

Summarization Techniques Used by Primary School Pupils in Kuje, Abuja, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the techniques used by primary six pupils in answering summary questions in three primary schools in Kuje, Abuja. The study purposively selected three primary schools out of one hundred and fifteen and two arms of primary six in the selected schools, with two hundred and ninety-nine pupils and twelve teachers making a total number of three hundred and eleven samples. Three research instruments were used: The first one designated as Instrument A contained sections A and B. Section A contained personal data of the teachers while section B contained two open ended questions for free responses. Instrument B contained examiners' observations during marking and instrument C was a curled passage with a set four teacher made questions. With aid of a research assistant, the instruments were administered on the pupils and teachers who wrote free responses answers. Responses of pupils were marked by four seasoned examiners and the marked scripts were vetted by one more experienced examiner. Techniques used in summary writing were categorised into three, extractive, abstractive and hybrid. Though pupils committed infractions, the results showed that abstractive techniques, the acceptable method, took the lead with 65.7%, 62% and 68.8% in centres A, B and C respectively followed by extractive and the least was hybrid methods. The study concluded that pupils use acceptable examination techniques to respond to summary questions. It was recommended that spelling drills be encouraged and that teachers should teach pupils how to write simple and correct sentences.

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INTRODUCTION

Availability of abundant information or ideas in a passage, the need to test readers' understanding of passage and ability to write short forms of a text gave birth to summary writing which should be well taught by teachers, learnt and passed by learners. Writing is one of the skills of language taught at all levels of education in Nigeria. Summary is one of the key areas that learners' writing skills, a productive skill, can be assessed. A good knowledge of the text, aided by linguistic competence of the reader, will produce a good summary which is an important aspect of comprehension. Comprehension and summary passages are different in the sense that comprehension has to do with answering some listed questions while summary deal reduction of the length of a text, passage, paragraph or sentence. This should be done accurately to earn good marks and failure to, as required, will lead to loss of marks or eventual failure (NECO, 2010).

Summary is a key area in English language as a subject which must be mastered by learners to earn good marks in examinations. Laying a solid foundation for this aspect of English language by teachers and responding appropriately to summary question by learner are intellectually interwoven, since teaching and learning go together. Chief Examiners' Reports, National Examination Council (NECO, 2010) remarked that candidates lost marks because they did not have a good mastery of the techniques of answering summary questions as they copied sentences verbatim from the passage and wrote ungrammatical related sentences. These errors committed in the course of writing summary answers showed, according to the Report, outright ignorance of the knowledge of answering summary questions. Also, Chief Examiners' Reports, West African Examination Council (WAEC, 2022) reported woeful performance of candidates in summary writing. This situation prompted the researcher to research into the techniques of answering summary question by primary school pupils which is the foundation level of education in Nigeria where pupils must get it right (Igboanusi, & Peter, 2016).

To carry out the study, the following research questions were raised to guide the study.

- (i) How do primary school pupils respond to summary questions?
- (ii) What problem do pupils have in the course of answering summary questions?
- (iii) What are the strategies used by teachers to overcome these problems?

The study also formulated the following objective in line with the research questions. Hence, the study sought to:

- (i) Investigate the techniques used by primary school pupils to answer summary questions;
- (ii) To identify the problems encountered by pupils in the course of answering summary questions; and
- (iii) Identify the approaches used by teachers to solve problems encountered by pupils in the course of writing summary.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Summary writing is an aspect of comprehension which pupils must taught and learn as one of the language skills and this necessitated by the volume of texts and the information contained therein which have to be reduced for ease of comprehension. Summary requires a comprehensive grasp of the information provided by the author to produce an abridge version of the passage. Ademola-Adeoye et.al. (2020), remarked that a summary is informative condensed form of a passage or story. The purpose of summary is to find out reader's in-depth knowledge of the writer's message using the reader's linguistic resourcefulness to rewording sentences in condensed manner without leaving out relevant information using skills derived from regular reading of a wide range of materials (Jimoh and Adesanmi, 2013 and Ibe, 2016).

Approaches to Summary

Different techniques are identified by scholars as methods of summarising texts by readers, depending on the situation such as linguistic competence and demand of the questions. Nenkova and McKeown (2011) and El-Kassas, et.al (2021), advanced Extractive, Abstractive and Hybrid techniques.

