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## SUMMARIZATION AS AN INDISPENSABLE LANGUAGE SKILL FOR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY INDEPENDENT LEARNING

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study examines the effect of instruction in summarization on SSII students' achievements of reading comprehension in Bauchi local Government area of Bauchi State. The objectives of this study were to determine the extend to which instruction will enhance SSII students' ability to identify main ideas in a given passage, to determine students' ability to identify supporting details in a given passage and to determine students' ability to summarize a passage effectively. A non-probability judgement was used to select a sample size of 368 from a population of 8,440 students of SSII in all public schools in Bauchi local government Area of Bauchi state. Pre-test and Post-test were the instrument used for data collection while the arithmetic mean and T-test were used for data analysis and interpretation. The findings rejected the null hypothesis at 0.05 level of significance and concludes that the alternative was accepted, thus there is a significant difference between students who were taught summarization and those weren't taught. The study recommended that there should be seminars and workshops on the strategies to improve instructions in summarization. There should concerted effort on the part of teachers' trainers to inculcate in teachers the practice of teaching summarization as a process not a product. Lastly, there should be summary competition for students in order to spur students' skills and strategies for effective summarization.

**Keywords:** Instruction, Summarization, Summary, Comprehension, Reading comprehension.

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The importance of learning English language has been reinforced for many decades throughout the world as a means of global communication because of its

key position in the international arena as a language of technology, politics, business, commerce, education, etc. In Nigeria, English language, though a second language, occupies a central position as a lingua franca which makes it the language of the public domain and the official language of transacting any government business. It also serves as a medium of instruction in school and a subject of study in school. Despite the prominent position of English language in Nigeria, the performance of students in English language as a subject and English language medium examinations has left much to be desired. The abysmal performance of students in English language and other school subjects is usually attributed to poor reading culture and writing skills of students. Reading and writing are indispensable skills for the academic success of students and the two skills are inextricably linked. This is why some scholar advocate the joint teaching of the skills which means reading should involve some response in form of writing and reading should involve writing like news on the board.

Summarization establishes a link between reading and writing because until students understand that “whatever is written is to be read and whatever is read was written and can be responded to” they will not be active readers and good writers. Summarization instruction puts this consciousness in students by helping them to extract only important information from print to form their response. Cho (2012) lamented the lack of instruction in summary writing even though it was used to ascertain comprehension. He stated further that most English as a second language or English as foreign language teachers do not know exactly how to teach summary writing even though they recognize summary writing is important. Students are often asked to write summaries without adequate instruction which makes them to struggle through their academic life. Students with poor understanding of summarization will have obscure knowledge of reading comprehension which is primarily a sieving process.

Choy and Lee (2012) state that summary writing is an important skill for students to learn in English as a second language because it allows them to paraphrase and summarize what they have read at the same time interpreting what they have understood from the passage. This shows that summary writing combines both reading and writing and it aids comprehension.

Because of the complex nature of summarization, students usually have problems writing good summaries especially as second language learners. Enright et al. (2000) state that summary writing is an integrative task that involves the interplay of two abilities: the ability to understand the main idea and rhetorical organization of a text and the ability to compose a succinct and coherent reinstatement of the author’s gist. This integrative task is very challenging for

ESL/EFL learners, as their deficiencies in reading and writing might lead to breakdowns at certain points in the process of summary writing, ranging from identifying key words to combining ideas into a coherent restatement.

Despite the relevance of summarization to reading, very few students show mastery of the skill throughout their academic life. Khoshnevis and Parvinnejad (2015) state that very few students are proficient at summarizing all the materials they encounter as many students have not developed comprehension strategies required to condense what they have read into manageable chunks of information. Summary requires students to distinguish between important, less important and trivial information and to make judgment of the main ideas and supporting details.

Asking students to read and summarize reading selections without the teacher's describing and routinely modeling of how to use appropriate summarization strategy especially of varying text length, content area, and complexity will not improve the students' summarization ability which is critical to the overall comprehension level of students.

Annadale (2005) in Umeadi (2011) states that, in Nigeria, the teaching of comprehension is still viewed as the simple task of providing learners with many opportunities to read a piece of text and respond to a variety of questions. The number of correct responses provided by learners is then taken as an indication of their level of understanding of the text. This pedagogic misconception is the brain behind most reading failures which account for academic failures in schools in Nigeria. Comprehension, once seen as an act of asking students to read and answer questions, has more to it. According to Harcourt (2004), effective teachers now know that reading passages and answering questions are far too shallow as students may only be doing guess work. These teachers understand the importance of providing explicit instruction in multiple comprehension strategies in which summarization is one.

