

Iraqi Preparatory Schools Learners Use of Summarization Strategies on the Development of Writing Ability

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استعمال طلبة الدراسات الاعدادية العراقية لستراتيجيات التلخيص في تطوير قابلية الكتابة

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الملخص

تناول هذا البحث استعمال طلبة الدراسة الاعدادية لستراتيجيات التلخيص في تطوير مهارة الكتابة، ولتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة صممت تجربة اذا اختيرت مجموعتان وان احدى المجموعتين اختيرت لتكون المجموعة التجريبية التي تدرس استراتيجيات التلخيص والمجموعة الثانية هي المجموعة الضابطة والتي لا تدرس استراتيجيات التلخيص، وظهرت النتائج وجود فروق ذات دلالة احصائية بين المجموعتين في تحصيلها في كتابة الملخصات لصالح المجموعة التجريبية.

Abstract

This study deals with Iraqi preparatory schools learners use of summarization strategies on the development of writing ability.

To fulfill the aim of the study, an experiment is designed. One of the two groups is assigned to be the experimental group, which taught summary writing strategies and the other one is the control group which is not taught summary writing strategies.

The results appeared that there are statistically significant differences between the two groups in their achievement in summary writing in favor of experimental group

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1-Introduction:

Good writing skills usually develop from extensive reading, some training, and a good deal of practice.

Most students through their academic life have to condense information from lessons and other bibliographical sources in order to fulfill certain assignments in their own field of study (Palmer, 1998: 7).

Summarize information is an essential skill for preparatory schools students learning English as a foreign language. It is a technique that intends to highlight the main points of a writer's work written in the students 'own words. It is one of the most useful strategies in how to write in English (Meyers, 2006: 232).

It has been found out that Iraqi preparatory school Learners have not been trained to use summary writing. Thus, most of them face difficulties in summarizing the contents of a given passage.

To fulfill the aim of the present study, the researcher attempts to test the following hypothesis:

1-There are no statistically significant difference between the experimental group, which is taught summarization strategies, and the control group, which is not taught summarization writing.

2-Iraqi preparatory schools learners face difficulties in writing a good summary.

2-Summary writing

Summary writing helps the students to increase their abilities to understand the main ideas in a text and explain those ideas in a written form. Therefore, if we teach our students how to sum up a text and how to condense its information, we will similarly enhance their reading and writing abilities.

Langan (2001: 395) mentions that summarization can be a real aid to understanding; one must “get inside” the material and realize fully what is being said before one can reduce its meaning to a few words.

The first step in preparing summary writing is to search for the topic sentence. The development of the central idea of the paragraph usually follows the topic sentence logically (Wishon and Burks, 2005: 395).

A summary is a way to demonstrate the students understanding of a reading and of getting to the main points and rejecting the less important material. So, it begins with reading and ends up with writing.

Summarizing shows the full comprehension of the source text, because only those who comprehend the original text will be able to create a new version of it by condensing the gist of the text using their own words (Winograd, 1984:404).

Creating a summary is also identified with the development of the organizing abilities, based on the rearrangement of the information in a way that should be both clear and appealing (Donin et al., 1992:209).

The characteristics of a good summary are:

- 1- Be brief.
- 2- Describe the main topic or theme of the selection.
- 3- Include only the important information.
- 4- Omit minor or irrelevant details.
- 5- Organize the information in clear way.
- 6- Restate the meaning in the reader's own words. (AL-Hamash, 1981:143)

2-1 A Topic Sentence

When one reads the topic sentence, one knows what to expect in the paragraph

A good topic sentence often has a controlling idea.

Words or phrases that help guide the flow of ideas in the paragraph as in the following:

- 1-The best season for kids is winter
- 2- People from many different cultures live in Los Angeles (Folse et al., 1999:37).

Chaplen (1970:1) points out that the controlling idea is developed in a paragraph. It is a restricting idea because it limits the information that can be included in its paragraph.

Most topic sentences have three distinct parts, subject, verb and controlling idea. The main function of the controlling idea, then, is to focus or narrow the subject (Gallo and Rink, 1985:2-3).

So, we must exclude material that does not develop the controlling idea.

2-2 Support

Each sentence in a good paragraph may be classified into one of two groups: major support sentences or minor support sentences. A major support sentence has only one job, it develops the controlling idea of a paragraph by telling the reader something new or different about that idea. It directly supports the controlling idea by making that idea more easily understood.

A minor support sentence has two jobs, it develops its major support sentence by telling the reader something new or different about sentence and it helps its major support sentence develops the controlling idea (Chaplen , 1970:14).

