

PROBLEMS STUDENTS ENCOUNTER WITH NOTE-TAKING IN ENGLISH MEDIUM INSTRUCTION

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Abstract. The present article aimed at researching the prerequisites of successful note-taking by students, cognitive mechanisms involved in note-taking and the correlation of note-taking with listening skills; it describes both processes taking place while students listen to a lecture and the possible strategies that students use to take notes as well as explores the hindrances that prevent successful recording of the lecture material. It is evident that taking notes does not depend only on students' abilities to listen and take notes, but directly depends on lecturers' abilities and skills to deliver the information. The study carried out at Turība University and St. Petersburg State University of Economics showed to what extent note-taking affects the process of lecture comprehension by students, whether it fosters understanding of the subject as well as to what extent note-taking of B1 – C2 English level students, according to *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (CEFR), depends on students' abilities to take notes and on lecturers' skills to deliver information.

Key words: English as lingua franca, laptop note-taking, note-taking, use of Power Point

INTRODUCTION

Note-taking in the university lecture setting is an integral skill of students; it is 'a mathemagenic activity' (Rothkopf, 1970), 'a crucial component of the educational experience' (Dunkel and Davy, 1989) used to retain information for recall on a test and to promote successful material acquisition. However, the skills of 'taking' or 'making' notes are often ignored by students who are not always competent in creating coherent notes and by academic staff who avoid training their students on how to make notes, 'restricting note-taking to a self-study skill' of students (Al-Musalli, 2015: 1). For a long time note-taking was ignored as an important skill, although studies in the 21st century have shown that it requires separate investigation. Note-taking is an important 'study skill' as noted by Devine (cited in Tabberer, 1987: 4–5): 'those competencies associated with acquiring, recording, organizing, synthesizing, remembering and using information and ideas'. Wright and Wallwork (1962), Heaton (1975), Marshall and Rowland (1998), Chambers and Northedge (1997) differentiated between 'note-taking' and 'note-making' arguing that the first is done while listening, whereas the second while reading, according to them, these two terms basically

mean the same, since they involve 'listing briefly, in an abbreviated form for the purpose of speed, the most crucial facts, arguments, or ideas found in a heard or written text' (Wright and Wallwork, 1962: 44–45). Both terms will be used in the course of the present paper identically.

It should be noted that students who study in their native language may experience fewer difficulties in taking notes than students who study in English, and since the target audience of the present research are foreign students studying in English, it is essential to investigate this topic.

For those attending lectures given in their native language (L1), taking notes is a habitual action. Many foreign language (FL) students resort to this same metamemory strategy when faced with the task of listening to a lecture given in a language other than L1. Learning how to listen and take notes in FL is, in fact, perceived to be 'a question of academic survival for those non-native English speaking students who intend to pursue academic degrees in English-speaking universities' (Dunkel, 1988: 11).

Apart from challenges of studies in non-vernacular languages, students may experience difficulties with fast-paced lectures, where they may have little or no skill in note-taking and it is unclear whether students' note-taking behaviour changes over the course of their studies.

Note-taking as a skill has been used to promote the study process from the times when lectures started. Up to the introduction and development of technologies, such as computers, laptops, tablets, iPhones, dictaphones and other technical devices, notes were taken using pen and paper; today both pen and paper and laptop methods are used, which makes it necessary to investigate the positive and negative aspects of both methods.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

1 THE NOTION OF NOTE-TAKING

Most research on listening and note-taking has been undertaken in a native-speaker context. Bligh (1972, 1980) and Beard and Hartley (1984) have examined the way information is presented in lectures, Gibbs (1981) has made recommendations for improving students' study skills. Morrison (1974) has identified the following linguistic features of difficulty that overseas post-graduate students encounter: 'the referential system (anaphora, cataphora; transition markers and logical connectors), lexis (especially idiom and nominalized groups and phonology' (ibid.).

Ewer (1974: 41) mentioned three areas of difficulties students may encounter with note-taking: language and speech, concepts and mental 'set'. According to Ewer (ibid.) students may have difficulties in 'identifying the oral forms of words' even though they may have good knowledge of core language of the subject they learn. As regards 'concepts', the introduction of unfamiliar concepts or

combinations of familiar concepts may create impediment to understanding and 'adequate evaluation process'. The problem with mental 'set' can be associated with the previous educational experience, where students could have been taught to over-simplify: 'knowing what the speaker wants to say better than the speaker himself with consequent misapprehension of what in fact he really does say' (ibid.).

