

# A STUDY ON TECHNIQUES TO IMPROVE NOTE-TAKING SKILLS IN ENGLISH LISTENING SKILL OF ENGLISH MAJORED SOPHOMORES AT A UNNIVERSITY IN VIETNAM

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## ABSTRACT

The research "A study on techniques to improve note-taking skills in English listening skill of English majored sophomore at Tay Do University" was conducted to figure out techniques to improve note-taking skills. This is a survey research. The participants of this research are students in English classes, course 15. In this process, questionnaire and interview were used as two instruments to collect the data. The results of the study pointed out the techniques to improve note-taking skills in English listening skill of English majored sophomore at Tay Do University.

**Keywords:** Techniques, Note-taking skills, Listening comprehension

## 1. INTRODUCTION

English has been the international language for such a long time, and that is the reason why more and more people choose to learn it. First, it is necessary that we can communicate with as many people as possible, and English can totally help us with that. Harmer (1992:1) stated that "Today English is the world's most widely studied foreign language". English can be used as a means of communication tool for people from different countries. Students may not realize the importance of reading as well as English when they are still in school. Only when they graduate and start to look for a job that they know most of the companies nowadays require basic skills in English. For language learners, who learn English as a foreign language in a nonnative setting, often find it difficult to capture the main ideas and necessary details from authentic exercises. Particularly, this presents a problem that while many English majored students do their listening tasks, they feel at a loss when listening to some new texts or cannot understand the speakers (Luo, 2008). Therefore, it is necessary for these students to find appropriate and effective strategies to promote their listening comprehension.

In a non-native English environment, such as schools in the Mekong Delta in general and TDU school in particular, the role of listening comprehension skills becomes even more significant in the context of the mother tongue being used. This is because the Listening-Speak classroom culture dictates that teaching-learning tasks must be achieved largely through speaking and listening. Therefore, effective listening becomes one of the determinants of student success or failure (Taron & Yule, 1989). Especially, at the final level of English majors, the

ability to listen effectively is a necessity. At this level, students must understand a variety of lectures, discussions, presentations, seminars, and other academic presentations. Additionally, validation exercises require students to have critical note-taking capabilities to create summaries, inferences, reports, and more.

Perceiving the importance of note-taking skill in English listening skill and difficulties that students are confronting, the research “A study on techniques to improve note-taking skills in English listening skill of English majored sophomore at a university in Vietnam” was conducted. Hopefully, based on the technique stated in this study, students can select suitable methods to improve their listening skill.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Listening

#### 2.1.1 Definition of listening

Listening is considered one of the most important parts of oral communication. It is the act of hearing attentively. Almost we listen more than speak. If this listening skill is used in a proper way, we can master the tools of communicative skills. Listening is difficult, as human mind tends to distract easily. A person who controls his mind and listens attentively acquires various other skills and is benefited. So, the concepts of listening have been defined by numerous researchers in the field with distinguishing perspectives. It is concluded in a significant amount of definitions describing the term, some of which are mentioned below.

According to Howatt and Dakin (1974), “*listening is ability to identify and understand what others are saying. This process involves understanding a speaker’s accent and pronunciation, the speaker’s grammar and vocabulary and comprehension of meaning. An able listener is capable of doing these four things simultaneously*”. With the same thought, Chastain (1971) also stated “*Listening as the ability to understand native speech at normal speed*”. Certainly, listening is the ability to exactly understand and receive language and messages through the ears in the communication process which requires high focus and attention.

In addition, Lesley Barker (2001) states: “*Listening, however, is more than just being able to hear and understand what someone else says, listening skills involve etiquette, asking for clarification, showing empathy and providing an appropriate response*”.

Wolvin and Coakley (1985:74) points out that listening is “*the process of receiving, attending to and assigning meaning to aural stimuli*”. This definition suggests that listening is a complex, problem-solving skill. Purdy (1991) defined listening as “*the active and dynamic process of attending, perceiving, listening, remembering and responding to the expressed verbal and non-verbal needs, concerns and information offered by the human beings*”. Carol (1993) described listening as a set of activities that involve “*the individual’s capacity to apprehend, recognize, discriminate or even ignore*”. Rubin (1995:7) “*listening is conceived of as an active process in which a listener selects and interprets information, which comes from auditory and visual clues in order to define what is going on and what the speakers are trying to express*”.

