

Teacher Notes

Can-do: *Can make accurate and complete notes while listening to a tour guide*

Goal: Informing peers about places of interest

Input: Audio tour guide commentary

Output: Notes and an oral/written summary

Focus: Note-taking and using Information Units



Introduction

The ability to listen and write coherent notes is valuable in academic and professional life. Note-taking encourages active listening and deeper engagement with the material as well as reinforces memory retention by allowing students to review the material later, helping them recall information over a longer period of time. Notes also help students filter out less essential information and organise key ideas in a concise way when summarising a text.

This unit covers listening, note-taking and summarising skills needed in language learning.

Two strategies in particular help students improve their listening, note-taking and summarising – one is using information units (I.U.s) and the other is memory combined with collaboration.

Key concepts include the following:

- ✚ type of source text: audio guides
- ✚ type of note-taking: taking notes as a series of points
- ✚ accuracy of the notes: notes precise enough for own use (CEFR CV, 2020)

Can-do statements

The lesson is designed for students at B2 level, but can be adapted to B1 level:

- ✚ Can understand a clearly structured speech on a familiar subject, and can take accurate and complete notes (CEFR CV, 2020)

Activities:



- Listening, note-taking, summarising



- Cross grouping aka cross-team collaboration

Summary of procedure

LESSON 1: Corpus Christi College tour		45 minutes
1.	Lead in contextualising the lesson	5
2.	Listening, collaborative note-taking	10
3.	Identifying Information Units (I.U.s) and evaluating completeness of notes	20
4.	Review & reflections on note-taking	5
5.	Homework (on taking notes while listening to audio tour guides)	5
LESSON 2: Peterhouse College & Vilnius University tours		45 minutes
1.	Discussing notes in expert groups and scoring notes using Information Units [I.U.s]	10
2.	Sharing information in pairs using students' notes	10
3.	Discussing the variety of I.U.s and criteria for a good summary (writing a summary)	20
4.	Review and evaluation	5

Materials:

1. Student worksheets (4 pages)
 2. Teacher notes (4 pages)
 3. Slides for classroom work_Lesson 1 (16 slides)
 4. Slides for classroom work_Lesson 2 (12 slides)
 5. MP3 audio of Christi tour guide
 6. MP3 audio of Peterhouse tour guide
 7. MP3 audio of Vilnius University tour guide
 8. Appendices
- Appendix 1a: Corpus Christi tour transcript
Appendix 1b: Chunked transcript
Appendix 2: Highlighted Information Units
Appendix 3: Information Units grid
Appendix 4: Homework tasks
Appendix 5: Peterhouse College tour transcript
Appendix 6: List of I.U.s to Peterhouse
Appendix 7: Vilnius University tour transcript
Appendix 8: List of I.U.s to Corpus Christi
Appendix 9: The 5Cs of summarising
Appendix 10: Exemplar summaries

LESSON 1.

Lead in

What is it a photo of?

A college in Cambridge – Corpus Christi College

What do you already know about it?

Elicit & list what they already know about Cambridge. If they know nothing that's fine, just move on.

What do you think we're going to do today?

1. Listen to a tour guide giving a commentary
2. Take notes of the tour guide's commentary
3. Learn about 'information units' and how they can help us improve our notetaking skills.



Listening & Note-taking

This lesson is not designed to facilitate mediation. It is rather a lesson designed to input and practice the sub-skill of note-taking. Lesson 2 will focus on mediation and so will involve cross-team collaboration.

Students are going to listen to the audio twice. The first time without making notes. This makes the task a memory task and stops them transcribing full sentences. The key question is not "What did you hear?" but "What do you remember?" Then, individually they write down everything they remember.

They then collaborate within their group. Collaborating in groups helps them remember more as different students remember different things.

For the second listening they continue making notes by filling in the gaps.

Next, and without checking or discussing what notes they've made, introduce information units.

Information Units (I.U.s)

Read the definition and then either elicit examples or offer examples yourself.

An information unit [I.U.] is a single piece of data, a single piece of information, or a single unit of knowledge. I.U.s include, for example, the name of a person, place or concept e.g. 'democracy' or 'gravity'. An I.U. could also be a fact, a definition, or an example.

