Improving the Summarizing Skills Through Text Structure-Based Strategies

Sukran Diliduzgun[1] and Serife Genc[2]

[1]Istanbul University, Faculty of Education, Department of Turkish Education, Istanbul, Turkey
[2]Ataturk Imam Hatip Secondary School, Istanbul, Turkey
E-mail: [1]<sdilid@yahoo.com>,[2]<serife_genc@hotmail.com>

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ABSTRACT In Turkish Language Teaching,there are product-based activities rather than process-based with the same kind of comprehension and summarizing activities in different genres. The aim of this research is to propose a number of tasks based on text structure to develop summarizing skills in Turkish Language Teaching and to determine their effectiveness to equip students with appropriate strategies.Comprehending essays is important for cognitive and intellectual development. A two-group control group pretest-posttest design was used during the research with the sample of 25 7th grade Turkish students for each group. The groups were evaluated by means of a summary writing assessment rubric. Mann Whitney U Test ensures that two groups were equal, and the difference between the groups is significant in all subdimensions of the summary writing assessment rubric. The Wilcoxon signed-rank test for test group indicated the summary writing instruction elicited a statistically significant change in writing summary texts.

INTRODUCTION

The ability to summarize information is an important study skill involving both comprehension of, and attention to, importance at the expense of trivia. The ability to recursively work on information to render it as succinctly as possible requires judgement, effort, knowledge and strategies (Brown and Day 1983: 2).The comprehension of oral and written communication requires the student to relate, simplify and intensify the knowledge given by senders since it is not possible to remember all communication word by word. Sequences are not organized only at the local level by linear relation of coherence but also by higher level conceptual units (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983). While writing expository texts, for example, students need to sum up what they write in order to write the introduction and conclusion. Writing summary texts is hard work and more difficult than writing other types of text since summaries are written using source texts as a base and, therefore, requires special strategies.

Addresses for correspondence:
Associate Professor Sukran Diliduzgun
Istanbul Universitesi,
Hasan Ali Yucel Egitim Fakultesi,
Istanbul Turkey
Telephone: +90(537)301 9848
Fax: +90(212)513 0561
E-mail: sdilid@yahoo.com

While writing summaries, people do not present new knowledge; what they have to do is to define the main idea and sub-ideas, to decide on emphasized parts and to erase the redundant/trivia knowledge of the source text and create a summary text like the nucleus of the previous one. During this process, people use receptive and productive skills together (Ulper and Karagul 2011).

Writing a summary is the most essential sign oftext comprehension as van Dijk and Kintsch (1983) point out. To be able to transform a source text into a summary qualitative and shorter text, interpretation of the text by micro and macro processing in the reading process is compulsory. To transfer knowledge to long-term memory from short-term memory, the main points are determined and related to one another,and the knowledge is presented in a different form. Akyol (2009b) uses the concept of "reshape the knowledge," giving an example of presenting the knowledge coded in pictures or tables. This is not just copying; furthermore, it helps to recall, to interpret and comprehend the knowledge better.

Notions used to describe this overall coherence of discourse include topic, theme, gist, upshot, or point, which require explication in terms of semantic structure.What makes an author write is "gist."A text is comprehended only if the main idea is grasped since the structure of the text is

composed by expanding, explaining and enriching this idea with other ideas/facts/events (Ozdemir 2000). Linguistics, semantics of discourse, and macrostructures are defined by macrorulers, which is a fundamental principle of both linguistic and logical semantics that the interpretation of certain units be defined in terms of the interpretation of their constituent parts (van Dijk and Kintsch 1983): Deletion, Generalization, Construction.

Macrorulers require cognitive processes which provide distinguishing, associating, classifying and sequencing the concepts/events in the text to analyse the semantic structure of the text. Determining the rhetorical structure of the text means determining main points, which are the basic compenents of summary texts (Yagcioglu 1998).To write a brief and condensed form of a textsome text organizing principles should be taken into consideration (Grabe 1997): 1. Texts are hierarchically organized; 2. Readers tend to focus on and remember information at higher levels in the text hierarchy; 3. Top-level structural information influences comprehension and recall; 4. Better students recognize and use top-level structuring to assist recall and comprehension; 5. Top-level structuring can be taught so that students will recognize this aspect of texts and use it to assist in their own comprehension.