In fact, with the above views, listening comprehension is considered a hard task, which demands a great deal of mental analysis on the part of the listener. In order to construct the message, the speaker intends, the listener must actively contribute skills and both linguistic and nonlinguistic knowledge. These include having an appropriate purpose for listening, social and cultural knowledge and background knowledge (Littlewood, 1981; Richards, 1985; Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Morley, 1991). Recently, Imhof (1998) stated that listening is “*the active process of selecting and integrating relevant information from acoustic input and this process is controlled by personal intentions which are critical to listening*”.

In short, listening is a vital skill in learning language which can help students become a good English learner and have good communication.

#### 2.1.2 Classification of listening

In creating a successful listening, it is very important to expose a variety of listening activities to the students. Brown (1994:242-244) describes listening activities as follows.

a. Reactive: It requires little meaningful processing. The role of listener as merely a “tape recorder” must be very limited. The only role that reactive listening can play in an interactive classroom is individual drills that focus on pronunciation.

b. Intensive: It focuses on components (phonemes, words, intonation, discourse markers, etc.) in its requirement that students single out certain elements of spoken language. It includes the bottom-up skills that are important at all levels of proficiency.

c. Responsive: A significant proportion of classroom listening activity consists of short stretches of teacher language designed to elicit immediate responses.

- d. Selective: Its purpose is not to look for the global or general meanings, necessarily, but to be able to find important information in a field of potentially distracting information.
- e. Extensive: Its purpose is to develop a top-down, global understanding of spoken language.
- f. Interactive: This listening activity can include all five of the above types as learners actively participate in discussions, role-plays, and other pair and group work. It must be integrated with speaking (and perhaps other) skills in the authentic give and take of communicative interchange.

While Galvin in Rost (1994:121) identifies four categories of listening, with typical corresponding purposes as follows:

a. Transactional listening: listening to learn new information. According to Buck (2001: p.73), transactional listening is message oriented. It focuses on content and conveys factual or propositional information. It is used for giving instruction, explaining, describing, giving directions, ordering, checking on correctness of details, and verifying understanding.

b. Interactional listening: listening to recognize personal component of message. Interactional listening is person oriented more than message oriented. According to Buck (2001:13), the primary purpose of transactional listening is social relationship. The important features of interactional language are those of identifying with other persons concerns, being nice to the other person, maintaining social, relationship, etc. It includes greeting, comment about the weather, what is happening in the world and etc.

c. Critical listening: listening for evaluating, reasoning and evidence. In critical listening, listeners learn about expected types of responds and do not become passive listeners.

d. Recreational listening: listening to appreciate random or integrated aspects or events. Based on the explanation above, it can be inferred that listeners understanding of a passage depends very much on their purpose of listening. Rost (1990:11) states that the purpose of listening helps the listener to select appropriate strategies for seeking specific clarification, for noting down certain details, for scanning for the intent of the speaker and etc.

In other words, the students need to select an appropriate role, and purpose to guide them as they listen. Moreover, Rost (2001:75) states that in most listening situations, there are both transactional and interactional language use, although one will usually be more dominant in any particular situation. In this case, teachers need to provide listening practices in both transactional talk and interpersonal talk. Students need instruction and listening practices to help them recognize both transactional talk and interpersonal talk and how they can respond appropriately.

## **2.2 The role of note taking skill in listening**

Frequently, note-taking occurs in various everyday life situations such as making purchases, planning future events and activities, studying for examinations, preparing a technical talk, designing a model in an industry, recording the minutes of work meetings, etc. Note taking is a complex activity in which comprehension and selection of information and written production processes are required (Piolat, Olive & Kellogg, 2005).

Note taking is a powerful aid to communication, a way of summarising and retaining the key points from what you have heard and understood. Note taking is a mode of memory. It takes a great important role in language listening. Note taking is an effective information-processing tool that is commonly used both in daily life and in many professions (Hartley, 2002). As such, it contributes to the carrying out of a range of intellectual processes, such as making judgments, resolving issues, and making decisions. The taking of notes can aid time-consuming, real-time thought processes, such as the resolution of mathematical problems. In this respect, notes are similar to a rough draft in that they allow information to be coded, thereby relieving mnemonic processes and consequently helping with the development of the solution (Cary & Calson, 1999).