2 INTERCONNECTION OF LISTENING SKILLS AND NOTE-TAKING

A number of researchers have studied students' notes as a means of insights into the listening comprehension process. Trzeciak and Mackay (1994: 20) have worked out listening note-taking strategies. They considered that the difference of listening to a lecture and reading a text, for example, is the impossibility of a learner to stop the speaker and review while listening. Three stages of note-taking have been mentioned: pre-listening research, taking notes during the lecture and work with the notes after the lecture.

Carman and Adams (1972), Rost (1990), Chela-Flores (1993), and Al-Musalli (2001; 2015) emphasized the interconnection of listening and note-taking (hereinafter NT) skills: 'It is hard to think of effective notes without effective listening as the basic step' (Al-Musalli, 2015: 3). These two processes are mutually interdependent, as Al-Musalli (ibid.) stated 'effective listening also depends on taking effective notes which is a way of saying that NT enhances concentration'. The processes of listening and note-taking can be described as 'decoding aural input' (Al-Musalli, 2015: 3), and they involve listener's ability to make certain judgments and reply to them. These processes require lower-level decoding skills (or subskills). These skills have been developed on the basis of reading skills, since what applies to reading applies to listening. As it was stated by Rost (1990: 8), 'although listening and reading are different decoding skills, that is aural versus visual, there are the cognitive strategies common to both.' This assumption was explained by Chela-Flores (1993: 24) who stated that after a word is recognized, 'the cognitive processes and the mental representations elicited by these two modes are the same'.

Despite the similarities between the two above-mentioned skills, there are some differences between them. According to Al-Musalli (2015: 4), the reader has more control over the input than the listener; the reader can focus or stop on whatever part of the text he wants, which is impossible while listening, because the spoken discourse is a dynamic non-stop process. Speaking implies the physical presence of the speaker, which means that the listener hears the variation in pronunciation, dialect, idiolect; he is either positively or negatively affected by the speaker's pauses, false starts or unclear pronunciation.

Munby (1978: 123–126) proposed the following set of sub-skills necessary for listening:

- discriminating sounds in isolated word forms and in connected speech;
- discriminating stress patterns within words;

- understanding intonation patterns: use of tone in respect of tone variances;
- interpreting attitudinal meaning through pitch variance, pause, or tempo.

This categorization shows that before a student puts down information in written form in the way of taking notes, he is obliged to discriminate and interpret words in the connected flow of speech, discriminate and understand the intonation of lecturer's speech, as well as interpret the meaning of the speaker through pitch, intonation and pauses. Thus, NT skills are much more-complex multi-staged processes involving listening, comprehension and later writing skills.

Rost (1990: 152–153) proposed three categories of listening skills: skills emphasizing perception, those emphasizing interpretation and enacting skills. Perception emphasizing skills involve 'recognizing prominence within utterances', perceiving and deciphering strong and weak forms, identifying the use of stress and pitch in connected speech, adapting to the speaker's variation. Skills emphasizing interpretation mean 'deducing the meaning of unfamiliar items and ideas', recognizing the indicators of discourse, differentiating between main and supporting ideas, interpreting the speaker's intention, whereas enacting skills are connected with making appropriate replies, providing feedback.

Al-Musalli (2015: 138–140) has developed the classification of listening skills and subskills, having based them on Gray's (1960) and Ferguson's (1973) levels of reading subskills. Table 1 shows the literal, inferential, critical and creative levels of listening skills with explanations presented by Al-Musalli:

Table 1 Classification of listening skills and subskills (modified from Al-Musalli, 2015: 138–140)

The Literal Level	
Phonological skills	Control of the phonological system to discriminate the words that sound similar and phrases that differ; knowledge of intonation patterns, uses of word and sentence stress, pitch, etc.
Syntactic skills	Recognition of basic grammatical structures and sentence types; focusing on whole parts of sentences and attending to grammatical relationship.
Lexical skills	Getting the direct meaning of words, phrases and sentences; concentrating on specific words and making appropriate choices of what they mean depending on context.
The Inferential Level	
Inferential skills	All types of inferences that the listener makes to understand the message: attitude, intentions, implications, motivations, purposes, making expectations and predictions of what will be said.
Textual skills	Grasping the development of the text, the recognition of the main ideas, details, cause and effect relationships, which require connecting between the parts of the text, recognizing cohesive devices, handling the variation of style, tone and forms of speech, concentrating on details, comprehending the gist of what is said, organizing and sequencing ideas.