For many students and teachers, comprehension is defined by the questions supplied in reading passages. These questions may range from literal and inferential to evaluative questions. The fact of the matter is that, such questions are only assessing comprehension not teaching it.

This has been the ugly trend in most ESL classrooms which leave students to grapple with exercises given to them. According to Maloney (2005), educators have asked students barrage of questions under the guise of reading instruction, but there is little evidence to suggest this practice had positive results.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### THE CONCEPT OF READING COMPREHENSION

Reading comprehension is, conceivably, the most essential academic skill learned in school. It is a tool for students in the formal education process just like knives, machetes, hoes, bulldozers are tools to the farmer. As the ultimate goal and essence of reading, reading for understanding should be a primary focus in reading instruction and intervention to enable students to understand and learn from text (Douglas & Albro, 2014).

In the field of literacy research, comprehension is a complex term to define. It is not a single process that happens within a reader's mind, but encapsulates many different components in order for a reader to make sense of a text (Kintsch & Kintsch, 2005). Reading comprehension represents two different ideas. Reading is the identification of various words that make up a sentence, while comprehension is the ability to explain the various groups of sentences that formed the reading material. According to Rogers (2007), comprehension is intense active work between the reader and the text with full concentration. Reading, according to Dewey (2002) and Givon (1999), is a complex psychological process which involves mastery of the language signals (such as letter, words, sentence structure) and such psychological factors as readiness, interest motivation and the likes. Reading comprehension is more than pronouncing words though misconstrued by many as simply the act of pronouncing words.

Reading is a complex process including a combination of perceptual, psycholinguistic and cognitive abilities (Adam, 1990). Furthermore, reading is interactive between reader and text. It requires sufficient knowledge of language, and sufficient knowledge of the word and a given topic (Grabe, 1997). During the 1970s and 1980s, Smith (1979) Claimed that reading would not be a linear process but the one in which readers might constantly form hypothesis, test predictions, and use their knowledge of word and of the language to construct meaning. It is widely accepted that the three key components of reading are accuracy, fluency and comprehension (Cummins, 2007).

Defining reading comprehension may not be an easy task since a lot of cognitive processes are involved in the process of reading. Johnston (1983) sees reading comprehension as the process of using the cues provided by the author and one's previous knowledge to infer the author's meaning. However, a lot more is involved in reading comprehension than inferencing, as various other authors conceptualize reading comprehension not in terms of just inferencing but other skills.

In addition, reading comprehension is a complex cognitive ability requiring the capacity to integrate text information with the prior knowledge of the reader, resulting in the elaboration of a mental representation (Anderson & Pearson, 1984). Thus, reading comprehension is an interactive process that takes place between a reader and a text. During this interaction, the reader brings variable levels of experiences and skills, which include language skills, cognitive resources and world knowledge. In reading, especially in reading comprehension, readers have been found to employ a wide range of strategies, while they are engaged in comprehending text, since reading comprehension involves conscious and unconscious use of various strategies, including problem solving strategies to build a model of meaning (Johnston, 1983).

Reading comprehension is a process consisting of the simultaneous extraction and construction of meaning through interaction and involvement with written language and consists of three essential elements: a) the text; b) the function of the text, and c) the reader's capacities, abilities, knowledge, and experience with the act of reading (Snow, 2002).

Aukerman and Aukerman (1981) observe that comprehension is the act or process of grasping with the mind. Comprehension is not getting meaning from the printed page. There is no meaning on a printed page. There are only lines and curves that we happen to call letters and from which we build words. Meaning resides not on the printed page but in the mind of the person who reads the words. Comprehension will not be found on the printed page, but in the mind of the reader who reads the words. It is a connection between the writer's and the reader's mind through the print. The text is just a medium of interaction between the reader's mind and the author's thoughts.

Comprehension is a time consuming, continuous and complex process, but one that is both satisfying and productive (Duke and Pearson 2002). The relevance of comprehension in reading is so vital that learners are expected to be able to monitor meaning and comprehension while reading. According to Keene (2005) learners should be able to tell what makes sense and what does not make sense. Learner should know when to re-read a text; know what they need to comprehend in relation to their purpose for reading; must learn to pause, consider the meanings in text and use different strategies to enhance their understanding. Possession of these tools is expected to greatly enhance comprehension.