In addition, note-taking skills have a number of other important roles such as taking notes to help you remember, writing it helps you to remember the material, summarizing things in your own words that will help you learn, and writing descriptive notes. Pictures can help visual learners, notes keep a record, and notes will document the source of information. More than that, class notes are a record of essential points discussed in class and notes that help with your writing. Additionally, reviewing your notes allows you to review your thoughts and prepare to start writing, you can see the information that you plan to write on your paper, organize your notes can inspire organization in your writing. Looking at your notes can help your ideas flow, and taking notes helps with your understanding. Thinking about what to write allows you to understand the importance of the material you study. Through the organization, you see how the information fits and works together. Notes help you study for exams. Taking notes enables you to commit some of the information into your memory. Organized material can make studying easier when preparing for an exam.

### 2.3 What to note

Students' notes show that they tend to stick to words. They hesitate to free themselves to focus on meaning by discarding lexical forms such as words and structures, etc. They try to retain word for word the origin of the sentence; As a result, their short-term memory quickly becomes overloaded with individual lexical items, which may not even form a meaningful sentence. Furthermore, their attention will be wasted searching.

The lexical entries are equivalent in the target language instead to the meaning of the incoming messages. Obviously, these students may not realize that note-taking is logically related to “mental analysis of sentences”. Notes will not be complete or organized as in the original speech. On the other hand, they are expected to provide the necessary cues to remember information in speech. Notes can be compared to the outline of a speech shaped by the main ideas and the relationships between them.

#### 2.3.1 Main ideas

The first thing to note should be the main ideas. Due to the fact that the writing speed is always slower than the speaking speed, it is not possible for the listener to write down everything the speaker has said. Brown and Day (1983) found that upper elementary, middle school, high school, and even college students struggle to identify main ideas in text. So, listeners need to be able to identify, select, and retain important ideas but ignore anything unrelated to the understanding of the original speech. Furthermore, by taking notes on the essential points, the listener can simply reconstruct the structure of the speech, avoid missing important points, and maintain faithfulness to the original material.

#### 2.3.2 The links

The second thing listeners should look at for note-taking are the links between ideas. The relationship between individual ideas determines the overall meaning of the speech. Therefore, listeners need to recognize and display the links. The ways in which ideas may be linked together are (I) the logical consequence which is expressed clearly with words such as consequently, as a result, accordingly or therefore; (II) the logical cause which can be recognized with the words because, due to, as, or since; and (III) opposition which often goes with but, yet, however or nevertheless (Jones, 2002:28-29). Listeners are hardly confused if they systematically note the links. It is just like the act of marking the way for each turn. Thanks to the logical connections, the listener can follow every movement and change of direction made by the speaker without any difficulty.

#### 2.3.3 Non contextualized information

According to David Bowen, Margareta Bowen(1990:137) “*Non-contextualized information is that which cannot be predicted from what has preceded linguistically or from the setting of the situation*”.

With notes, the listeners have a memory trigger for difficult non- contextualized information, such as numbers, dates, statistics and proper names (David Bowen, Margareta Bowen, 1990:138). These elements are cannot be recalled on the basis of analysis and logical thinking in a given context. If the listener wants to remember these elements, he or she has no choice but to keep repeating them over and over again. Obviously, this is not the right way because if the Listener's mind is too preoccupied with the rehearsal that is “non-contextualized information”, most likely, the listener will be distracted from listening comprehension and production of the target language. Also, unlike the “main idea” that has already made a strong impression on himself in the mind of the listener below. Particular image form or general and closely linked concepts, most of these are not tagged with any kind of mental image and they stand on their own. So it is no exaggeration to say that numbers, proper names, lists of things and terms most deserve the priority of listeners' notes.

#### 2.3.4 Verb tense

According to Jones (2002:42), it is also important to note down tenses of verbs. That means “when noting verbs, listeners should thus take care to note the tense correctly, and if appropriate the mode, in particular conditional”.