The Critical Level	
	Making appropriate judgments about the message, the speaker's personality, topic and so forth, and judging how the purpose of the interaction is achieved.
The Creative Level	
	Handling verbal and non-verbal strategies and giving appropriate responses.

The four skills characteristic of listening are integral to the further note-taking process. The notetaker needs to differentiate between words, recognize the appropriate structure of a sentence, get the meaning of words, understand the attitude of the speaker towards the uttered, distinguish the key information from less important facts, comprehend the gist, make appropriate judgments about the message and give a response to the speaker.

3 PEN AND PAPER VERSUS LAPTOP NOTE-TAKING

Circumstances of contemporary lectures allow students to take notes in other ways than writing down. Students have learnt, although it is questionable whether they had a special training in it, to take notes on a computer, laptop or I-phone. The question of which method – typing or handwriting – is the most efficient and effective in the study process and which method is better for the use in the course of a lecture has been investigated by several researchers. For example, Bui, Myerson and Hale (2013) claimed that typing is usually faster than handwriting. The experiments made (ibid.) have shown that participants who chose typing using a computer rather than writing in hand had greater note-quantity by increasing their transcription speed, that in its turn led to better memorization of lecture material. Friedman (2012: 13–15) compared both ways of NT and acknowledged that laptop use ‘may reduce the cognitive resources required for production’ that may allow ‘additional resources dedicated to lecture comprehension’. The researcher considers that people who have ease of taking laptop notes may take more notes than they would with pen and paper. The disadvantage seen by Friedman (ibid.: 13) that may arise in laptop NT is the fact that students may take verbatim notes rather than writing in their own words, as well as much is dedicated to ‘production and not enough to comprehension which can be detrimental to learning outcomes’ (ibid.). The advantage of handwriting method mentioned by Friedman (2012: 14) is that due to the limitations of handwriting speed, pen and paper NT discourage learners from writing everything the instructor says in favour of selective notes in their own words, ‘which encourages deeper processing and long-term retention of content’. The author of the present research sees another drawback of typing in comparison to handwriting – no thorough studies have been made on how the computer and typing may affect the learning and memorization processes,

although it is known that handwriting activates the left part of brain and fosters memorization, especially it affects memorization processes of those people who have visual memory.

It is to be mentioned that lecturers today use Power Point slides or other programmes to accompany their speech and provide students with lecture handouts, which can have both positive and negative influence on learning outcomes. The advantage of handouts distributed before a lecture is that they may assist students in pre-lecture material review, although students are obliged to be proactive and responsive which is not always the case in modern education; well-structured carefully-considered handouts (the right amount of information, the use of key concepts) may guide students and 'make the proper associations between concepts' (Huxham, 2010, in Friedman, 2012: 18). The possible drawback of the use of handouts may be that students stop taking notes effectively since the instructor's notes may 'constrain student engagement with the material making them less likely to make connections between idea units that they would have otherwise made with other note-taking procedures' (Peperanm Mayer, 1986 in Friedman, 2012: 16). Moreover, giving students access to such materials prevents them from making generative notes in their own words that can make the learning outcome inefficient and reduce 'memory performance for a later test' (ibid.). A compromise could be providing students with the materials that have only the key facts or concepts, so that they themselves could make additional notes and, as a result, could be better involved in the perception process.

4 NOTE-TAKING AS A SEPARATE GENRE OF ACADEMIC WRITING

Note-taking of university lectures can be attributed to a separate genre of academic writing with its own distinguishing peculiarities. Note-taking depends directly on students' listening skills and working memory. Students taking notes can have individual traits, e.g. handwriting speed, work of short-term memory and memory span, skills to concentrate and keep attention to the material, however, in most cases notes will look like short, coherent texts, summarizing what the lecturer says. Using Van Dijk's (2008: 21) dimension, the following analysis of NT as a separate genre may be done: sphere (private), mode (handwritten, typing on a computer, laptop, I-phone), main social domain (education), institution or organization (university), participant roles and relations (students) and goals (retain information of a lecture).

