



Summarizing Approach in Improving Academic Writing Skills of ESL Learners

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Abstract

Students entering higher education are expected to have developed academic writing skills that are up to the standards set by the institution. As a consequence of this, improving one's command of the English language, and in particular, one's command of academic writing at the university level, is absolutely necessary for academic genius. In this regard, this study used an experimental approach to identify the effect of using the summarizing strategy on undergraduates' learners academic writing abilities. The intervention, i.e., the summarizing strategy integrated instruction lasted for around two months, which was carried out in a single-group pre-post-test model only. Subsequently, the scores from both tests, i.e., pre and post-test were analyzed statistically via a t-test. Based on the analysis, the use of summarizing strategy showed a significant increase in the academic writing abilities of ESL learners. Therefore, the study suggests using the summarizing strategy at all educational levels to keep learners up to date in terms of their academic writing abilities.

Keywords: Summarizing technique, academic writing skills, undergraduate level, experimental study, ESL learners

1. Introduction

At the present time, the English language is the one that is utilized all over the world the most. This is primarily attributable to the extremely high percentage of people who were born speaking English. Because of this, the English language has the capacity to bridge cultural, academic, social, or political divisions; it can also foster excellent relations and understanding; and it is the language that has the most worldwide users because it is the language that is used generally over the world (Bice & Kroll, 2019). English serves as more than merely a mode of communication in the context of information and communication technology; in fact, more than half of the websites that receive the greatest traffic are written in English. The significance of the English language can already be inferred from just one simple fact. Students have access to a wide variety of learning groups and tools that can assist them in improving their English language abilities as a result of the widespread use of the internet, which is used by more than one billion people worldwide. These learning groups and tools can help students improve their English language abilities (Lee, 2018; Abdelrady & Akram, 2022). In addition, because the vast majority of the information that is available today can only be found written in English, it has developed into a subject that is taught in secondary schools, as well as colleges and universities. This is because the majority of the material that is accessible today can only be found written in English. Because of this, having proficiency in the English language is currently more important than it has ever been (Rahman & Singh, 2020). In spite of that, the major obstacles encountered have been pitted against the degree of English language ability, which includes unskilled teachers and an insufficient resource (Akram, 2020), intellectual and social divides among students (Haidar & Fang, 2019) Anxiety over foreign language speaking (Akram, Junaid, and Yang, 2019), a dearth of opportunities for teachers' professional development (Akram & Yang, 2021), and students from low-income families (Haidar, 2019).

The ability to write is therefore something that should be taught to pupils beginning in primary school. Students are expected to absorb a variety of texts, organize them, and make their own versions of them. In addition, these expectations are vital to keep in mind because it is critical to develop one's writing skills. In today's more globalized and interconnected world, the ability to communicate effectively in writing is more vital than it ever was before the advent of the internet and other technologies (Akram et al., 2021; Akram et al., 2022). The use of written language in many people's daily communication is something that we can all attest to from our own personal experiences. This communication takes place on the internet, specifically via email, various social media platforms, websites, blogs, and other online forums. In spite of this, the value of writing lies not only in its capacity to facilitate communication but also in its capacity to assist students in acquiring new knowledge. For example, writing can help students improve their command of the grammatical and lexical aspects of the language while also encouraging them to take risks and become more engaged with it (Bacha, 2002).

Writing is a talent that requires a lot of complexity, and teaching it to students is not a simple or straightforward endeavor because of this. Writing is more difficult than speaking because it takes the completion of a number of processes or steps before it can be considered a finished result, whereas speaking is an act that occurs on the spot. According to Harmer (2006) the four stages of planning, drafting, editing, and final draft are the most important processes that students should go through. The difficult nature of writing creates challenges for both the student and

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the instructor. The researcher noticed that the undergraduate students had a number of issues with their writing based on the observations they made in the classroom. To begin, there are some students who have no notion what they want to write on the paper they are working on. Second, there are some students who simply do not have the drive to improve their writing ability. Finally, the majority of students do not engage in critical thinking, which is an essential skill for writing argumentative prose. The fourth issue is that the students do not have enough writing strategies; to put it another way, the students are overly reliant on the instruction provided by the teacher. In conclusion, the kids have not enough practice writing. Writing strategy is required in order to overcome issues with writing (AlMarwani,2020; Akhtar et al., 2019).