The mode and tense of the verb have a decisive influence on the meaning of the sentence. In short, in the listener's notes, at least the main ideas and the relationships between them must appear to help the listener visualize the structure of the speech. Besides, to relieve nostalgia, listeners should also take notes of “non-contextual elements” including numbers, proper names, lists of things and terms, etc. Others such as of the verb and the speaker's point of view may or may not be and are noted down, at the discretion of each listener under certain circumstances. Some listeners prefer notes with very little detail, while others prefer to take advantage of as much detail as possible. Both attitudes are justifiable provided that notes are not allowed to backfire, harming the listener's comprehension and the production of the target language.

### 2.4 How to note

Conspicuously, notes that are clearly separated and logically organized help the listener avoid all confusion when reading back notes. And notes using abbreviations and symbols are very helpful in activating the most information.

### 2.4.1 Abbreviations and Symbols

First and foremost, the notes must be frugal like maybe to save the writing effort of the listener. In this case, abbreviations and symbols seem to be effective tools. To date, several attempts have been made to create a complete system of acronyms and symbols used in notes for listening. The first of these is the Becker system. Becker is a conference listener and trainer and he has created special cues for taking notes. His Notizenschrift and Symbolschrift offer many tips for inventing symbols and abbreviations. Another notation system was created by Matyssek, who devised a similar system with complex rules so that complex symbols could be derived from the basic symbols in his Sprachunabhängige Notation. However, both note-taking systems can never be as effective as the one that aims to replenish the memory of successive listeners for the reason that they are used to encode all the information in a single way. systematically aimed at broader use not only for listeners. The use of symbols and abbreviations should be automatic as any new ones created during listening can require a lot of attention. The listener should not for any reason be distracted from his work. Only by pre-developing their own system of abbreviations and symbols can the listener automatically find his or her pen.

#### 2.4.1.1 Abbreviations

Abbreviations help listeners take notes quickly, saving time about other activities in the listening process. Abbreviations used in note-taking are not exactly the same as those used in student notes or secretary prompts. These abbreviations should be clear and conspicuous enough that the listener can immediately understand when rereading the note because under time pressure, the listener does not have a chance to review the meaning of the acronyms. An abbreviation may make no sense to another person, but it should make sense to the listener using it.

There are many guidelines and rules for using Acronyms. However, the most important thing is that the abbreviations should be consistent, if the listener has chosen “pop” to stand for “popular” then he should look for another acronym for “population”, for example, “pop on”. The following suggestions for creating abbreviations are based on the fact that the fewer strokes are written; The more time can be saved.

According to the first rule, “unless a word is short (4-5 letters), the listener should note it in an abbreviated form” and “write some of the first and last letters rather than trying to write as many letters as possible from the start onwards” (Rozan, n.d). For example, Prod. could be read as “production”, “producer”, “product” or “productivity” while Pron, Prer, Prct, Prvity are unambiguous. The second rule reads that “to indicate tense we add for the future and for the past”. The third one is applied to abbreviate expressions which are too long, for example, “In order to arrive at some conclusion” can be noted “to end”; or “Taking into account the situation at the present time” can be noted “as siton now”; “with the intention of/ with the purpose of” can be noted “to”. The rule here is “wherever possible we must abbreviate by using a word which conveys the same meaning but is much shorter” (Rozan, n.d.)

The presentation of the table below is not intended to be systematic exhibits an ambitious collection of abbreviations. In the table, only a few acronyms are accumulated through personal experience and actual observations.

**Table 1:** List of Abbreviations in Common Use

WORDS	ABBREVIATION	WORDS	ABBREVIATION
kilometer	<i>Km</i>	labor	<i>Lbr</i>
kilowatt	<i>Kw</i>	people	<i>Pp</i>
kilowatt-hour	<i>kwh</i>	society	<i>Soc.</i>
centimeter	<i>cm</i>	economy	<i>Eco</i>
millimeter	<i>mm</i>	monetary	<i>Mon</i>
number	<i>NO</i>	politics	<i>Pol</i>
figure	<i>fig</i>	popular	<i>Pop</i>
maximum	<i>max</i>	export	<i>Exp</i>

minimum	<i>mini</i>	import	<i>Imp</i>
hundred	<i>h</i>	professional	<i>Pro</i>
thousand	<i>thou</i>	department	<i>Dep</i>
mathematic	<i>math</i>	bureau	<i>Bu.</i>
literature	<i>lit</i>	agriculture	<i>Agr</i>
physics	<i>phys</i>	corporation	<i>Corp.</i>
hour	<i>hr</i>	company	<i>Com</i>
Tuesday	<i>Tue</i>	commerce	<i>Com</i>
week	<i>wk</i>	information	<i>Info</i>

The abbreviation of the joint international organization must be remembered by the listener. It can be said that the listener must have some background knowledge about those groups. Listeners are tasked with remembering their names in abbreviations as part of the required knowledge. The following table contains some common abbreviations.