Thereby, taking notes is an individual process: it is carried out in the written mode in the way of writing by hand or typing, realized in the university setting by students with the aim of retaining information of a lecture for its further use.

If students are aware of some techniques of recording information such as the use of (1) shortened forms of words and concepts, (2) abbreviations, (3) 'verbal, graphic or numerical forms of concepts' (White, 1996: 90), (4) formulas, drawings, symbols, (5) specialized terminology pertinent to the specific field of studies, this can help them in processing lectures delivered at

fast pace (speed) or with high density of new terminology, or when the lecturer uses such referential elements as anaphora or cataphora.

Students' note-taking depends on the quality of a lecture, including the linguistic competence of a lecturer, for example, phonological peculiarities such as intonation, pitch, tone, idiolect, the speed of lecture delivery, individual characteristics of the speaker; however, much depends on students' skills and abilities to process the information and to write it down. The following recommendations compiled from the advice given by Fahmy and Bilton (1990), Rost (2002), Al-Musalli (2015), Haynes, McCarley and Williams (2015) could help students improve their note-taking skills:

- use knowledge of the phonological system (intonation, stress, etc.) to discriminate between the sounds and make phonetic decisions;
- use knowledge of the grammatical structure to recognize specific structures in particular settings;
- get the direct meaning of words, phrases and sentences, infer meanings of words from context;
- identify and recognize main ideas, details, sequences, cause and effect;
- recognize cohesive devices, different styles (Al-Musalli, 2015: 10), 'lecturer's cues', for example, discourse markers and logical connectors (Fahmy and Bilton, 1990: 124);
- make appropriate judgments, assumptions and evaluations about the message (Al-Musalli, 2015: 10);
- learn to discern important and unimportant information:

By increasing the amount of relevant information and decreasing the amount of irrelevant information in their notes, students may increase the quality of their notes and potentially their academic performance (Haynes, McCarley and Williams, 2015: 183);

- do not take verbatim notes, take structured generalized notes in your own words;
- eliminate whole sentences, write in phrases;
- use abbreviations, shortenings and special symbols; maintain the relationship between the main ideas and supporting details;
- 'listen for structural cues (signpost/transition words, introduction, body and summary stages);
- look for non-verbal cues (facial expression, hand and body signals);
- look for visual cues (copy the content of any visual aids used (e.g. Power Point slides), note references to names and sources);
- listen for phonological cues (voice change in volume, speed, emotion), handle verbal and non-verbal communicative strategies.' (Rost, 2002: 407 and Al-Musalli, 2015: 10).

The above-enumerated recommendations on NT are relevant if the content of the lecture, the lecturer's discourse, the manner of speaker's presentation, the speed of lecture delivery are appropriate for the perception of the lecture by students.

The empirical part of the present article looks at how and if the lecturer may affect the students' note-taking process, whether the language competences of the lecturer may influence the students' processes of comprehension, the interaction between the perception and note-taking.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY, PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURE

In order to achieve the goals of the research a descriptive analysis of the theoretical findings was carried out and theoretical literature was reviewed. A questionnaire and an interview were designed to test the reliability and validity of the theoretical findings of the research.

The questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to 100 students in Word format, Pdf format and using the program Google Format. Twenty-four respondents provided feedback on the questionnaire. The target audience were Erasmus and full-time students of Turiba University and Erasmus students of St. Petersburg State University of Economics. All students study in programmes where English is used as a lingua franca both by academic staff and students.

There were eight students from Germany, three students from Turkey, five students from Latvia, two students from Belarus, one from Portugal, one from France, one from Korea, one student from the Netherlands, one student from Tajikistan and one student from China. In total there were two students of B1 level (according to the CEFR) representing Portugal and Turkey, three students of B2 level (Latvia and Turkey), thirteen students of C1 level (Germany, France, Turkey, Belarus, Tajikistan and China) and six students of C2 level (Latvia, the Netherlands and Germany). All respondents were bachelor level students.