Summarizing, taking notes, keeping a journal, seeing parallels and contrasts, cooperative learning, and many other methods are just some of the many ways that writing skills can be taught to students (Solikhah& Sari,2022). The researcher selected the method of summarizing for a total of three different reasons. To begin, the method of summarizing encourages independent learning. As was mentioned earlier, the most significant challenge that the students experience is that they do not have a sufficient number of writing strategies, which results in the students becoming overly reliant on their English teacher. Second, the approach of summarizing is one that can be used to educate reading ability, but it can also be used to teach writing ability. Both of these applications are possible with the summarizing strategy. Lastly, while many studies have been conducted to study the influence that summarizing method has on students' reading skills, very few studies have been carried out to investigate the effect that it has on students' writing skills. Because of the issues mentioned above, the researcher made the decision to carry out this research in order to demonstrate whether or not the method of summarizing is beneficial to the academic writing skills of students.

1.1. Significance of the study

The researcher anticipates and expresses optimism that the findings of the study will be able to make a substantial contribution to the following areas:

- The findings of this study will offer English instructors in higher education an alternate pedagogical approach to implement in their classrooms.
- The findings of this study, it is hoped, will help students enhance their ability to write arguments and confrontational pieces.
- Lastbut not least, other researchers who will be interested in conducting related summarizing strategy research in terms of writing talent which is still limited; this research will hopefully be able to add value and information for them to use so that they can undertake additional researches.

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

Undergraduate students majoring in English as a second language who attended a variety of universities in the state of Punjab participated in this study. The survey was carried out for the entirety of the academic year 2021-2022.

2.2. Sample

The study's sample is made up of thirty undergraduate students majoring in English as a second language. These students were selected at random from a variety of universities and departments. They ranged in age from 18 to 23 years old. All of the participants were studying English as a second language, and they were required to attend a standard eight-week writing class for a total of two hours per week.

2.3. Study design

This study was carried out using an experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest design in order to determine the participants' performance in terms of writing an academic essay using a method that involved summarizing.

2.4. Instrument

The present investigation utilized a written test as its primary data collection tool. The purpose of the test was to determine how well students are able to summarize academic materials by employing the summarizing approach. At the final step of the explicit summarizing lesson that the participants were a part of, they were each provided with a written text that needed to be read and then summarized.

2.5. Validity and reliability

The researchers distributed the test to English language instructors, supervisors, and university professors in order to gather their data. They were questioned on the relevance of the study, including whether or not they believed it to be relevant and appropriate. Everyone reached a consensus that the study was appropriate and could accurately assess the students' level of academic writing abilities. Cronbach Alpha was utilized, and its value was 0.65; hence, the researchers had a strong sense of confidence in the validity and reliability of the examination (Heo,Kim,& Faith,2015).

2.6. Pilot study

An initial feasibility study, or pilot study, was carried out in advance of the main experiment in order to validate and improve the materials and procedures (In, 2017). As a result of the fact that the participants in the pilot research were

not included in the experimental research, the results from the pilot research were not incorporated into the study. The researcher chose five students from the same university to participate in the pilot study. These students are majoring in English language studies.

2.7. Lesson plans on summary writing

The investigator presents his proposal to the participants, explains the study, and instructs them on how to implement the technique for summary. In addition to this, it is critical that students put the approach for summarizing into practice and ask their teachers for comments on the quality of the summaries they have produced. When the participants require assistance, the instructor should encourage them to adopt methods of summarizing that have been adjusted or extended upon to make them more suitable for the students and the circumstances.