- (i) Extractive Summary: This is verbatim use of exact sentences used by the author in the process of summarising the text. The reader merely lifts sentences without any form of modifications why answering summary questions.
- (ii) Abstractive Summary: The reader, in this process, paraphrases sentences of the author by using similar words in shortened forms to present ideas of the author without leaving of vital information.
- (iii) Hybrid summarization: This is the amalgamation of extractive and abstractive summaries.

Abstractive summaries are associated with human beings and are bedevilled with the problems of semantics, cost, time, cumbersomeness and language interference while extractive summaries done by computers are more result oriented (Allahyari, 2017 and El-Kassas, et.al 2021). Despite the short comings of abstractive summaries, El-Kassas, et.al (2021), recommended the use of abstractive and hybrid summaries probably because verbatim lifting of sentence is not allowed in summary writing (WAEC, 2022).

The scholars also viewed summaries from the angle of their contents. Summaries provide information about the content, style and purpose of the texts are called indicative summaries while those that provide ideas as contained in the texts are called informative summaries. On the other hand, summary question may require the readers to recast sentences in a story, information locus detection, reduce the passage to one third of its original form, precis writing, or ask readers to a passage or paragraph in a sentence, single sentence summary (Jimoh and Adesanmi, 2013). This is similar to lower order and higher order questions in comprehension where readers are to get direct answers from the passage and think intellectually before they respond to questions respectively (Adepoju, 2020).

In any summary passage, Ademola-Adeoye et.al. (2020), succinctly remarked that there is the key sentence

called the *topic sentence* which may be the first sentence or any sentence in the passage that emphasis the main idea and the *thesis sentence* which stresses the theme of the author in the text. These two sentences are very germane in summary writing and the pupils should take note of them because they form the nucleus of the ideas or the message of the author. The authors went further to give the following hints on summary writing:

- (i) That summaries should exclude examples;
- (ii) That summaries should exclude ideas not presented in the passage;
- (iii) Readers should identify the topic sentence of each paragraph;
- (iv) Readers should paraphrase the sentences;
- (v) Avoid grammatical errors;
- (vi) Avoid spelling errors;

All these shortcomings will make candidates' performance not impressive and lose marks in summary writing.

Globally, summary writing is considered an important aspect of reading. For example, in Ghana, the findings of Ababio (2020), revealed that summary writing is important and improves vocabulary but difficult. However, the study of Ashrafzadeh & Nimehchisalem (2015), discovered that majority of the Malaysian tertiary institution students performed very well in summary writing.

METHODOLOGY

The study is a case study of Kuchayko Primary School, Kuje, herein in this study called Centre A, Science Primary School, Kuje, referred to in this study as Centre B, and Kayada Primary School, labelled as Centre C in this study. The schools are located in Abuja because Abuja is cosmopolitan city where all tribes converge for commercial activities. The design, case study, was used to penetrate and have an in-depth study. Primary six pupils in Kuje formed the population of the study. To focus on the area and gather in depth data, the study purposively selected three primary schools out of the one hundred and fifteen primary schools in Kuje and with the same purposive sampling, two arms of Primary 6 in each of the three selected schools were selected with the total number of samples totalling two hundred and ninety-nine. Also, the study purposively selected the twelve teachers teaching primary six in the selected schools because they had requisite characteristics suitable for the study (Lumandi, 2015). Three instruments were used for the study. The first is an instrument (**Instrument A**) titled, '*questionnaire on summarization techniques used by primary school pupils.*' The instrument contained two sections. Section A contained demographic information about the teachers and Section B contained a two item open ended questions for the respondents to respond in order to harvest divergent views on the subject matter. The second (**Instrument B**) being the examiners' observations as recorded in the course of marking. The third instrument (**Instrument C**) was a comprehension passage titled '*Always be honest; dishonesty never pays*', culled from '*Nigeria primary english pupils' book 6*', was designed with a four-item teacher made text for the purpose of precision and simplification for pupils to answer. The question set are:

- (1) In one sentence, summarise the kind of person Ahun is.
- (2) In one sentence, summarise what Ahun lost.
- (3) In one sentence, summarise the decision of the judge.
- (4) In one sentence, summarise what the story teaches us.