In addition to the questionnaire, interviews were conducted at Turiba University with eleven bachelor programme students of B1, B2, C1 and C2 levels. The interviewees represented Poland, Latvia, Belarus, Lithuania, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and France. All of them attended lectures in English as Erasmus or full-time students. The interviews were recorded via Dictaphone by the author of the present research.

RESULTS

1 ANALYSIS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Twenty-four respondents completed the questionnaires. Question 1 helped to reveal the level of students' language competence. The questions of Section 2 aimed at finding out whether students take notes and whether they consider note-taking an important element of the study process. Nineteen students out of 24 answered in the affirmative that they regularly take notes, 5 confessed that they do not take notes on a regular basis; however, answering the question about the necessity of note-taking skills the majority (22 students) of the respondents answered in the affirmative.

The researcher wanted to ascertain which method of note-taking (questions of Section 3) is the most popular among students today. The respondents had to choose among Pen and paper, Laptop note-taking or both methods. Twenty three students replied that they preferred the Pen and paper method, 9 students chose both ways of note-taking and 1 student admitted taking notes solely using the laptop.

Since the goal of the study was to determine the extent to which students are good at note-taking, as well as whether the note-taking process is more dependent on the students' skills of taking notes or the lecturers' competence of delivering coherent and cohesive lectures, two-fold questions were asked.

One category of questions (Section 4) was aimed at identifying how proficient students were at taking notes, i.e. to discover whether students used special note-taking techniques, for example, abbreviations and short forms, special symbols, non-verbal cues (facial expression, hand and body signals), as opposed to writing full sentences when taking notes.

Having analyzed the answers provided, it was discovered that 21 students out of 24 use abbreviations and short forms, only 7 students used special symbols, 9 students looked for non-verbal cues and 9 students wrote full sentences when taking notes. The findings showed that, although the majority of students considered themselves C1 and C2 level students, this does not guarantee highly developed note-taking skills.

Another set of questions (Section 5) was aimed at finding out what exactly students might misunderstand in lecturers' discourse. There were 11 questions based on Al-Musalli's (2015) table of classification of listening skills and phonological skills: the ability to discriminate the words that sound similar, knowledge of intonation patterns, stress and pitch; lexical skills: getting the direct meaning of words, phrases and sentences, making appropriate choice of what they mean depending on the context; inferential skills: lecturer's attitude, intention, motivation and purpose and textual skills: recognition of the main ideas. Table 2 shows the number of answers in the affirmative and in the negative to the questions concerning students' listening skills.

Table 2 Possible difficulties students encounter while listening to lectures in English (%)

When listening to a lecture I sometimes do not understand:	Yes	No
1. Lecturer's intonation or stress	46%	54%
2. Some specific terminology	70%	30%
3. Idioms (they are not clear)	46%	54%
4. Pronunciation of some specific words because I do not know them	33%	67%
5. Pronunciation of some specific words because the way they are pronounced by the lecturer differs from how I am used to pronouncing them	67%	33%
6. Use of anaphora	13%	87%
7. Use of cataphora	17%	83%
8. Where the lecturer starts the new idea and where he finishes it	33%	67%
9. The oral form of a word (I do not recognize the word)	38%	62%
10. Lecturer's dialect	50%	50%
11. Lecturer's idiolect	25%	75%

It is to be noted that irrespective of the language proficiency all students face difficulty in listening and consequently understanding lectures to some extent. However, the major problems identified by the students were the lecturers' use of specific terminology (16 respondents marked it as an obstacle to understanding the lecture) and the pronunciation of some specific words. Almost half the respondents mentioned the lecturers' intonation as well as the usage of idioms (11 respondents out of 24) as a source of difficulty. Twelve students marked the lecturers' dialect as a barrier to understanding their lectures.

Ten questions of Section 6 (see Table 3) helped us discover what difficulties in note-taking students may encounter in connection with the quality of the lecture. The students were asked to choose what problems they had while listening to a lecture. The table below demonstrates positive and negative answers provided by students.