2.8. Procedures for summarizing

The following are the actions that the students were told to take in order to implement the summarizing method in writing:

- Before beginning to summarize a lengthy piece of writing, make sure you have read the entire piece at least twice, each time paying close attention and concentrating fully on what you are reading.
- Draw attention to the most important ideas and terms, then get rid of them.
- List key-words in the order they appeared in the passage.
- Find the parts of the text that provide evidence for the primary argument, and highlight those passages.
- It is recommended that the original section be cleaned up by removing any superfluous content, such as drawings, quotations, etc.
- Rewrite the important themes using your own words after first restating them in your own words and then paraphrasing them.
- Integrate your sentences by employing words or phrases that transition from one thought to the next.
- Provide a brief synopsis of each section, paragraph, or component using one to two sentences.
- The summary should be significantly shorter than the primary material, taking up no more than one-third of the space occupied by the primary text.
- Anything additional to the author's ideas should not be added.

2.9. Procedure

All of the participants were given a pre-treatment exam right at the outset, before to the start of the treatment sessions, to ensure that they were all at the same level when it came to their writing ability. The participants were not given any instructions regarding the method to use while summarizing the information. The researcher gave the participants an essay that was already written and asked them to rewrite the passage in their own language as quickly as possible (within the 45 minutes). The preliminary examination was examined by a few qualified English specialists.

The author shared with all of the individuals who were chosen that this method would assist them in composing a summary, and that it would also assist them in improving their academic writing skills. The instructor went over the summarizing method, outlining its purpose as well as the significance it holds, during the first week of the treatment. After that, he makes an attempt to compose the primary sentence of the first paragraph in a text that is supplied to students before the beginning of the session. After that, he asks students whether the particulars shown in the sentences that follow give the overall concept. The author then asked his students to determine the core sentence of the following paragraph in the piece, as well as how to use keywords or phrases to identify the important themes from the text, and to delete the details in the passage that were not necessary.

The instructor urged his students to keep a close eye on their own progress in order to determine whether or not they were making good use of the topic sentence selection method. Participants were led through the steps of summarizing by the instructor, who also instructed them on how to determine the statements that support the key idea by disclosing lines that are more dominant to the core theme. The learners were given the opportunity to learn summary writing as part of the usual curriculum for the class throughout the instruction. Students were given five separate texts to read, each of which had a piece that ranged in length from 400 to 600 words and dealt with a different topic.

A post-test was carried out in the week following the conclusion of the teaching sessions, which was the last week of the experiment. The purpose of the post-test was to determine whether or not there are differences that are statistically significant between the subjects before and after the treatment. Both the pre-test and the post-test followed the exact identical set of procedures. The participants were given the pre-test conditions once again, but this time they were instructed to write a summary of a passage that had been selected from the associated textbook. For evaluation, the study gathered the papers for the written exam and glanced through them to help ensure they grasp the summary method.

The findings of the statistical analysis employed analytical scoring to measure particular textual characteristics of writing such as (grammar, vocabulary, organization, coherence, and content aspects) were given a score between 1 and 5, with 1 being the best and 5 being the worst. The scores of the subjects were out of a total of 100.

3. Results

The testing results of the participants were collected by the researcher after the test had been completed. These results were then analyzed on the basis of the five writing criteria (grammar, vocabulary, organizing, content, and coherence) to determine whether or not there were any changes in the performance of the participants in academic writing as a result of using a summarizing strategy.

In order to determine whether or not using a summarizing method improves academic writing abilities, post-test mean scores were compared with pre-test mean scores from the sample of ESL students.

The analysis with regard to the vocabulary component showed that there was a significant difference in performance between the pre-test and post-test scores (see Table 1). In terms of mean scores, the mean value of the post-test examination was much higher (i.e., $M = 3.56$), than the mean value of the pre-test assessment (i.e., $M = 2.12$), confirming that the summarizing technique greatly improves the vocabulary component of academic writing skills of ESL students.

Table 1: Comparison of the academic writing with regard to the vocabulary component

Test	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig.
Pre-test	30	2.12	0.87	-20.12	0.00
Post-test	30	3.56	0.31		

The analysis with regard to the grammar component showed that there was a significant difference in performance between the pre-test and post-test scores (see Table 2). In terms of mean scores, the mean value of the post-test examination was much higher (i.e., $M = 3.41$), than the mean value of the pre-test assessment (i.e., $M = 2.10$), confirming that the summarizing technique greatly improves the grammar component of academic writing skills of ESL students.