Activites to improve summarizing skills should begin with reading activities to analyse text structure, rhetorical or semantic, and continue with the activities to perceive and practice the form and content of summary texts.The research in the field points out that there is a focus on "product" rather than "process" in the activities and evaluation of summary instruction, and the difficulty of summary writing results from the lack of strategic skills (Idris et al. 2011). Students are not capable of determining/rewiriting topic sentences or generalizing/constructing (Cikrikci 2004), or using summarizing strategies such as finding a new title, including main points/supporting sentences in summary texts and writing with their own words (Ulper and Yazici 2010).

These problems in Turkish Language Teaching arise from the fact that specific summarizing skills are not stated in the Turkish Language Teaching Programme (Milli Egitim Bakanligi (MEB) 2006) and there are not enough activites to help students gain summarizing strategies. In Turkish text books there are product-based rather than process-based activities such as "sum-marizing the text using one's own notes taken while reading or listening,"or "reading by summarizing" activities during which the teacher writes" WH questions" or questions like, "What is told in the introduction, development and conclusion parts of the text?" on the board to be answered while reading the text. It is not possible for students to determine macropropositions using macrorulers with these kinds of activities.

There are five basic expository text types that people encounter in life: Description, sequence, problem-solution, reason-result and comparison (Dollins 2012). Akyol (2006) classifies informative texts in five main similar headings asdefinition, chronological order, comparison and contrast, problem-solution and reason-result. Gunay (2013) points out that a classification/definition is not always made on the same referent in determining informative text type, which is expository and aims to give information, and that all literary texts are more or less informative. Literature is a science which gets to some comments and judgements after research and examination of literary texts and composers (Unlu 2012). Informative texts can be narrative, expository, argumentative, descriptive or rhetorical text types. Essays are also regarded as a genre of informative text types and are proved to be a type of discourse with the problems in different fields (art, culture, society) (Gunay 2013). Atabas (2013: 673) also points out Belge's words that "In my opinion, essay must be regarded not as a kind of literature but a type of discourse." As Ozdemir (2012: 283) stated, "Essays also teach some facts, while they amuse and help readers have a nice time, however they are not aware of this."

According to Adali (2003), essays have an inner logic which constitutes the structure composed of listed ideas, and this logic is determined by their theme and message, as Belge thinks that the structure and form of an essay are determined by the quality of the fact they concern (Atabas 2013). The inner logic can be reason-result, from general to specific or vice versa, from simple to complex, etc. Naturally, authors choose one or more of them to express their ideas. Essays being a collection of different ideas on the same topic always contain subjective judgements of senders, as authors present the information in a subjective way with their emotions and ideas, not as a scientific fact, although they are somewhat informative.Therefore, essays are outputs of individuation. Nevertheless, authors ought to

be equipped in a scientific context. Doctrines, facts, sicientific findings and documentaries are means of verification for essays.The analyses of essays contribute to analysis of all kinds of discourse; meanwhile,writing essays enriches people's scopes of thinking.To identify essays as a genre is important for people's intellectual and cognitive development as they internalize critical evaluation of the world from the view point of authors.

Essayists, being masters of language, use words within all their semantic possibilities. To be understandable they generate a new language beyond the colloquial usage but with stylistic features.While summarizing, it is necessary to prompt metacognitive processes to uncode this language beside the schematic structures of texts and to determine messages to express with other words.

Writing qualitative summary texts seems not to be possible without dividing texts into meaningful parts, generalizing notions / events which are related to one another, and expressing them in different words, deleting unimportant parts in the context of text type. As Grabe (1997: 3) cited from Pearson and Fielding (1991), any sort of systematic attention to clues that reveal how the authors attempt to relate ideas to one another or any sort of systematic attempt to impose structure upon a text, especially in some sort of visual re-representation of the relationship among key ideas, facilitates comprehension as well as both short-term and long-term memory ofthe text. During the reading process, details can be determined via graphic representations that are visual illustrations of verbal statements and indicate the organization of different types: Spider map is used to describe a central idea or concept with support; fish bone map can show causal interaction of a complex event or series of events to describe the steps in a linear procedure (Grabe 1997). With story boards change and improving of an organization or event are illustrated (Akyol 2009b). Nevertheless, there are three major lines of research on the effect of text structure instruction (Grabe 1997: 5):

1. The first line of research involves the impact of direct instruction which explicity raises student awareness of specific text structuring: that is, specifically pointing out to students the structure of description, or the problem-solution organization.

2. A second line of research develops student awareness of text structure through more general graphic organizers, semantic maps, outline grids, tree diagrams, and hierarchical summaries.