**Table 2:** Lists of Names of International Organizations and Agencies in Abbreviation

<b>NAMES OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND AGENCIES</b>	<b>ABBREVIATION</b>
World Bank	WB
European Union	EU
Asian Development Bank	ADB
World Trade Organization	WTO
World Health Organization	WHO
International Monetary Fund	IMF
United Nations Children's Fund	UNICEF
North Atlantic Treaty Organization	NATO
Food and Agriculture Organization	FAO
Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation	APEC
International Atomic Energy Agency	IAEA

Association of Southeast Asia Nations	ASEAN
United Nations Development Program	UNDP
International Criminal Police Organization	INTERPOL
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	UNHCR

**Table 3:** List of Names of Vietnamese Agencies in Abbreviation

<b>NAMES OF VIETNAMESE AGENCIES</b>	<b>ABBREVIATION</b>
Ministry of Trade	MOTD
Ministry of Justice	MOJ
Ministry of Finance	MOF
Ministry of Industry	MOI
Ministry of Fisheries	MOF
Ministry of Construction	MOC
Ministry of Home Affairs	MOHA
Ministry of Public Health	MOPH
Ministry of Transportation	MOT
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	MOFA
Ministry of National Defense	MOND
Ministry of National Security	MONS
Ministry of Information and Culture	MOIC
Ministry of Education and Training	MOET
Ministry of Science and Technology	MOST
Ministry of Investment and Planning	MOIP
Ministry of Post and Telecommunication	MOPT
Ministry of Labour, Invalids and Social Affairs	MOLISA
Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development	MOARD
Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment	MONRE

### 2.4.1.2 Symbols

Although the abbreviation is commonly used in notes, its major drawback is that it tends to entice listeners to stick to the word degree rather than the degree of meaning. Therefore, symbols are preferred for their ability to represent ideas and eliminate interference from the source language.

“Symbol” is anything, a mark, sign, or letter that is used to denote a thing or a concept. Symbols are faster and easier to write than letters. Similar to abbreviations, the symbols need to be prepared first. One basic rule for listeners: use only symbols that are inherently stuck in the mind. Second, the symbols must be consistent. That means the symbols are instantly associated for the listener himself with the meaning he gives them, and the listener can avoid confusion when “deciphering” the meaning of the symbols they use.

Followings are some symbol examples retrieved from electronic a source at Note-taking Training Resource.

**Table 4: Symbols**

SYMBOL	MEANING
+	plus, in addition, and, also, more
-	minus, less
=	is equal to, equals, is the same as,
≠	is not equal to/is not the same as
¹	not equal, is not
~	about, approximately
ft	foot, feet
X	times
>	greater than
<	less than
\$	money, cost, price
%	percent
↗	rises, increases by
↘	falls, decreases by
∝	proportional to
∯	not proportional to

Some could say that symbols clearly help the listener take notes more quickly and effectively, and then it is wise to use as many symbols as possible. However, it would not seem rational to set up a rigidly unchanged rule for



a degree of symbolization, each listener through practice would find their own balance. For some, symbolizing as much information as possible is good. For others, it is not necessary to do so.

In short, abbreviations and symbols, like other elements of notes, is “a means to an end, not an end in themselves” (Jones, 2002:39). What is the use of acronyms and symbols if they do not help the listener do his or her job better? In order for listeners to fully benefit from taking notes, a logical, coherent and clear system of abbreviations and symbols should be self-developed.