Reading is a transactional process between the reader, the text, and the context (Rosenblatt, 1978). A perfect oral reading of a passage is not proof of comprehension as it could just be seen as barking at the print. Comprehension

facilitates motivation for wider reading. Successes at school, especially at the higher level depend on the ability to read and understand (Olaofe, 1989 and Adeyanju, 1987). For this reason, text comprehension is not only an important part of performance in English, but also an important gatekeeper skill for students as they are expected to master content – area knowledge (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006). The relationship between reading comprehension and summary is that basic comprehension facilitates summary, while summary facilitates deeper comprehension. Part of the challenges with regard to comprehension for learners is that text comprehension becomes more difficult as learners get older and are expected to process increasingly sophisticated texts. Simply put basic level literacy is insufficient in today's world where both reading and writing tasks required of adolescents are continuing to increase in complexity and difficulty.

The concept of summary is the ability to gain mastery of a text beyond its literal meaning. It is explained as a process of drawing conclusions based on facts deducted from the text which could form a representative version of the larger work. It is the deductive process through which something is worked out or made explicit in terms of what's unspoken or unwritten (Osisanwo, 2003).

For students to understand a text to be able to make a good summary, they need other reading comprehension skills like inferencing in other to extract some unwritten facts from the text. According to Wallis (2005), inferencing requires active reading and a willingness to enter into partnership with an author. Inference requires that you make logical conclusions from information given. This requires careful reading and organization of ideas presented. This goes a long way to buttressing the fact that reading comprehension is a convoluted activity.

In Pressley (2002), reading is an active process wherein readers use prior knowledge to understand new information, ask questions before, during and after reading, make inference, monitor their understanding and determine what is important as they read. This is why Keene and Zimmerman (1997) said that to summarize, as we read, is to go beyond literal interpretation and to open a world of meaning deeply connected to our lives.

## **METHODOLOGY RESEARCH DESIGN**

The experimental research design was adopted for this study. The experimental research design is selected for this study because the researcher is interested in drawing causal inferences and to observe whether the independent variable (summarization instruction) can cause any change in the dependent variable

(academic achievement of students). The manipulation was carried out through instruction using the macrorules of summarization advanced by Kintch and van Dijk (1978) which include: (a) deleting unnecessary or trivial material, (b) deleting material that is important but redundant, (c) substituting a superordinate term for a list of items, (d) substituting a superordinate term for components of an action, (e) selecting a topic sentence, and (f) when there is no topic sentence, inventing one. After instruction on how to summarise large text using these skills, the students were given a material to read and summarise. And thereafter asked to write a test on the subject of the material.

### **POPULATION OF THE STUDY**

The population of this study comprises all persons who engage in reading at all levels of education especially in this era where self-learning through electronic means is the trend and the need to read the available bulky materials and summarise is expedient. Students reading skills especially summarization needs to be sharpened to cope with out of school study which to a very large extent becoming the new normal.

### **SAMPLE SIZE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUE**

The sample for this study was \_\_\_\_\_ students of history \_\_\_\_\_ in 100 level. The convenience sampling technique was adopted to select students of \_\_\_\_\_ for the research because of the short time required for this research work. Thereafter, the simple random sampling technique without replacement was used to select the class and department of students to be used as sample. Then the simple random sampling technique with replacement was used to select the 25 students from the sampled class as the treatment sample while the rest of the students were in the control group. The use of the probability sampling techniques was deployed to give each level and students the chance of being selected.

### **INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION**

The instrument that was used for data collection was a reading comprehension passage taken from a discipline other than the students'. The choice of the passage from a discipline other than the students' was to prevent the transfer of previous knowledge already acquired by the students in answering the comprehension questions.

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## METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data obtained through the administered test were analyzed using arithmetic mean and t-test statistics of independent samples. The research question and the postulated hypothesis for this study were answered and tested statistically using mean and t-test statistics of independent samples to ascertain if there is any difference in reading comprehension performance as a result of summarization instruction at 0.05 level of significance.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This section attempts to answer the research questions posed in chapter one of this study.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 1:

To what extent does instruction in summarization improve students' comprehension achievement test?