The controlling idea, the major support sentence and the minor support sentence are all clear and easily understood (ibid).

Gallo and Rink (1985:74) mention that each major support sentence directly supports the controlling idea by telling the reader something new about it. Each minor support sentence directly supports its major support by developing it and making it more easily understood and indirectly supports the controlling idea by helping its major support sentence develops that idea.

2-3 Organization

If one takes time before he writes to think about the relationships between ideas, one can save oneself sometime frustration.

Outlining is the key to organization. In organizing a successful summary, one first needs to outline the points s/he wants to make and arrange them in order of importance. If one plunges in and tries to handle too many ideas at once, one is likely to place small ideas where large ones belong and vice versa.

The structure of the outline represents the proper positioning of smaller ideas in relation to larger, more significant ones. The thesis or topic sentence contains the dominant idea, the larger idea and it is expressed in the form of a generalization. The primary support is also a generalization, but it is narrower and more focused than the thesis it supports. The secondary and tertiary support represent the specifics, the small ideas, that develop the larger thoughts (Gallo and Rink (1985:98)).

2-4 The relationship between the Summary Writing Method and Communicative Approach

One of the most important characteristics of communicative language teaching is that it pays systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language. Communicative teaching, on the other hand, advances the claim that language is acquired through communication, so that it is not merely a question of activating an existing but inert knowledge of the language, but of stimulating the development of the language system itself. Language that is meaningful to the learner supports the learning process. Learning activities are consequently selected according to how well they engage the learner in meaningful and authentic language use (rather than merely mechanical practice of language patterns (Richards and Rodgers) 2001:155).

According to palmer (1996:123), summary writing is also a communicative activity which focuses on integrating the skills of reading and writing. In summary writing the students should first read the text and understanding it with the meaning of the new word, and then write down on a sheet of paper the main ideas using their own words and the main sentences using paraphrasing. After that, the students start to write their first draft of the summary, next check the language of the written summary. Finally, the students should write their final versions of the summary.

Brown (2001:43) says that students are given opportunities to focus on their own learning process through an understanding of their own styles of learning and through the development of appropriate strategies for autonomous learning.

So both communicative approach and summary writing use integrated skills and both of them encourage students to use an interactive process inside the classroom.

3. The procedures

In order to fulfill the aim of the study and test its hypothesis an experiment is conducted. These procedures include Sample Selection, Pilot administration, the post-test and Statistical Tools.

3-1 The Experimental Design

Christensen (1980:150) states that the design of any experiment is very important and should be an appropriate one because it determines the possibility of obtaining valid, objective and accurate answers to research questions.

So it is necessary to choose an appropriate design to determine whether or not valid objective and accurate the results which will be obtained.

Brown (2001:211) declares the following design:

- 1-Selecting two groups at random and assigning them to an experimental and a control group.
- 2-The independent variable is administered to the experimental group.
- 3-Both groups of subject submit to "a pre-test and post-test" to measure the influence of the dependent variable.

The experimental group is taught by using summarization strategies, while the control group is taught by using the traditional method. The experiment is lasted two months. The scores of both groups are compared to see if there is any significant difference between the two groups or not.

3-2 Sample Selection

The sample of the present study is the pupils of sixth year preparatory schools in Iraq. They are native speakers of Arabic who have similar EFL background and their average age is eighteen years old. Sample selection procedures are considered as one of the most important variables that can affect experimental research. This variable has been controlled by the random selection of the groups.

Huitt et al. (1999:2) clarify that the subjects in the comparison groups should be functionally equivalent at the beginning of the study. If they are, then observed the difference between the groups as measured by the performances of the dependent variable, at the end of the study. If the comparison groups are different from one another at the beginning of the study the results of the study are biased.

3-3 Pilot Administration

Before making the main administration of the test, a pilot study has been administrated involving preparatory schools learners. They are selected randomly. The test is intended to estimate the time required for answering the test and to know whether the questions are clear to the subjects, to find out which of them need modification and to evaluate item analysis. The pilot test has revealed that the time required to answer the whole items of the test is one hour. In addition all the results got from the pilot administration have helped the researcher in making the final administration.

3-4 The Post-test

The primary role of an achievement test is to determine acquisition of a course objective at the end of period of instruction. An achievement test should support the teaching to which they relate (Brown, 2001:391).

So, a written test is prepared to measure the student's ability to write in English by using the summary writing.

The subjects of the control group and experimental group were post-tested on 4/1/2014.

The whole tests were applied by the researcher.