## 2.5 Note Arrangement

### 2.5.1 Diagonal Layout

It appears that whenever the topic of how to take notes comes up, the term “diagonal presentation” comes up. Diagonal presentation was introduced by Rozan in 1956. Expert listeners have long employed diagonal lines, which are also considered vertical arrangements. The design of a diagonal arrangement is founded on the fact that the subject, verb, and object are the most significant aspects of a sentence, including nearly all of the information or meaning of the phrase, and they should be expressed clearly in notes. The subject, verb, and object are placed diagonally from left to right and top to bottom of a page using this technique. This does not, however, imply that the listener simply takes note of the subject, verb, and object parts. If the listener wishes, he or she might add more features to the notes based on the framework. Diagonal layout is highly recommended because of the clear note presentation. Notes in diagonal arrangement are concise and succinct; focusing on ideas rather than words, unlike notes in horizontal form which often tempt the listener to write as many words as possible. Diagonal layout is described by Jones (2002: 44) as:

*Subject*                      *Verb*                      *Object*

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

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”. How shift works is well explained by Rozan through many examples in his book entitled *La prise de notes en listéning*. 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 on

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. All those things together show that diagonal layout can accelerate the listener’s review of notes.

### 2.5.2 Left-hand Margin

As crucial as the concepts themselves is how they are connected to one another. Idea is a single unit in terms of meaning. Only when they are joined together do they form a whole message. As a result, the importance of linkages between concepts is never questioned. In other words, the listener when, for example, the note cannot ignore the “linking words”; therefore, nevertheless, therefore, on the other hand, nevertheless, but, or, and, etc. There is already diagonal layout for ideas to be put in logical order, and 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 listeners. Furthermore, a left-hand column is ideal for marking missing ideas or denoting any change in the flow of speech. The following table shows some symbols for link words.

**Table 5:** Symbols for link words

LINK WORDS	SYMBOLS
1. because/ the main reason for/ on account of/ due to/ thanks to/ owing to/ since/as	<b>Coz</b>
2. therefore/ consequently/ as a result/ that's why/ for that reason/ hence/ thus	<b>So/</b> →
3. so as to/ in order to/ with the aim of/ with the intention of/ with the purpose	<b>To</b>
4. however/ nevertheless/ on the other hand/ although/ despite/conversely	<b>but/</b>
5. in addition/ furthermore/ moreover/ besides/ also/ too/ and	<b>+/&amp;</b>

## 2.6 When to note

In the process of taking notes, the listener has to bear decide every time. When to take notes is very important and it is also a difficult decision that requires the listener to come in the right way and wisely. Listeners should start taking notes as soon as possible without waiting for a complete “meaningful unit”. If they wait too long, they run the risk of not being able to fully document what happened before. Therefore, when the listener can sense the meaning of a sentence that may not have been completed, they should take notes. Here the listener has the ability to “forecast” or “feel” what is to come.

Besides, listeners are not required to take everything is exactly the same as the speaker, their notes are not presented in the exact order as the speaker said, so listeners do not have to wait until the speaker has finished a statement to take notes. It is also important to reiterate that as soon as a speaker finishes their speech(s), listeners should immediately stop taking notes and begin reproducing ideas. If listeners are too preoccupied with notes, they will delay listening, which is undesirable. The listener cannot wait longer than the speaker. Conclusion, by evaluation of the literature in this chapter, it can be seen first of all that the notes taken by listeners differ from those taken by students for study, secretaries drafting memos and minutes, or those of speed typists, who take notes, repeats everything almost word for word, without analyzing the meaning. For listeners, they need notes that can help them reproduce the entire message with the speaker's intention or point of view as faithfully as possible.

Student notes are for subsequent review or long-term use, whereas listener notes are solely for short-term usage. The important points of the speech should be summarized in a decent note. A good note should also be as concise as possible with abbreviations and graphic symbols; then, with a diagonal arrangement, separating lines between concepts, and a useful left-hand margin, it should be clear and logical.

## 2.7 Previous studies

Kiewra and Benton (1988:33) concluded that the “amount of note-taking is related to academic achievement” and the “ability to hold and manipulate propositional knowledge in working memory is related to the number of words, complex propositions, and main ideas recorded in notes.”

Chaudron, Cook, and Loschky (1994) investigated a number of quantitative and qualitative measures of the notes and their relationships to successful short-term recall. Utilizing multiple choice and cloze comprehension tests, Chaudron et al. (1994) concluded that three measures (symbols, abbreviations, and total words) were significantly correlated with multiple-choice test scores on one lecture, but not with multiple-choice test scores on two other lectures.

