

THE ROUTINE OF THE PLENARY ASSEMBLY
DOES NOT INCREASE SHORTHAND SPEED!

Prof. Waldir Cury
Retired Stenographer/reviser of the Legislative Assembly of Rio de Janeiro – Brazil
Shorthand Teacher

(Portuguese to English translation: Claudio Bizzocchi.)

It is very common for a newly appointed stenographer to think that the daily practice of writing down, in shorthand, what plenary speakers are delivering, will make their shorthand speed increase.

In fact, this actually does not happen because there is no relationship of cause and effect between the shorthand act per se and an increase in speed.

We can compare a stenographer writing in shorthand in a plenary assembly to a pianist playing at a concert. The pianist, on this very special occasion, exhibits efficiency, skill and ability that have already been acquired in endless hours of study, devotion, practice and training. The magnificent execution, the exquisite performance, admirable fluency, the prodigious domain of a pianist are the result of a daily, unceasing and untiring work previously performed at home.

The pianist - it is important to repeat and emphasize - will display at the concert, an already acquired and mastered prowess!

It is the same with the stenographer. The "concert" of the stenographer is the act of writing down, in shorthand, what speakers are conveying. The performance, fluency and proficiency are in close and direct relationship with the constant, systematic, repetitive training of the progressive speed dictations executed at home in a careful and dedicated manner.

The more the stenographer trains speed dictations, repeats words difficult to trace (thus eliminating mental hesitations at the moment of writing in shorthand!) as well as assimilates conventional signs, gets the graphomotor automatism achieved exactly with

gradual speed dictations, the better the performance, accuracy and fluency will be at the time of writing down, in shorthand, what the speakers are proclaiming.

Through devoted study of dictations with progressive speeds, the stenographer accustoms the brain to the work of performing analysis and synthesis, instant construction of signs, and unraveling graphic execution, briskly and without hesitation.

Every new speed level obtained, new synapses are formed in the brain. This is why there is the need for a concentrated and prolonged study of each and every speed, in order to give enough time for new synapses to be formed.

This importance given to the brain is paramount because, as stated by Nataletti, Gregg and Galletti, "shorthand is performed by the brain, not the hands". In fact, it is inside the brain where shorthand outlines are formed before being jotted down on paper.

I remember when I started working as a stenographer at Alerj. It was customary in the Shorthand Department to see a stenographer dictating a speed dictation to another stenographer. The speed training among stenographers was a deep-rooted custom! And it was a fascinating scene to see: stenographers of the highest ranking willing to become even greater!

During my professional life as a stenographer, I developed the following habit: every day, after breakfast, I used to sit at a desk to train speed dictations. I wrote in shorthand, again and again, words difficult to trace from a certain dictation, repeating exhaustedly the brief forms, and "digesting" the same dictation throughout the entire week. The following week, I would be busy with another dictation.

Even with the advent of the electronic recorder, which greatly facilitated the hard work of stenographers, I continued to train my speed every day. The electronic recorder then became an ally because it was an important tool in acquiring speed. It became a "teacher who did not get tired of repeating the same dictation!"

Another great virtue of the electronic recorder is to assist in the correction of the text translated from each shorthand dictation. A dictation is written in shorthand, then translated and checked by listening again to the recording in comparison to the translated text. This way, we know exactly how many words were lost and how many were mistranslated. And therefore, the electronic recorder ends up fulfilling another

magnificent employment: it becomes a great and incomparable assistant in the stenographer's improvement!

Train dictations, train words, train conventional signs, and train **“resistance dictations...”** this is the secret to leverage and boost the shorthand speed!

“Resistance dictations” are dictations with less speed, but with a longer duration like ten, fifteen, twenty, thirty minutes! These dictations, besides the "resistance" they provide stenographers, allow them to write in shorthand for a longer period of time and thus, have the collateral function of "enhancing" the very act of writing in shorthand. Therefore, they offer stenographers the opportunity of a more careful "management" of writing shorthand signs on paper, as well as a more accurate “control” of both the size and perfection of the signs, that is, without any distortion.

The perfection of signs, even when writing in shorthand at high speeds, is an absolute necessity that every professional stenographer must master because, as they say, there is no point in being “super fast” if it is not “super readable”!

Finally, to conclude my thesis, I can say - based on the experience I have had over the years - in relation to the increase in shorthand speed, it is worth more three months of technical training, as detailed above, than ten years working at the plenary assembly!