Table 3 Students' feedback on some deficiencies in lecture delivery by lecturers (%)

Choose what is characteristic of you while listening to a lecture	Yes	No
1. I sometimes miss the idea while taking notes	66%	34%
2. I cannot always manage the lecturer's speed, it is too fast	46%	54%
3. I forget what was said and cannot take notes because the lecturer does not explain the new concept	46%	54%
4. I forget what was said and cannot take notes because the lecturer changes the theme too fast	58%	42%
5. I cannot take proper notes because I do not understand the meaning of unfamiliar items and ideas	29%	71%

6. I cannot recognize where the main and supporting idea is	12%	88%
7. I cannot take notes because sentences are too long and I lose track of the main idea	29%	71%
8. I cannot take proper notes because I do not understand the meaning of a word in that specific context	25%	75%
9. I cannot take proper notes because the lecturer does not give clear hints where the ideas start, finish, change (no use of discourse markers or logical connectors)	42%	58%
10. I do not understand the attitude of the lecturer to the message	16%	84%

The results showed that the major problems the students experienced with respect to the quality of a lecture were as follows: they sometimes missed the main idea while taking notes (sixteen out of twenty-four), the speed of the lecture was too fast for eleven respondents, the lecturer failed to explain unclear terms (11 out of 24) and inadequate use of discourse markers or logical connectors by lecturers (10 out of 24).

The researcher was interested in ascertaining whether there was a correlation between the note-taking skills and the language competence of students as well as whether the quality of the lecture comprehension depended only on the students' level or also on the lecturers' competence in delivering lectures.

A more thorough analysis of the answers (see Table 4) based on the students' levels showed that almost all B1 and B2 level students faced problems in understanding intonation and stress, specific terminology and idioms, as well as the pronunciation of some specific words by the lecturer that may differ from their own pronunciation.

Table 4 Major difficulties students encounter while listening to lectures in English

Language level →	B1	B2	C1	C2
Total number of respondents → (100%)	2	3	13	6
Lecturer's intonation or stress	50%	100%	38%	33%
Some specific terminology	100%	100%	85%	33%
Idioms (they are not clear)	100%	100%	46%	0
Pronunciation of some specific words because the way they are pronounced by the lecturer differs from how a student is used to pronouncing them	100%	66%	54%	83%
Lecturer's dialect	50%	33%	46%	67%

Students of the perceived C1 level constituted the majority of respondents, which might mean that the biggest percentage of students who studied in Erasmus programmes or full time programmes in English as the language of instruction were usually C1 level students. Eighty-five percent of C1 students admitted to

having problems in understanding specialized terminology while listening to lectures, 54 per cent of C1 students could encounter problems in understanding the lecturers' pronunciation of some specific words; 46 per cent of C1 students sometimes misunderstood idioms used by lecturers.

It was interesting to note that even the perceived C2 level students admitted occasionally facing difficulties with note-taking, including the pronunciation of specific terminology by the lecturer (83%), the lecturer's dialect (67%) and to a lesser extent by the intonation and misunderstanding of some specific terminology (33%). It was noted that the choice of answers varied among students of different levels. It can be summarized that if the perceived B1 and B2 students had all 6 problems, that is almost all the respondents had chosen them, C1 and C2 level students marked selective problems – misunderstanding of terminology as the biggest problem (C1 level students) and the lecturer's pronunciation of specific words and the lecturer's dialect (C2 level students).

The analysis of the students' feedback on the lecturers' competences is depicted in Table 5. It is to be noted that irrespectively of the language proficiency level students can have problems in the comprehension of a lecture if the lecturer has some imperfections in the delivery of a lecture. The students of all levels admitted that they could sometimes miss the idea while taking notes. The biggest percentage of answers to this question was among C1 level students (85%), which prove that the perceived high level of language competence does not guarantee that students are experienced note-takers and would follow the lecturer's discourse in full. Over half of the respondents in each category chose fast delivery of a lecture as the reason for losing track of the lecture and forgetting what had been said as well as noted the necessity of lecturers to explain the new concepts. Regardless of the level of language skills almost half the respondents did not always follow where lecturers start, finish and change the idea because of the inappropriate use of discourse markers and logical connectors.