3. A third line of instructional training follows from instruction in reading strategies more generally: Cohesion of structure, main idea identification, summarization, and text study skills (for example, noting main point in the margin, underlining main points). This line of instructional research was taken as source of this study supporting text structure instruction.

The Aim of the Research

The aim of this paper is to determine the effectiveness of summarizing strategies, proposing a number of tasks to develop the summarizing skills of students in the Turkish Language Teaching process. The hypothesis of the research that "Analysing text structure is necessary in order to write summary texts" will be tested on the sample of "essay."

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

Two-group control group pretest-posttest experimental design as quantitative research was used. This is a useful way of ensuring that an experiment has a strong level of internal validity (Yildirim and Simsek 2008).

Sample

The population of the research is 7th grade Turkish students. A test group of 25 students and a control group with the same number were assigned randomly from two different secondary schools in Istanbul.

Research Instruments

A summary writing assessment rubric was developed taking the macrorules by van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), criteria by Gunay (2013),and the principles of other research in the field. The rubric was reorganized in light of the views of seven instructors from the university and the secondary school. Designed as a five-rank Likert-

type scale,the rubric is composed of 4 sub-dimensions (content, macrorulers, form and comprehension questions) and 26 items. Cronbach's alpha reliability factor is found at .793 for the whole scale of the Rubric.

Procedure

1. Lesson (Pretest): The groups summarized an essay without any instruction after they answered five comprehension questions on the essay to determine their understanding of the text.

2. Lesson: The test group was asked "how they summarize" and here are some answers: "We read andI write what I've understood," "I write sentences from the beginning, the middle and the end of the text," "I write what each paragraph means to me." As seen, the students do not use any summarising strategies. After that, following the first major line of text structure instruction by Grabe (1997), some summarizing rules by Gunay (2013: 136) were presented to the test group. Then, a summary text of an essay was projected on the board to show students how these rules work for comparing the source and summary text. The students determined the parts of the text for each sentence in the summary text and decided on which parts of the text had been deleted, and which sequence in the source text had been substituted or replaced by which proposition in the summary.

3. and 4. Lessons: During 40x2 minute length of time,another essay without paragraph divisions or a title was given to the test group and students divided it into paragraphs.Then,they wrote a summary sentence for each paragraph, answering questions prepared for each paragraph. After that, they prepared only one question containing all the questions to find the main idea;they found a title with respect to the main idea and compared it with the title of the text.

5. and 6. Lessons: The test group divided into smaller groups and organized another essay into semantic parts with colored pencils. Then, the groups wrote a summary of each partexplaining what they deleted, generalized or constructed and got points from 1 to 5 for each part for a competition.

7. Lesson: The test and control groups were post-tested summarizing the same essay used in the pretest and answeringthe same comprehension questions.

Data Analyses

The summaries of the groups were evaluated by three experts and correlation was found significant at the level of 0.05 (correlation coefficient: .862) by Spearman's rank correlation.As the number of groups (25) was under 30, nonparametric Mann-Whitney U Test was appliedvia SPSS 18.0 for Windows. To compare the scores of the pretest and post-test of the groups, Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used.

RESULTS

The result of Mann Whitney U test, which is used to evaluate the difference between the scores of pretests of groups, ensures that the randomization process was effective and that the two groups are equal (Table 1).

From this data, it can be said that the difference between the test group and control group is found not to be significant in content (U= 294.00, p>0.05), macrorulers (U=262.00, p>0.05), form (U=188.00, p>0.05), comprehension (U= 302.00, p>0.05)and the sum (U=246.50, p>0.05).

From the data analyses of post-tests of the groups illustrated in Table 2, it can be concluded that the difference between test group and control group after the summary writing instruction

Table 1: The results of Mann-Whitney U test for pretests of groups

Groups	Question	N	S.O.	S.T.	U	Z	p
Test	Content	10	25	26.24	656.00	294.00	-.360	.719
Control	Content	10	25	24.76	619.00			
Test	Macrorulers	3	25	27.52	688.00	262.00	-1.002	.316
Control	Macrorulers	3	25	23.48	587.00			
Test	Form	8	25	26.67	640.00	188.00	-1.705	.088
Control	Form	8	25	20.05	441.00			
Test	Comprehension	5	25	25.92	648.00	302.00	-.205	.837
Control	Comprenhension	5	25	25.08	627.00			
Test	Sum	26	25	28.14	703.50	246.50	-1.284	.199
Control	Sum	26	25	22.86	571.50			

is significant in all subdimensions and in sum (U=23.00, p<0.05).