Single word	"hypothesis," "experiment," "results," "conclusion"
Phrase	"major causes of climate change", "impact of globalization on the economy", "advantages of renewable energy sources"
Sentence	"The French Revolution began in 1789 and was fuelled by social inequality and political unrest.", "Newton's first law of motion states that an object at rest will remain at rest unless acted upon by an external force."
Paragraph	a self-contained paragraph that summarizes a concept, theory, or argument, e.g., a paragraph describing the lifecycle of a butterfly.
Images	a photo of a sunset
Symbols	the dollar sign "\$", the check mark "✓"
URL	" https://www.example.com "

1. Identifying I.U.s:

OK. / I want us to imagine / that we've just walked past / Fitzbilies cake shop / and we're walking towards/ Corpus Christi College, / and we'll stop here / for a minute.

Distribute the transcript (Appendix 1a) and ask students to chunk it.

Give them time to do this. It can be quite challenging to do.

Have them do it individually and then compare with a partner. Give out the answer key (Appendix 1b).

Note: the idea of using I.U.s is to help students make better notes, but notes can be highly individual so beware being "black and white" or saying something definitively. Let students discuss I.U.s and develop their understanding of how information builds up in a text, or how ideas are structures and connected in a text. Ask them if those information units are of equal informative value. Then, ask them to identify the main and supporting ideas, transitions, and redundancies in the text (exemplar marked text in Appendix 2). (This will help them in later activities on summarising.)

2. Using I.U.s

Give out the list of I.U.s (Appendix 3) and have students use the grid and their listening notes to score themselves. Suggest they do it individually and then compare within their group.

Having them divide by 14 and multiply by 5 gives you & them to quantify their ability to take complete notes, using the table below (and in the PowerPoint).

If time permits, have students work in pairs to say what they remember about Corpus Christi referring to their notes, not to the list of I.U.s.

5	Outstanding	complete
4	Good	Mostly complete
3	Satisfactory	Half of the info included
2	Below par	Some info included
1	Weak	Little or no info

Review and reflections on note-taking

Have students discuss with a partner, and in whole class. Point out that regarding notes students often assume that the idea is to write as little as possible. The reverse is true – they should write more not less, but chunks, not sentences.

Homework

Divide students into two groups and ask them to listen to two different audios at home. Remind students to listen only twice and write in chunks, not sentences. They will have to share the information in class using their notes. The homework task is described in Appendix 4.

LESSON 2.

Lead in

Review briefly what students did in Lesson 1, reminding that I.U.s are single units of data, info, or knowledge and a useful way of note-taking when listening – you note the info in chunks, not sentences. Introduce the scenario to Lesson 2.



SCENARIO

You've listened to an audio guide about a higher education institution and learned some fascinating details. You took notes while listening and now want to share this information with a friend who may not know much about it. Using your notes, you're ready to explain what makes this institution interesting.

1. Discussing notes in expert groups and scoring notes using Information Units [I.U.s]

Organise students into expert groups of 4 or 5. Students A (who listened to the audio about Peterhouse College) work together, and students B (who listened to the audio about Vilnius University) work together. Ask students to compare their notes in the group. Then, give out the lists of I.U.s (Appendix 6 and 8) and have students use the grid and their listening notes to score themselves. They may wish to do that individually first and then compare within their groups.

2. Sharing information in pairs using students' notes

Reorganise students into pairs so that student A works with student B. Remind them that they can use their notes, but not the list of I.U.s. Encourage them to take notes while listening to the partner. Then, let students come back to their expert groups and share what they learnt (this can be optional).

3. Discussing I.U.s and criteria for a good summary

Remind students of the task in Lesson 1 when they had to chunk the transcript of Corpus Christi College tour and mark the main and supporting ideas, transitions, and redundancies in the text. Have students discuss different contexts when notes can be helpful and then brainstorm what a good summary is. Then, give them the 5Cs (Appendix 9, also slide 9).

Once they have the idea, have them go through their notes highlighting the main ideas. Again, you can ask them to try individually and then compare with a partner.

Ask them to follow the directions in the student pages and write a summary. Remind them of the word limit and set a time limit (maybe 10 – 15 minutes). Students may wish to choose what tour they want to summarise (Appendices 6 & 8 present IUs and exemplar summaries are in Appendix 10).

If you are short of time, ask students to write a summary at home and bring it to the next class.

4. Review and evaluation

To round up the lesson, have students discuss over these points:

1. How interesting was this lesson and the previous lesson on note-taking?
2. How useful was it? How difficult was this lesson?
3. What one thing would you like to improve?