The analysis of this research question is presented in table 4.2.1 below.

General Hassan Usman Katsina Unity College	No. Of Sample	Pre-Test Mean Score	Post-Test Mean Score	Gain Score	Judgment
<b>Control Group</b>	35	4.13	3.73	-0.4	There is a difference of 3.91 in favour of the experimental group.
<b>Experimental Group</b>	25	3.33	7.20	3.87	

The table above shows that for the control group, the pre-test mean score was 4.13 while the post-test mean score was 3.73 with a gain score of -0.4 which shows a decline in the performance of students as a result of lack of treatment. For the experimental group, the pre-test was 3.33 while the post-test mean score was 7.2 with a gain score of 3.87. The experimental group with a mean gain score of 3.87 scored higher than the control group with a gain score of -0.4. Also, the



difference in the pre-test mean scores and the post-test mean scores of -0.8 and 3.47 between the control group and experimental group reveal that show that there is a difference in reading comprehension achievements of students taught summarization through the macrorules and their counterparts that are not taught.

### RESEARCH QUESTION 2:

To what extent does instruction in summarization improve students' comprehension of subject matter contents in general?

The analysis of this research question is as depicted in table 4.2.2 below.

Government Day Secondary School, Army Barracks	No. of Sample	Pre- Test Mean Score	Post- Test Mean Score	Gain Score	Judgment
<b>Control Group</b>	35	3.47	3.8	0.33	There is a difference of 3.6 in favour of the experimental group.
<b>Experimental Group</b>	25	3.27	7.2	3.93	

Table 4.2.2 above depicts that the control group has the pre-test mean score of 3.47 and the post-test mean score of 3.8 with a gain score of 0.33 while the experimental group has the pre-test mean score of 3.27 and the post-test mean score of 7.2 with a gain score of 3.93. The gain score of the experimental group is higher than the gain score of the control group. Again, the difference in the pre-test mean scores and posttest mean scores of -0.2 and 3.4 between the two groups indicates that there is a difference in reading comprehension achievements of students taught summarization through the gist method and those that are not taught.

### RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

Two hypotheses were formulated to guide this study and they were tested using t-test statistics. The decision rule for the four hypotheses was that the null hypotheses should be rejected if the significant level is lower than the critical value of 0.05

There is no significant difference between the mean scores of students taught reading comprehension using the macrorules of summarization and their counterparts not taught.

Table 4.2.1: T- Test Analysis of Difference of Students Taught Comprehension Using the Macrorules of Summarization and Their Counterparts not Taught at 0.05 Significance Level

**Independent Sample Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean Difference
Score	Equal a	.003	.955	-9.317	58	.000	-3.669
variances assumed							

Decision Rule: Accept  $H_0$  = if Sig.  $\geq$  0.05

Since the obtained significance value of 0.000 is less than the critical value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. This indicates that there is a significant difference between the mean scores of students taught reading comprehension using the macrorules of summarization and their counterparts not taught.

$H_0$ : There is no significant difference in the mean scores of students taught summarization skills and their counterparts not taught in the comprehension of subject matter contents.

T-Test Analysis of Difference in Mean Performance of Students in Subject Matter Contents Achievement Test at 0.05 Significance Level

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means			
		F	Sig	t	Df	Sig (2 tailed)	Mean Difference
Score	Equal a	.604	.440	-7.148	58	.000	-2.583
variances assumed							

Decision Rule: Accept  $H_0$  = if the Obtained Significance  $\geq$  0.05

Since the obtained significance value of 0.000 is less than the critical value of 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis accepted. This

indicates that there is a significant difference in the mean scores of students taught summarization skills and their counterparts not taught in the comprehension of subject matter contents.

### **SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

From the data analysis, the following are the findings:

1. There is a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of students taught summarization through the macrorules and those that are not taught.
2. There is a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of students taught summarization through the gist method and their counterparts that are not taught.
3. The reading comprehension achievement of students differ as result of their mastery of the English language.
4. There is no significant difference in students' reading comprehension achievement after summarization instruction as a result of gender.
5. There is a slight difference in the mean performance of female and male students after summarization instruction as the mean score of the female students is slightly higher than the male students.
6. There is no difference in the mean performance of students in reading comprehension achievement test after summarization instruction using the gist method and the macrorules.
7. The post-test and pre-test mean performance of students not taught reading comprehension through summarization strategies is less than 4.2.
8. The post-test mean performance of students exposed to summarization instruction in reading comprehension achievement test is 6.4 and above.
9. The mean performance of students who were subjected to experiment is relatively the same and the mean performance of students who were not exposed to experiment is also relatively the same across the groups.