The difference between test group and control group is found significant in the subdimensions of content (U=17.50, p<0.05), macrorulers (U=15.00, p<0.05), form (U=22.00, p<0.05) and comprehension (U=131.50, p<0.05).

A Wilcoxon test was conducted to evaluate whether the test group showed greater difference between the pretest and post-test (Table 3). The result of the Wilcoxon test indicated a significant difference, z = -4.37, p < .01. The mean of negative ranks in favor or pay was.00 while the mean of positive ranks was 13.00.

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test showed that a 3 week, 5 lesson (5x40 minutes) instruction elicited a statistically significant change in writing summary texts. The results indicated a significant difference in content, z = -4.37, p < .01, in macrorulers z = -4.29, p < .01, in form z = -4.26, p < .01 and in comprehension z = -4.13, p < .01.

The result of the Wilcoxon test conducted to evaluate the difference between the scores of pretests and post-tests of control group showed that there is not a significant change in the sum, z = -.122, p > .05 and in other subdimensions (Table 4).

The results of the Wilcoxon test for control group that evaluate whether control group showed any difference between the scores of pretests and post-test is not significant in content, z = -1.07, p > .05, in macrorulers z = -.68, p > .05, in form z = -.17, p > .05 and in comprehension z = -1.33, p > .05.

DISCUSSION

The students copied verbatim from sources when summarizing; they had little appreciation of the need to extract the main points and restate them in their own words, which is called copy-delete strategy (Brown and Day 1983). Recogni-

Table 2: The results of Mann-Whitney U test for posttests of groups

Groups	Question		N	S.O.	S.T.	U	Z	p
Test	Content	10	25	37.30	932.00	17.50	-5.72	.000
Control	Content	10	25	13.70	342.50			
Test	Macrorulers	3	25	37.40	935.00	15.00	-5.82	.000
Control	Macrorulers	3	25	13.60	340.00			
Test	Form	8	25	37.12	928.00	22.00	-5.64	.000
Control	Form	8	25	13.88	347.00			
Test	Comprehension	5	25	32.74	818.50	131.50	-3.52	.000
Control	Comprehension	5	25	18.26	456.50			
Test	Sum	26	25	37.08	927.00	23.00	-5.61	.000
Control	Sum	26	25	13.92	348.00			

Table 3: The results of Wilcoxon signed-rank test for pretests and post-tests of test group

Group	Rank	N	S.O.	S.T.	Z	p
Deney Grubu	Negative ranks	0	.00	.00		
Content	Positive ranks	25	13.00			
	Ties	0		325	-4.37	.000
	Total	25				
Deney Grubu	Negative ranks	0	.00	.00		
Macrorulers	Positive ranks	24	12.50			
	Ties	1		300.00	-4.29	.000
	Total	25				
Deney Grubu	Negative ranks	1	1.00	1.00		
Form	Positive ranks	23				
	Ties	1	13.00	299.00	-4.26	.000
	Total	25				
Deney Grubu	Negative ranks	2	2.75	5.50		
Comprehension	Positive ranks	22				
	Ties	1	13.39	294.50	-4.13	.000
	Total	25				
Deney Grubu	Negative ranks	0	.00	.00		
Sum	Positive ranks	25				
	Ties	0	13.00	325.00	-4.37	.000
	Total	25				

Table 4: The results of Wilcoxon signed-rank test for pretests and posttests of control group

Group	Rank	N	S.O.	S.T.	Z	p
Control	Negative ranks	14	11.39	159.50		
Content	Positive ranks	8	11.69	93.50		
	Ties	3			-1.07	.282
	Total	24				
Control	Negative ranks	10	8.10	81.00		
Macrorulers	Positive ranks	6	9.17	55.00		
	Ties	9			-.68	.491
	Total	25				
Control Form	Negative ranks	13	9.31	121.00		
	Positive ranks	9	14.67	132.00		
	Ties	3			-.17	.491
	Total	25				
Control	Negative ranks	9	9.50	85.50		
Comprehension	Positive ranks	13	12.88	167.50		
	Ties	3			-1.33	.182
	Total	25				
Control Sum	Negative ranks	12	11.17	134.00		
	Positive ranks	11	12.91	142.00		
	Ties	2			-.12	.903
	Total	25				

tion of the contextual and schematic structures of different text types not only provides reception and production of the texts more easily but also equips people with appropriate summarizing strategies. Over the past 15 years, research on discourse analysis and language comprehension have increasingly demonstrated that text structure awareness has a strong impact on efforts to improve reading instruction (Grabe 1997).