Table 2: Comparison of the academic writing with regard to the grammar component

Test	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig.
Pre-test	30	2.10	0.61	-20.12	0.00
Post-test	30	3.41	0.33		

The analysis with regard to the organizing component showed that there was a significant difference in performance between the pre-test and post-test scores (see Table 3). In terms of mean scores, the mean value of the post-test examination was much higher (i.e., $M = 3.23$), than the mean value of the pre-test assessment (i.e., $M = 2.51$), confirming that the summarizing technique greatly improves the organizing component of academic writing skills of ESL students.

Table 3: Comparison of the academic writing with regard to the organizing component

Test	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig.
Pre-test	30	2.51	0.45	-17.34	0.00
Post-test	30	3.23	0.21		

The analysis with regard to the coherence component showed that there was a significant difference in performance between the pre-test and post-test scores (see Table 4). In terms of mean scores, the mean value of the post-test examination was much higher (i.e., $M = 3.31$), than the mean value of the pre-test assessment (i.e., $M = 2.01$), confirming that the summarizing technique greatly improves the coherence component of academic writing skills of ESL students.

Table 4: Comparison of the academic writing with regard to the coherence component

Test	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig.
Pre-test	30	2.01	0.34	-18.23	0.00
Post-test	30	3.31	0.23		

The analysis with regard to the content component showed that there was a significant difference in performance between the pre-test and post-test scores (see Table 5). In terms of mean scores, the mean value of the post-test examination was much higher (i.e., $M = 3.41$), than the mean value of the pre-test assessment (i.e., $M = 2.45$), confirming that the summarizing technique greatly improves the content component of academic writing skills of ESL students.

Table 5: Comparison of the academic writing with regard to the content component

Test	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig.
Pre-test	30	2.45	0.21	-19.41	0.00
Post-test	30	3.41	0.31		

4. Discussion

The purpose of this investigation was to investigate how the use of a summarizing method influences the performance of ESL students when writing an academic piece. According to the findings, using summary as a technique to help students become more proficient in academic writing is a method that can be successfully used.

Students' writing scores on the post-test revealed a considerable improvement, which implies that summarizing tactics had a major effect on students' ability to write well. Learners became conscious of reframing the primary paragraph in their own way, which led to considerable improvements in their vocabulary, grammar, and ability to cohere ideas. They are able to structure the central concept and the supporting elements in their own words while taking into account all of the linguistic characteristics.

The findings of this research are comparable to those found in Solikhah and Sari's study (2022), in which the author investigates the efficacy of employing summarizing approaches towards EFL students' narrative abilities of writing. The investigation led the researcher to the conclusion that the method of summarizing plays an important part in the process of enhancing students' abilities to narrate English texts. This study is also comparable to (Ozdemir, 2018); he attempts to investigate the "impact of summarization techniques usages and narrative text summarization success." Similarly, this study examines the effects of narrative text summarization. The findings demonstrated that there was an increase in the students' overall performance on the post-test, as measured by the mean score, when they utilized the summarizing technique. This research is also consistent with what Mallia (2017) found in her article titled "Strategies for Improving English Academic Writing Abilities." In the research, vital "pre-writing" chores are discussed, and some of the most important aspects of academic writing are outlined. These aspects of academic writing frequently concentrate on the structure of paragraphs, necessary components of an essay, and various forms of functional essays. The researcher makes use of a variety of methods in order to improve their English academic writing skills.

5. Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to determine whether or not using a summarizing method can help undergraduate students in Punjab's higher education institutions enhance their academic writing skills. The before and post outcomes of the treatment revealed that the summarizing strategy had a good influence on undergraduate learners' capacity to absorb the subject and stating it in their own words. This was shown by the fact that the results showed the same thing. The findings demonstrated that the strategy of summarizing helps students successfully improve their academic writing skills. So, in order to strengthen their pupils' writing, teachers should employ the summery technique and examine the results. In addition, Governing bodies should incorporate summarizing tactics into English language instruction. In order to gain more benefit, Summarizing techniques and tactics to improve academic writing should be researched.

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