In a study of the content of notes, Cushing (1991) employed a qualitative analysis of sets of the notes taken by the high and low proficiency 1.2 listeners when students were provided an outline of the lecture to guide their note-taking. The results indicated the following: (1) high proficiency students tended to take more complete notes than low proficiency students; (2) high proficiency students made somewhat better use of the note-taking guide than did low proficiency students; (3) overall, there was not a great deal of incorrect information in the notes, although 40% of the low proficiency students had written wrong or incomplete information in blanks in the note-taking guide; (4) lower proficiency students did not distinguish between relevant and irrelevant information as well as

higher proficiency students; (5) graduate students tended to fill in the blanks on the note-taking guide more completely (although not always more accurately) than did either undergraduate or noncredit students, suggesting perhaps that they approached the task more seriously.

Liu (2001, cited in Carrell, 2007) found that taking and having one's notes available during question answering had a significant effect on the recognition of specific information (but not general information) in both immediate and delayed multiple-choice test performance in a group of Chinese EFL learners. The association between three qualitative elements of Chinese students' notes and test performance was explored in a follow-up study described in the same thesis: number of content words, number of words spelled out entirely, and number of notations. Liu found significant positive correlations between number of content words and lecture specific information (as opposed to general information), as well as significant negative correlations between number of words in full spelling and lecture-specific information (again as opposed to general information). Liu concluded that learners should be encouraged to "take down more content words when required to recall specific information," and as it might be a lost cause to spell out words fully, to establish a "personalized shorthand system" (2001, abstract).

Ferit and Derya's (2009) study also focused on the effect of note-taking on students' listening comprehension. In detailed, 44 Turkish EFL students in the first year of their undergraduate level in the Department of Foreign Language Education in Middle East Technical University and were aged between 18 and 20 were divided into two classes of 22 students. The first class (experimental group) practiced listening comprehension questions taking notes while the other class (control group) practiced the same questions without taking notes. As results, participants' responses suggest that they felt at ease if allowed to take notes while listening to lectures (100% agreed) and also 86.4 %believed that taking notes helped to understand the lectures. However, about half of the students (% 45.5 agreements) stated that taking notes helped them to listen carefully to the lectures. However, 36% stated that they used their notes when answering the test questions and also 95% wanted more time to review their notes.

Carrell (2007) examined the relationship between the content of notes taken by examinees during mini-lectures and their performance on a listening comprehension measure and integrated listening/speaking and listening/writing tasks. Among four objectives of his study, examinees' perceptions of their note-taking strategies as well as their perceptions of the helpfulness of those note-taking strategies in their performance on the listening comprehension measure and speaking and writing tasks based on the lectures were investigated by administering the questionnaires. He found that note-taking strategies that involved content were the strategies they used most frequently and found to be most helpful. The next most commonly used and helpful note-taking strategies were those addressing efficiency. Note-taking procedures requiring note organizing were observed to be utilized less frequently and to be less effective. The least often utilized and least helpful note-taking procedures were observed to include employing good handwriting and putting down unconnected words.

### **3. SEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research aims**

The study has purposed to find out techniques to improve note-taking skills in English listening skill of English majored sophomore at Tay Do University.

#### **3.2 Research questions**

The research is required to answer the following question:  
What techniques should be used to help TDU English major students overcome their difficulties?

#### **3.3 Research design**

The research was carried out to find out the difficulties encountered by 2nd-year English majors in improving note-taking skills in listening class. The reliability and validity of the research results are based on two instruments, and the main key of this research is participants. They were 100 English majored sophomores who were delivered questionnaires. To make the research more specific and more objective, 10 students were randomly chosen to answer the interview questions. This study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The data collected would be analyzed to show the difficulties in improving note-taking skills in listening class of English majored sophomore at Tay Do University.

#### **3.4 Research participants**

The participants of this research were 100 English-majored sophomores, course 15 at Tay Do University. And they have learned two modules that are listening and speaking 1, 2. They come from different areas, both rural and urban. The students' age was from 18 to 20. They speak Vietnamese as their mother tongue, and English is considered as their foreign language. The participants have been learning English for more than 11 years. They were

given questionnaires and interviews in order to get information about note-taking skills they have used in learning English listening skill.