3-5 Statistical Tools

The following statistical tools were used in this study:

1-The "t-test" formula is used in order to identify whether there are any significant differences between the two groups in certain variables such as age and level of achievement in English. It is also used to calculate the statistical difference between experimental and control group in the pre-test and post-test.

$$t = \frac{x_1 - x_2}{\sqrt{\frac{(n_1 - 1)s_1^2 + (n_2 - 1)s_2^2}{(n_1 + n_2) - 2} \times \left(\frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2}\right)}}$$

Where:

x_1 = the mean of the experimental group

x_2 = the mean of control group

n_1 = the number of experimental group

n_2 = the number of control group

s_1 = the variance of the experimental group

s_2 = the variance of the control group (Brown and Rodgers, 2002:208)

2-One – sample-t-test of two tailed for correlated samples to test the difference between the pre-test and post-test within each group, i.e. experimental and control group.

$$t = \frac{\bar{D}}{SD/\sqrt{n}}$$

\bar{D} : Mean of difference between scores.

SD : Standard deviation of difference between scores.

N : Number of subjects.

4- Discussion of the Results

The statistical analysis of the results indicates that the mean value of the experimental group was found to be (67.2) which is higher than the mean value of the control group, in the post-test which was found to be (40.7). This means that the achievement of learners in the experimental group is significantly higher in the average than the achievement of learners in the control group in the total scores of the post test. This indicates that summarization strategies have a positive effect on the student development in writing.

The results of the present study are in agreement with those of Slimary (1992), which shows that there are significant differences between the achievement of the preparatory schools learners experimental group, who were instructed according to summarization strategies and the achievements of their colleagues in the control group, which is not taught summarization strategies, in their achievements scores in summary writing.

5- Conclusions

The study has investigated the efficiency of using summarization strategies in the development of writing ability of the preparatory school learners. The following conclusions can be drawn:

- 1- The results of the pre-test of the subjects indicate that preparatory schools learners face difficulties in writing a summary since they have got low marks.
- 2- The results of the post-test for two independent samples show that there is a significant difference between the subjects of the groups. This difference is in favor of the subjects of the experimental group who is taught summarization strategies. Therefore, the previous hypothesis which states that there are no statistically differences between the experimental group and the control group in their achievement in summary writing is rejected and an alternative hypothesis is accepted which states that there are statistically significant differences between the experimental group and the control group in their achievement in summary writing.
- 3- Summary writing strategies enable learners to comprehend and improve their writing ability and make them less independent on the teacher.
- 4- Summary writing is proved to be more effective and offers an attractive alternative to the traditional way of teaching writing.

6- Recommendations

In the light of the results, the following recommendations may be helpful for students, teachers, and syllabus designers:

- 1- Teaching of summarization strategies as skill in preparatory schools is the best way for developing the reading and the writing ability.
- 2- Syllabus designers should stress the implementation of summary writing in the curriculum for the subjects of the preparatory schools.
- 3- The teachers are recommended not to use traditional methods of writing, such as writing composition. So, they advised to teach summarization strategies to enhance students writing ability.

Experimental Group	Control Group
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**Appendix-1-
The Test**

Three thieves broke into a rich man’s house and took his money. They carried all his money to a lonely room where they lived. They sent the youngest of them to the nearest village to buy some food. When he was away his friends thought of killing him to have all the money. He also thought of killing his friends. He bought the food and put poison into it. When he returned to the room, the others jumped upon him and killed him. Then they sat down and ate the food the result was that all of them died.

Q1: Summarize the following passage in clear and correct English. Your summary must not exceed 40 words.

Q2: Answer the following questions using information found in the above passage.

- 1- Where did the thieves live?
- 2-Why did they break into the rich man’s house?
- 3-What did the youngest thief put into the food?
- 4-What did the others do to the youngest thief?
- 5- What was the result?

No.	Scores	No.	Scores
1	80	1	35
2	51	2	42
3	58	3	45
4	60	4	36
5	85	5	30
6	70	6	31
7	80	7	35
8	65	8	29
9	72	9	45
10	72	10	58
11	58	11	45
12	65	12	62
13	73	13	30
14	71	14	52
15	70	15	44
16	73	16	52
17	60	17	35
18	74	18	40
19	63	19	54
20	61	20	41

**Appendix-2-
Learner’s post-test Scores**

$x_1 = 68.1$	$x_2 = 42.5$
$\sum yi_1 = 1360$	$\sum yi_2 = 850$
$\sum yi_1^2 = 93520$	$\sum yi_2^2 = 38755$
$\sum (yi_1)^2 = 186225$	$\sum (yi_2)^2 = 719216$
SD = 8.352	SD = 8.580
$S^2 = 70.460$	$S^2 = 73.693$

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