

The Important Principles of Summary Writing

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ABSTRACT: The effectiveness of summary writing has been investigated in myriad empirical studies and research. The aim of this article is to investigate how writing summaries helps learners who are intending to learn a language as a second or foreign language to ameliorate their production in different skills.

This study has been framed around the following questions:

- a) how is summary writing defined by eminent scholars?
- b) what types of summaries exist and their effectiveness in SLA or FLA?
- c) what steps should be taken into consideration in writing summaries?
- d) what principles need to be followed or avoided in summary writing?

So as to analyze the afore-mentioned questions, various academic and linguistic resources were analyzed and compared.

KEYWORDS: summary writing, reader-based, writer-based, paraphrasing, academic dishonesty.

INTRODUCTION

Most educators and learners are aware of the importance of acquiring enough knowledge about the rules of writing summary which has effectiveness in learning foreign languages. Muller (2008) analyzed indispensable aims of writing summary in both academic and general fields in learning languages. Knowing how to highlight the gist of a text in a condensed form helps you better understand the main ideas of a text. Additionally, it provides an easy reference for your own research and serves as a first step for critically analyzing the text. It is evident that given materials seem difficult to understand for most learners in classroom, especially, in academic fields, materials are usually arduous for learners to comprehend because of academic language and myriad terms which related to the topic. In these cases, summarizing the entire texts is a productive way in catching the main points and in having successful comprehension of contexts. In teaching process, instructors sometimes give a task to their students to write a summary for videos like Ted talks or academic lectures in which they encounter difficulties in catching meanings while watching or reading them. Consequently, it will be far easier to understand speeches given by the people who are involved in academic areas.

The purposes of this literature review are to describe a) the definition and types of summary writing, b) stages of summary writing and paraphrasing, c) Dos and Don'ts of writing summary.

The definition of summary writing.

Summary writing have been defined differently by myriad scholars in different periods. According to my comprehension, summarizing reduces a text to its main idea and necessary information. According to Suzanne Hidi and Valerie Anderson (1986), a summary is “the production based on existing text is fundamentally different from the average composing task. Most other writing activities require careful planning of content and structure, generation of core ideas and related details, and continuous shifting between these processes. Summarization, on the other hand, involves operations based on already planned and generated discourse”. In the last quarter of XX century, summary writing was paid a great deal of attention by educational scholars for instance, when Brown and Day (1983) and Brown, Day, and Jones (1983) argued that “the formation of a summary of extended text is not an automatic outcome of either comprehension or recall, and that it involves additional and deliberate strategies”, the other two researchers N.Johnson and Winograd provided a strong support for their opinion about the process of writing summary. N.Johnson (1983) concluded that children's recall of stories is automatic processing for them while summarizing requires from learners to identify important elements of the context. Winograd (1984) suggested that “whereas comprehension requires readers to form mental representations, summarizing demands additional evaluations of the relative importance of the elements of such representations”. Another eminent scholar, Martin Muller also did research on summary writing and he also gave various explanations about it. Martin Muller (2008) described that summaries are condense an original text by increasing the level of abstraction, present the key points of an argument and therefore require to distinguish between main and subsidiary information, have a clearly arranged structure and are written in a logical and traceable fashion, reflect only the opinion of the original writer, paraphrased with new words.

3. Types of summary writing.

In terms of types of summary writing, functionally, there are two broad types of summaries: a) writer- based summaries which writers produce for themselves,

b) reader-based summaries which are written for the benefit of audience. These two types of summaries appear not only to have different functions but also to be written in different conditions and ways (Flower,1979). A writer- based summaries are written for writer's own benefits to comprehend the context or to provide vital segments of the given text. S.Hidi and V.Anderson sited clear explanations about reader-based summaries, “a reader-based summary is produced for the benefit of an audience, such as a school teacher, university professor, or the readers of a newspaper or journal. The function of this type of summary varies from having to demonstrate one's ability to pull out and condense accurately the important ideas of a given text, to trying to arouse people's interest by providing them with the gist of some written text, as in the case of a newspaper's book critic who is recommending a book to readers”. Some scholars like Brown & Day, & Jones (1983) Hahn & Goldman (1983), Marshall (1984) had an argument about the quality of these two different

types of summaries: “only reader-based summaries have strict space limitations has further implications” is the considering that according to Brown & Day (1983). Hare & Borchardt (1984) and Winograd (1982) claims that “a polishing strategy” that differentiates a good, rough summary from a finished product suitable for outside reading”. Suzanne Hidi and Valerie Anderson (1986) made a conclusion that reader-based summaries are qualitatively and quantitatively different from and much more complicated than writer – based summaries.