Table 5 Major weaknesses in lecture delivery noted by students that hinder proper listening and efficient note-taking

Language level →	B1	B2	C1	C2
Total number of respondents → (100%)	2	3	13	6
1) I sometimes miss the idea while taking notes	50%	66%	85%	50%
2) I cannot always manage lecturer's speed, it is too fast	50%	33%	46%	50%
3) I forget what was said and cannot take notes because the lecturer does not explain the new concept	0	66%	46%	50%
4) I forget what was said and cannot take notes because the lecturer changes the theme too fast	50%	66%	54%	67%
5) No clear hints where the ideas start, finish, change (no use of discourse markers or logical connectors)	50%	33%	46%	33%

2 ANALYSIS OF THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

The follow-up interview included two questions. Question 1 ('Did you experience difficulties while taking notes? What kind of?') was an open-ended question and aimed at finding out more about the possible difficulties with note-taking that were not noticed by the researcher.

The interview question about note-taking helped to clarify how students take notes and to what extent it is helpful in a typical lecture. The respondents were asked about the correlation of handouts (copies of presentation slides) and note-taking. Three ways of the use of handouts were mentioned by students (1) when handouts were distributed before the lecture, (2) when the lecturers sent the materials or handouts to the students' emails before or after the lectures (students did not always have printed copies for a lecture) and (3) workshop-type of lectures where some processes were demonstrated, e.g. Food and Beverage, where handouts were not always available.

Some students from Belarus stated that they preferred to have handouts with minimum text so that they could take additional notes by themselves. It is important to acknowledge a cultural difference: they stated that in their home country the lecturing style is mostly with a focus on the lecturer reading information, and students writing word-by-word transcript of the lecture. Another opinion was that handouts should include only the main information and some visuals (e.g. graphs, pictures and diagrams). The students wanted to structure additional information around the main ideas themselves, often adding personal examples; it is more characteristic of students with good visual memory.

A C1 level student from Latvia remarked that slides have to include the minimum of information and should allow students to take individual notes, instead of having full notes in slides. The necessity of handouts distribution was also a controversial issue. According to the respondent handouts were helpful in preparing for exams, however, the notes taken individually assisted better in revising before the examination since they allowed students to remember better what they had recorded.

When asked about the quality of notes taken, the majority of the respondents answered that at the beginning of the study process they often switched from English to L1. Some of them put down concepts and ideas in English, while examples were written in L1.

It was concluded that irrespective of the students' learning styles, all of them still preferred to take notes during a lecture, either in L1 or in English.

Since almost half of the respondents mentioned the speed of a lecture as one of the hurdles they experienced while listening to a lecture, the interviewer wanted to know in more detail how and why exactly it occurred. That is why the purpose of the second question ('Does the speed of lecturer's talk affect your comprehension of the lecture?') was to discover to what extent the speed of lecture delivery affects lecture comprehension and as a result note-taking by

students. The speed of lecture delivery as a hurdle in lecture comprehension was mentioned only by international students (France, Turkey and Uzbekistan). In the case of students from Turkey or France it should be stated that the experience of work with them always proved that their level of English language proficiency was lower in comparison to Latvian students. As Comiciotolli (2007: 49) stated, there are 'two factors that influence speech rate: individual propensity, but also a setting where lecturers and audiences may or may not share the same speech community'. Thus, the lecturers in Latvia working with lower-level students of foreign origin should consider that their speech rate might be too fast and might create difficulties in lecture comprehension. C1 and C2 level students stated that the speed of lecturers' speech was adequate: it was easy to follow the speech when the lecturer changed intonation and made pauses, asked rhetorical questions and invited them to participate in discussions. The students noted that when the lecturer's speech was monotonous without the change of the speed and tone, it created difficulty in comprehension and caused the loss of concentration after 15 minutes of listening.

An exchange student from Lithuania (B2 level) who had studied in Lithuanian noted that some lecturers' fast speed of speech complicated the process of auditory perception of lectures. While the student was busy assimilating information and simultaneously translating chunks of the lecturer's speech, the lecturer had already gone ahead to a new piece of information. As a result, he often did not have time to take any notes.

Whereas a student from Ukraine of C1 level noted that for her the speed of lectures was slower than that of Ukrainian lecturers and her personal speed of speech: 'in Ukraine all lecturers speak faster than here, here it is slower, my speed is faster than that of some lecturers. It is cultural. Ukrainians speak fast'. That is why she managed to translate the lecturer's speech into L1, add her own examples and take proper notes.

