduced as a skill which is very useful for learners of English not only from examination point of view but it is also needful during reading a textbook, listening to a lecture and attending a seminar/workshop etc. People make notes of important points before delivering a lecture. They also need to make notes and outline before writing a paragraph, essay, a book report and a book review etc. Akinsanya and Williams (2004,p.41) hold, “*Note-taking is a general learning strategy that has been well studied in a variety of different environments*”. It may be called as an organizing and focusing strategy. Kiewra (1985, p.23) refers to many studies that argue, “*Students, who take notes perform better than those who do not*”.

Some researchers are of the opinion that note-taking is effective on recalling and assists student's learning. However, there are following five main reasons of note-taking:

1. Note-taking emphasizes to concentrate on what someone learns.
2. Note-taking trains learner to put ideas into his/her own words for better understanding.
3. Note-taking helps learner to remember things better.
4. Note-taking is helpful for the purpose of revision before an examination.
5. Note-taking is easy way to keep a record of the speaker's or writer's main ideas.

The skill of note-taking is personal and particular to each learner. Hence notes differ from learner to learner and are understood by those who make them. Thus he/she uses his/her system of abbreviations and handwriting techniques to write very fast. If it is supposed that other people should also use and understand these notes then he/she has to be slower, and general at note-taking. Moreover, important points may be missed during note-taking from a lecture etc.

Learners write the main points in a diary or a notebook and lay out them in some way that relates them to one another. Some of the learners place the required notes in the form of a diagram, which are easier to remember. The use of a list is the most convenient way in note-taking. Note-taking consists of two following sub-skills:

1. Numbering systems

There are various numbering systems, used in note-taking as under:

- A.**
- a) Give capital letters to the main points A, B, C, D, E, etc.
 - a) Give small letters often in brackets to the sub-points (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), etc.
 - b) Give Arabic numerals to the sub, and sub-points 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, etc.
 - c) Give large Roman numerals to the sub, sub, and sub points I, II, III, IV, V, etc
 - d) Give small Roman numerals often in brackets to the sub, sub, sub, and sub points (i), (ii), (iii), (iv), (v), etc.

- B.** Other possible systems of numbering
 - a. Give decimal system (not usually combined with other systems) 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.2.1, 1.3, etc.
 - b. Use of dashes

2. Lay out

- A.** Indenting is used in note-taking to begin each paragraph with a space in the text. It shows the division of text into various paragraphs whether with numbering or without numbering them. Each new point is written on a new line.
- B.** Notes may be made clearer as under:
 - a. Underlining titles
 - b. Using capital letters for important headings
 - c. Using different coloured pens

Learners can save a lot of time and effort by using abbreviations and symbols. But they should use those abbreviations only which are easily remembered while revising their notes after sometime. There are three following kinds of abbreviations:

1. Field abbreviations:

The learners learn certain abbreviations that are peculiar to the study of that field for example C stands for Carbon and Ca for Calcium in Chemistry.

2. Common abbreviations:

It is very difficult to remember the main and important contents of a lecture by learners. It is more difficult to note all required points in a fast lecture. However, the usage of symbols and abbreviations help learners to write notes very quickly. M. J. Wallace (1980, p.3) mentions some abbreviations and symbols in common use in note-taking.

Table No.1

Abbreviation	Meaning
cf.	compare (with)
et al.	and others
Ibid.	in the same place (in a book or article)
N.B.	note well (something important)
Viz.	namely (naming someone or something you have just referred to)
W/	with (something)
W/o	Without
W/i	Within
i.e.	that is
e.g.	for example
Etc.	et cetera, so forth
B/c	Because
B/4	Before
Re:	regarding, about
Esp.	Especially
Min.	Minimum
Max.	Maximum
Gov't.	Government
ASAP	as soon as possible
Wrt	Write
Rt	Right
Yr / yrs	Year, years
c.	circa, about, around, from the year
Vs	versus, as opposed to
Ch	Chapter
Q	Question
A	Answer
Ex	Example
wd	Word

Wds	Words
Ref	Reference
Diff	Difference

Table No.2

Symbol	Meaning
→	leads to, produces, causes, makes
←	Comes from, is the result of
-↑	increased, increasing, goes up, rises
↓	decreased, decreasing, lowering
&	And
@	At
/	Per
P	Page
Pp	Pages
¶	Paragraph
§	Section
?	Question
+	plus, in addition, and, also
-	minus
=	equal to, is
	not equal, is not
~	about, approximately
Ft	foot, feet
X	Times
>	greater than
<	less than
\$	money, cost, price
%	Percent
~	approximately, more or less
∴	Therefore
#	number
no.	number
#s	numbers

nos.	numbers
ht	Height
wt	Weight
2	To , two, too

3. Personal abbreviations:

Personal abbreviations are peculiar to individual learner for example a learner of English Literature uses the initial W instead of writing Wordsworth in full each time while note-taking.

There are various methods of note-taking:

1. The Cornell Method

This method was developed by Walter Pauk (1974) in order to teach note-taking to her learners at university level. It is the most useful method for university learners. The paper is divided in two columns, the first one is used to enter key or cue words and the second one is used for writing ideas and information. Cornell method insists upon the use of R5: recording, reducing, reciting, reflecting and reviewing. It has simple, easy and efficient format to record important and main ideas either during attending a lecture or reading a book/material.

2. The Outline Method

Under this method of note-taking relationships between the different parts are shown through indenting. Thus neither numbers, nor letters, nor Roman numerals are needed. This method records content and relationships among them.

This method cannot be used if the lecture is too fast and is not presented in outlining organization.

3. The Mapping Method

The mapping method emphasizes upon a graphic representation of contents of a lecture. It maximizes active participation, and emphasizes critical thinking. Under this method main points are written on flash or note cards and put together into a table etc.

4. The Charting Method

The charting method emphasizes to set up a paper by drawing columns and labeling appropriate headings in a table. Under this method a learner has to listen to the lecture, note main and important information. However, the learner should not miss any important information for required chart.

5. The Sentence Method

The Sentence Method emphasizes to note every new thought, fact or topic on a separate line. Learner has to number each sentence onwards and rearrange these notes at the end of a class. This method employs the use of shorthand and abbreviations during note-taking.

Conclusion

The importance of teaching note-taking to the learners of English as a Second Language can not be denied in all academic spheres. The above mentioned various methods of note-taking are peculiar and useful to fulfill the requirements and needs of learners. Indeed, the use of numbering system, lay out, indenting, symbols, abbreviations does not only save the time, energy and tempo of study of learner but also bestows him/her critical insight to differentiate between relevant and irrelevant, important and unimportant ideas for the preparation of a written test etc. Note-taking integrates listening, writing, reading and comprehension skills for effective and efficient teaching learning process. Consequently teaching of note-taking to the learners of English as a Second Language should be taught and included in the syllabus/course at all levels from school to university level.

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