4. The stages of summary writing.

There are several stages which learners adhere to while they are focusing on writing summaries. Muller (2008) gave a full explanation about 6 steps of writing summary:

1. Create a header. Every summary has a head which consists of some elements such as the date, name of the writer, and the full reference of summary,
- 2) Draft a structural outline. Planning what we are going to write is an essential part of summary writing,
- 3) Develop the main arguments. Catching main points given in the context is the third stage of summary writing,
- 4) Write your summary. Finally, we can begin to write our summary by following other vital stages,
- 5) Revise. It means proofread your summary in order to find grammatical, spelling or punctuation mistakes,
- 6) Final check which means that checking the structure of the work to know whether is well-organized or not.

In recent years, two researchers Yuan-Shan Chen and Shao-Wen Su did research on how to write a good summary and they gave more clear indication about stages of summary writing. They described 7 stages of summary writing:

- a) read the heading of the passage carefully and comprehend what the passage is about (read for gist),
- b) realize which information can be summarized,
- c) find out related main points and omit details, examples, illustrations, politeness and repetition,
- d) organize the main points in order and remember that text order cannot be changed,
- e) Paraphrase the original text not changing the meaning and begin your first draft. Beginning with a thesis statement is very important to control the whole paragraph, f) keep connection of main points with linking words to ensure clear logical transition,
- g) write the final draft and proofread it before you submit (Yuan Shan Chen and Shao-Wen Su, 2011).

5. Dos and Don'ts of writing summary.

There are several principles which learners should adhere and avoid while writing summary. Paraphrasing is the most crucial in summary writing. Paraphrasing is considered by many to be an important skill for academic writing, and some have argued that the teaching of paraphrasing might

help students avoid copying from source texts. Few studies, however, have investigated the ways in which both L1 and L2 academic writers already use paraphrasing as a textual borrowing strategy when completing their academic assignments. (Casey Keck,2006). Campbell (1990) and Johns and Mayes (1990) suggest that paraphrasing is one of a number of strategies (including summary and quotation) that students can use when integrating source texts into their writing. Campbell further notes that students' inability to paraphrase effectively may, in part, help to explain their inappropriate copying. Though the teaching of paraphrasing has been recommended in the literature and a number of resources exist which provide examples of acceptable paraphrasing strategies, only a few studies have attempted to describe the ways in which university students already use paraphrasing as a strategy for integrating source texts into their writing. Those studies which have identified paraphrases in student writing (Campbell,1990), Johns & Mayes(1990), Pecorari(2003), Winograd (1984). Besides paraphrasing, there are myriad doses of summary writing. Muller (2008) explained dos and don'ts of summary writing: a) stay close to the text in what you write but do not plagiarize. It means that while writing a summary, we should not add other irrelevant information or our own words since it may affect the meaning of the text. b) avoid overly detailed accounts. Details and examples or some citations can be omitted, d) be careful when translating terms from a foreign language. It is important but may be difficult to find a good equivalent since many words have different meanings and they may not be appropriate in some contexts. In terms of don'ts the first thing which we should avoid while writing summaries. Writers should not normally use bullet points, except perhaps in highly technical enumerations. Direct quotations should not be frequently utilized. Paraphrasing them in our own words is much more acceptable. Our own opinion should not be involved. Consequently, it may affect the meaning of the text. Technical terms or specialized vocabulary should not be changed. They denote a specific concept for which there are usually few exact synonyms. Connecting points is crucial to form a coherent argument.

6. Conclusion

The reviewed literature suggested that there are several principles, stages and dos and don'ts of summary writing which is the most crucial type of writing for learners and educators in order to comprehend materials. While writing the literature review, I found out myriad important aspects of summary writing besides academic dishonesty and its counterproductive outcomes. I have learned about two types of summaries from the research by eminent scholar who proved that those types play fundamentally important role in learners' performances in language learning. Catching main points described in academic writings or reading passages by writing summaries is an effective way for learners to ameliorate their production in writing and reading. Summarizing helps you understand and learn important information by reducing information to its key ideas. Summaries can be used for annotation and study notes as well as to expand the depth of your writing.

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