CONCLUSIONS

Note-taking in the university lecture setting is an integral skill of students used to retain information for recall on a test and to promote successful material acquisition.

The study conducted at Turība University (Riga) and Saint Petersburg State University of Economics and Finance (St. Petersburg) allowed drawing some conclusions about the contemporary situation with note-taking skills of students and the correlation of students note-taking and lecturers' competences in delivering coherent and cohesive lectures in English. The result of the questionnaire showed that note-taking is still a significant element of the students' study process and, albeit the technical development and the use of laptop to take notes, Pen and paper note-taking is still the most preferred technique among students.

It was concluded that the students had occasional difficulties with note-taking irrespective of their language competence (B2 or C1 level according to the CEFR), which might mean that special note-making training sessions should be provided at least for the bachelor programme students during their first year of studies.

The results of the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews also showed the necessity of the academic staff to pay more attention to the style of lecture delivery, including explanation of specialized terminology and new concepts, control of the pronunciation, intonation, stress and the speed of lecture delivery, especially working with the students of lower language competence level.

The current study was limited in terms of the number of participants and therefore may be considered to be a generalization of findings. Further research needs to be undertaken to study the problem faced by specific audiences.

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APPENDIX 1

Questionnaire

The aim of the present questionnaire is to find out to what extent the process of note-taking is important while studying in English, whether it affects the process of lecture comprehension, whether it fosters the knowledge of the subject as well as to discover what difficulties international students have while taking notes. Better split the sentence.

Please find time to answer the questions below. If you have comments, you are welcome to add them.

1. How do you assess your language knowledge according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Choose the variant that describes your language competences the best:

B1	B2	C1	C2
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2. Answer the questions by choosing the answer that suits you best

2.1. I always take notes during a lecture.	Yes	No
2.2. I consider note-taking an important element of my study process.	Yes	No
3. I use the following method of note-taking

1. Pen and paper (I take notes writing).	Yes	No
2. Type on a tablet/computer / I-phone.	Yes	No
3. Both (Pen and paper and Typing).		
4. Choose **Yes** / **No** for the statement

1. When I take notes I use abbreviations and shortened forms.	Yes	No
2. When I take notes I write full sentences.	Yes	No
3. When I take notes I use special symbols.	Yes	No
4. When I take notes I look for non-verbal cues (facial expression, hand and body signals).	Yes	No
5. When listening to a lecture I **sometimes do not understand**:

1. Lecturer's intonation or stress.	Yes	No
2. Some specific terminology.	Yes	No
3. Idioms.	Yes	No
4. Pronunciation of some specific words because I do not know them.	Yes	No
5. Pronunciation of some specific words because the way they are pronounced by the lecturer differs from how I have got used to pronouncing them.	Yes	No
6. When the lecturer repeats words and ideas used at the beginning, he refers backwards in his discourse (anaphora), e.g. The music stopped and that upset everybody.	Yes	No

7. When the lecturer uses a more specific word, e.g. noun after he had used, e.g. a pronoun (cataphora), e.g. When he arrived, John went to sleep.	Yes	No
8. Where the lecturer starts the new idea and where he finishes it.	Yes	No
9. The oral form of a word (I do not recognize the word),	Yes	No
10. Lecturer's dialect,	Yes	No
11. Lecturer's idiolect.	Yes	No
6. Choose Yes / No for the statement		
1. I sometimes miss the idea while taking notes.	Yes	No
2. I cannot always manage lecturer's speed, as it is too fast.	Yes	No
3. I forget what was said and cannot take notes because the lecturer does not explain the new concept.	Yes	No
4. I forget what was said and cannot take notes because the lecturer changes the theme too fast.	Yes	No
5. I cannot take proper notes because I do not understand the meaning of unfamiliar items and ideas.	Yes	No
6. I cannot recognize where the main and supporting idea are.	Yes	No
7. I cannot take notes because sentences are too long, and I lose track of the main idea.	Yes	No
8. I cannot take proper notes because I do not understand the meaning of a word in the specific context.	Yes	No
9. I cannot take proper notes because the lecturer does not give clear hints where the ideas start, finish and change (the lecturer does not use discourse markers or logical connectors).	Yes	No
10. I do not understand the attitude of the lecturer to the message.	Yes	No

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