### 3.5 Research instruments

The instruments of this research include a questionnaire and interview questions. They are used to collect the participants' ideas. With the aim of the research, the questionnaire focuses on techniques to improve note-taking skills in English listening skills of English majored sophomore at Tay Do University. Additionally, the students' interviews would get extra information and confirm the information in the questionnaire.

#### 3.5.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of two parts. Part 1 includes 5 questions that investigated students' backgrounds and students' attitudes toward note-taking skills. In part 2, there are 30 statements about the difficulties encountered by 2nd year English majors in improving note-taking skills in listening class listed in the following table:

<b>Part 1</b>	<b>Investigated about students'</b>
From 1 to 6	Students' background, attitude toward listening and note-taking
<b>Part 2</b>	<b>Techniques in note-taking skills</b>
From 7 to 13	What to note
From 14 to 22	How to note
From 23 to 28	Note arrangement
From 29 to 33	When to note

#### 3.5.2 Interview

The paper interview is designed to get specific information from the sophomore about note-taking skills. It consists of 3 questions. The aim of this instrument is to understand the sophomore's attitude toward English listening and to improve note-taking skills in English listening skills of English majored sophomore.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

It is hard for English-majored sophomores at Tay Do University to be able to realize their difficulties to improve note-taking skills. This takes time and the experience of learning.

In the process of taking notes, most of the 2nd year English majors have encountered many difficulties, notably the ability to take notes in listening and speaking in many aspects.

### 4.1 What to note

As far as we know, "what to note" is a critical component of the note-taking process. Before taking notes, the listener must go through a lot of "cognitive processing." When listening, however, most students are unaware of the major, and secondary concepts and do not employ linking words to connect the information they want to record. Despite the fact that the topic is personal, in the sense that each listener makes his or her own decision about what to remember, some general guidelines are followed. Students, on the other hand, become confused and overlook essential facts when they receive material out of context. Furthermore, they have yet to determine the proper verb tense in which to take notes. On the other hand, due to their low vocabulary, the majority of the students have trouble taking notes. In addition, students have a limited understanding of stress and intonation, despite the fact that stress and intonation play a crucial role in cognition. Stress and intonation, according to Anderson and Tony Lynch (1988: 37), are major sources of hearing difficulties for EFL students.

### 4.2 How to note

Students have no idea how to take and organize notes. The vast majority of students are aware that the listener is the only one who needs to read and grasp the meanings of the acronyms and symbols in his notes; he must develop his own system, which is then logical and meaningful. They also recognize that, unlike mathematical formulas or dramatic poems, listeners should not be compelled to learn a fictitious sophisticated system of abbreviations and symbols invented by others. Because those acronyms and symbols take up too much memory space, learning is difficult. This will inevitably make it impossible for listeners to focus on listening to, comprehending, and evaluating the original. To sum up, many students currently do not take advantage of using abbreviations and symbols in their taking notes. They must waste a lot of time writing everything in words and cannot note the information as much as they use abbreviations and symbols in notes. It is one of the reasons why students cannot note all the main content in each lecture.

### 4.3 Note arrangement

Note arrangement is an important part of taking notes. Whether you are good at taking notes or not depends on how well you know how to organize your ideas according to different techniques. Therefore, the left margin and diagonal layout make it easier and faster to arrange notes. Through the survey, students rarely use these two techniques because they do not know them. This study has shown techniques to help students apply and make taking notes easier.

#### 4.4 When to note

“When to note” is their problem too. In fact, Students can only grasp the main idea when they correctly note the words or keywords of the lecture. Listeners appear to be at a loss as to when to take notes. On the one hand, the listener wants to start taking notes as soon as possible in order to keep up with the speaker. Taking notes as quickly as possible, however, does not imply that listeners must take notes on every concept that is presented. The haste can easily take the listener on the incorrect path in this scenario. Because the speed of writing is significantly slower than speaking, listeners who try to take note of words that aren't meant to be will always be “far ahead” of the speaker. One of the cornerstones of note-taking is capturing an idea and then writing it down.

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