### **DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

The first research question and hypothesis sought to ascertain if there was any difference in reading comprehension achievement of students taught summarization through the macrorules and their counterparts that were not taught as can be seen in tables 4.2.1 and 4.3.1. The differences in the pretest mean scores and post-test mean scores in the two groups in table 4.2.1 reveal that students do better in reading comprehension achievement test when they are exposed to summarization instruction. The result is also corroborated by the t-

test analysis in table 4.3.1 which proves that there is a significant difference in reading comprehension achievement of students taught summarization through the macrorules and their counterparts that were not taught. The disparity in the mean performance corroborates Eilers' and Pinkley's (2006) position that comprehension strategy instruction, in which summarization through the macrorules is one, provides a framework by which students become aware of how effective they can comprehend text and over time, enable the students experiencing reading difficulties to become independent readers. Westby, Culatta, Lawrence, and Hall-Kenyon (2010) state that Summarization is reportedly an activity that has yielded the greatest gains in comprehension and long-term retention of text information. They state further that summarization helps readers focus on the essential information in a text and promotes learning that lasts because students must spend time reflecting and processing what they have read. The mean performance scores of 4.13 and 3.73 and 3.33 and 7.2 for the control group and the experimental group pre-test and post-test show a considerable improvement in the experimental group post-test mean. Bean and Steensyk (1984) supported the relevance of the macrorules of summarization to comprehension when they stated that fluent readers employ internalized macrorules including the deletion of trivial or redundant propositions to construct a succinct summary of a text's gist in long term memory.

The second research question and hypothesis set out to determine if there was any significant difference in the mean scores of students taught summarization skills and their counterparts not taught in the comprehension of subject matter contents. Table 4.2.2 with the pretest mean scores of 3.47 and 3.27 and post-test mean scores of 3.8 and 7.2 for the control group and the experimental group respectively shows that there is a significant difference in contents area achievement of students taught summarization and those that were not taught. The means reveal that pupils in the experimental group performed better than their counterparts in the control group because they are taught passage summarization. The result is also corroborated by the t-test analysis in table 4.3.2 which proved that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of students taught summarization skills and their counterparts not taught in the comprehension of subject matter contents. This supports Hidi and Anderson's (1986) view that a summary is a brief statement that represents the condensation of information accessible to a subject and reflects the gist of the discourse. By implication, getting the gist of a passage means getting the message of the passage which is comprehension. According to Kintsch and van Dijk 1978 in Cho (2012), effective readers are believed to form a mental summary of the

important information of what they read. In other words, effective reading entails that the reader be sensitive to text-specific organization of ideas since this helps him or her select the gist of the text.

## **CONCLUSION**

The results of this study have served as a pointer to the fact that instruction in summarization improves students' achievement in reading comprehension and the traditional method of doling out passages to students to read and answer questions without instruction in any of the reading comprehension strategies is responsible for the abysmal performance of students in English language especially reading comprehension. It is clear from the findings that summarization instruction through the macrorules and the gist method have a positive impact on students' reading comprehension achievement. Both methods of teaching summarization has the same effect on students' reading comprehension achievement.

Gender does not greatly affect the performance in reading comprehension achievement test even though the female are more likely to slightly outperform their male counterparts. The difference in performance is quite insignificant.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following recommendations are made based on the preceding findings and conclusions of this study:

1. There should be seminars and workshops on the strategies to improve summarization among secondary school students.
2. There should be concerted effort on the part of teachers' trainers to inculcate in teachers the practice of teaching summarization as a process and not a product.
3. There should be the inculcation of reading as a separate part of the curriculum not as a language skill to be taught in English language in order to promote the teaching of summarization.
4. Students should taught what it means to read as reading is more than pronouncing words.
5. Students should be encouraged to join reading clubs that would expose them to rudiments of reading comprehension.
6. Students should be exposed to relevance of summary to reading comprehension as readers can only understand what has been reduced to their memory as the print could be too bulky to memorize.

7. There should reading competition for students in order to spore students to read rather than making reading only an academic task which can be boring.

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