Determining the schematic structure of the text while reading means determining essential points which are the top-level unities, which must be in summary texts (Yagcioglu 1998). For example, while summarizing narrative texts, events in the story are given sequentially and details / other events are omitted, the propositions which are related to title construct the frame of the text and are explained / supported in the text and take place in the summary of informative texts/expository essays (Uzun 2003). The study based on skills inproducing written text process, summarizing process and expository text structure by Ulper and Akkok (2010) also show that presenting characteristics of expository text structure such as problem-solving structure and schematic structure of problem-solving, when integrated with the given cognitive operations, have a positive effect on improving summarizing skills.

The results of Diliduzgun's research (2013) on summarizing activities in Turkish Language Teaching have pointed out the facts that the same kind of reading and summarizing activities are applied to different types of texts. Besides, there are no tasks for the students to perceive and practice the content and form of summary texts, and summarizing is regarded as underlining important sentences. While teachers state that narrative texts are summarized in common and that summarizing activities are insufficient, their knowledge of summarizing strategies is also not sufficient.

Comprehending and summarizing essays, which are on the borderline between literary and unliterary, is harder than summarizing other genres. Authors do not state their ideas directly; instead, they tell a story or point out an event. Therefore, readers must evaluate the whole text to grasp authors' intentions. It is important to distinguish between literal and implied meanings (Brown 2000). "A good part of text coherence indeed resides in the text itself rather than being a result of reader interpretation" (Grabe 1997: 4). Briefly, to comprehend essays and to determine their gists are important for people when developing their receptive skills, language skills and critical thinking. The activities on writing summary texts for essays also contribute to general summarizing ability.

The result of this experimental research on summarizing essays indicates that there is a significant change between the control group and test group, which had summary writing instruction, which supports Cakir's experimental study (1996) in which a test group showed progress

after the activities on awareness of macropositions.

This paper, which is based on Grabe's text structure instruction (1997) and in which the texts are essentially divided into meaninful parts to determine the topic sentences, not only supports Brown and Day's study (1983) applying macrorulers but also makes contribution to Kecik's research (1993) as a result of which she found that Turkish students apply deletion easily, hardly use construction and are not good at generalization, and urged on the activities which help students to relate propositions, to find important knowledge and present them in different form. Akyol (2009a: 38) also proposes drawing outlines as a reading strategy of informative texts, determining the topics and main ideas of paragraphs under the title. This research has paid attention to Blanchard and Root's (2004) activities in which source texts and summary texts are compared.

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CONCLUSION

People need to determine the macropositions of several discourse types to which they are always exposed,even in daily life, to develop their intellectual/critical thinking and recall the knowledge when required, which requires judgement and effort, knowledge and strategies, one of which includes macrorulers. Therefore, people should get instruction in recognizing the contextual and schematic structures of different text types, which are regarded as exercises in applied cognitive science and not only provide reception and production of the texts more easily but also equip people with appropriate summarizing strategies. In this research, "essay" as a kind of text type was focused on for the reason that the analyses of essays in which the authors do not state their ideas directly in a specific type of text organization contribute the development of thinking for analyses of all kinds of discourse. Along with the activities in the research, the students gained knowledge about what is required when they are asked to summarise and to develop summarizing strategies.

As a result of this research, the students in the test group tended to use their own words, applying macrorulers, thus avoiding details, and determining, classifying and putting macropositions in a logical order. After instruction, the students in the test group avoided using quota-

tions, examples and questions in their summary texts. They seemed more careful about the introduction, development and conclusion parts of summary texts. Some answered the comprehension questions in post-test while they did not in pretest, and the answers of some got more expositive after text structure instruction

RECOMMENDATIONS

Writing summaries is not only the most essential sign of text comprehension but also a device to transfer knowledge to long-term memory to recall the knowledge when required. Research in the field and this study as well determine that people need to be instructed to improve summaring skills which require them to relate, simplify and instensify their knowledge of the source text using receptive and productive skills together. When Turkish language teaching books have been examined by several researchers, it has been found that there are no specific summarizing exercises, and the students are asked to write summaries as a product without a summary writing process. This research aims to propose summarising activities based on text structure and especially text types for instructors and writers of Turkish language teaching textbooks. This kind of instruction is also thought to lead to active learning, and the results of interviews with the students indicate that they were entertained during the research process as well.

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