

## WHAT DELAYS SHORTHAND SPEED: HESITATION

Professor Waldir Cury

The art of writing in shorthand is a complex operation. The shorthand writer (stenographer) listens to the sound and transforms it into a shorthand sign. Everything is done within a fraction of seconds. When there is hesitation, a doubt as for a word, the fluency of the writing is damaged.

Observe an example of “mental hesitation” in the dictation which was posted by the student Claudio Machado, a resident of Belém (PA). Notice how “hesitation” with regard to the word “planejamento” harmed the shorthand writing fluency.

As he had not used the brief forms referring to several words in the text, I asked him to study well the brief forms contained in the dictation (the word “planejamento” itself, the reason for his hesitation, is a brief form!)

Claudio followed the direction and posted a new video of the same dictation, this time taken down in shorthand without hesitation and using the brief forms found in the text. Notice how fluency clearly improved in the second dictation.

- 1) Dictation “with hesitation”:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pniXEuAtGe0&p=E5B9A5037DC0FF0E&playnext=1&index=22>

- 2) Dictation “without hesitation”;

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVnLhIqFqcU>

(FOR A BETTER EXPLANATION OF THE SUBJECT, READ THE FOLLOWING PASSAGES FROM MY ARTICLE “THE STENOGRAPHIC BRAIN”)

THE SHORTHAND SPEED IS LOCATED IN THE BRAIN

It is important to emphasize that the shorthand speed is located in the brain and not, as many people think, in the hand. It is in the brain that shorthand signs are formed. It is there where the sound is transformed into a graphic sign. The hand will take down in shorthand the formed sign sent by the brain.

When the brain is not able “to instantaneously draw” the sounds of a word due to a doubt or hesitation in the formation of a shorthand sign, the hand is stuck, the graphic fluency is interrupted, one or several words are missed, the shorthand taking down is harmed.

#### THE ATTAINMENT OF SHORTHAND SPEED

The shorthand speed is attained step by step by means of the training of “progressive dictations”. The training stands for real “shorthand workout”, an intellectual gym which keeps maturing, strengthening the brain capacity of forming the shorthand signs more and more instantaneously.

The attainment of shorthand speed requires training, time, and dedicated study. Each dictation must be “well digested”. The words of difficult design, as well as the conventional signs contained in each dictation must be trained repeatedly, in a systematic and concentrated way, several times, today and tomorrow, for several days.

#### LEARNING SHORTHAND – A NEW LITERACY

Juvêncio Barbosa referring to literacy, in his book *Alfabetização e Leitura* (Literacy and Reading) makes the following comment:

“In these conditions, the process of learning is made up – before anything else – of moments of experience or familiarization, interspersed with moments of systematization devoted to observation, comparison, deduction, etc.”

It is interesting to notice that this approach to the literacy of common writing is the very same as the literacy of shorthand signs. In order to achieve familiarization with the signs, it is essential for the student to carry out systematic study and training, and to

get involved in what is learned in each lesson, by means of “observation, comparison, deduction” of the signs. It is through systematic training that the student acquires familiarization with the shorthand signs, learns how to draw and correct them; learns how to identify and decipher each word taken down in shorthand. It is only by means of exercises and dedicated study that the sounds turned into graphic codes may be deciphered, interpreted and translated from their intuited sense.

#### THE BRAIN AND ITS PROCESSING OF SHORTHAND SIGNS

In accordance with the advance of the speed training (more words added in each minute), the volume of data processed by the brain increases considerably. The intellectual activity becomes more and more intense and complex. A broader volume of data and a larger quantity of words listened to require more speed in the mental formation of shorthand signs, as well as more intense doses of concentration.

Let us compare the speed for reasoning out the same text dictated at the speeds of 20 words and 60 words a minute.

For each increase in speed, especially at higher speeds, the time spent for the command of that speed is redoubled. We may compare this increase to the climbing up of stairs of which the steps become wider as one progresses upwards, i.e., the distance (the time applied to studying) to be covered to reach the next level becomes longer.

It is interesting to notice that at the same time as the volume of sounds turned into graphic codes increases, it also becomes compact. That is to say, the larger the volume of data to be processed, the more compact it becomes. Twenty words a minute, sixty words a minute, and further still, a hundred and twenty words a minute. Not to mention the amount of shorthand signs which are required for certain words with many syllables, which are taken down only by means of basic signs, i.e., without the use of special compact resources provided by initial and terminal signs, as well as conventional signs.

Daily practice shows that in order to move from a high speed of 120 words a minute to 130 words a minute, longer periods of training, larger quantity of dictations, more dedication, more methodical study and perseverance are required.

Using a term from IT, we can say that by attaining a new speed we “upgrade” the brain areas which are responsible for all that learning, training and attainment of shorthand speed, all those multiple simultaneous operations: listening to the sound, transforming it into a shorthand sign, and transferring it onto paper by the hand. We set a more powerful “processor” into our brains, a broader and more efficient range of memory. Thanks to this more powerful “processor” and to this broader and more efficient range of memory, by attaining a new speed, we grow more mature in our performance of the art of shorthand writing and can exert it with a greater mastery.