On **Instrument A**, the demographic information on section A, showed the number of teachers teaching English reading comprehension and summary and their areas of specialization to determine their competence and qualification. For this section, descriptive analysis was used and thematic analysis used for section B, ditto to the examiners' observation. The study used four seasoned WAEC and NECO examiners to mark the scripts of the pupils based on the marking guide provided while one more experienced examiner was used to vet the marked scripts to determine accuracy and variations. The responses of the pupils were categorised into three, namely, extractive (correct and incorrect verbatim), abstractive (correct paraphrasing and incorrect paraphrasing) and hybrid.

Data Analyses and Results

Table A: Demographic Information About Pupils

Class	Average Age	Sex	Number of Students	Percentage (%)
Primary 6	12 Years	Male	231	67.90%
		Female	109	32.10%
		Total	340	100%

As indicated in Table 1, the demographic information about the pupils show that they are within the age bracket of learners expected in primary schools as stipulated in the National Policy on Education (NPE) 2013, that is, ages 6 to 12. The information also shows that the respondents were primary six pupils, those who are at the final year of their primary education, prior to admission to secondary or high school and that the male students were two hundred and thirty-one, which represents 67.9% and the female students were one hundred and nine, representing 32.1%.

Table 2: Demographic Information About Teachers Teaching Summary

Specialization	Number	%
English	24	11.5%
Other Languages	27	13%
Other Subjects (History, Biology, Mathematics, etc)	157	75.5%
Total	208	100%

Table 2 shows that majority of teachers teaching summary in the area under study are non-specialists. Out of two hundred and eight teachers, only twenty-four are graduates of English language, which represents 11.5%. this implies that 88.5 % of the teacher's teaching summary are not qualified.

Table 3, Summarization techniques employed by pupils in Centre A

Summarization Techniques	Correct	Incorrect	Total	Percentage (%)
ABS	200	03	203	65.7
EXS	20	46	66	21.4
HBS	39	01	40	12.9
Total	259	50	309	100

Table 3 reveals the methods used by pupils to respond to the set summary questions in Centre A. Two hundred and three (203) responses were under abstractive summary technique, which represents 65.7%, followed by sixty-six responses categorised as extractive summary, representing 21.4% and forty responses fall under the category of hybrid technique, representing 12.9%.

Table 4, Summarization techniques employed by pupils in Centre B

Summarization Techniques	Correct	Incorrect	Total	Percentage (%)
ABS	213	23	236	62
EXS	29	50	79	20.7
HBS	25	41	66	17.3
Total	267	114	381	100

On Table 4 above, two hundred and thirty-six responses, representing 62% were classified under abstractive technique, seventy-nine responses were labelled as extractive summary, which is 20.7% and under hybrid category were sixty-six responses, representing 17.3%.

Table 5, Summarization techniques employed by pupils in Centre C

Summarization Techniques	Correct	Incorrect	Total	Percentage (%)
ABS	232	15	247	68.8
EXS	50	31	81	22.6
HBS	06	25	31	8.6
Total	288	71	359	100

Table 5, indicates the techniques used by pupils in Centre C to respond to summary questions. Two hundred and forty-seven responses, representing 68.8%, fall into the class of abstractive technique, eighty-one responses were under extractive technique, that is 22.6% and thirty-one answers, representing 8.6 % are under the group of hybrid summary.

Table 6: An overview of performance of pupils in Centres A, B and C

Centre	Average and above	%	Below Average	Percentage (%)
A	68	69.4	30	30.6
B	69	66.3	35	33.7
C	63	63.6	36	36.4

Table 6 shows the performance of the pupils in each of the centres. As indicated above, in Centre A, 69.4% of the pupils scored above average, ditto to Centres B and C where the respondents scored 66.3% and 63.6% respectively. This is an indication that the respondents are well above average in summary writing.

Observations and Sanctions by Examiners

The examiners in the course of marking the scripts made the following observations:

- (a) Some pupils' illegible handwriting hinders communication;
- (b) Some pupils presented their responses in phrases;
- (c) Some pupils re-wrote part of the story as responses;
- (d) Extractive responses were scored zero; and
- (e) Grammatical errors were penalised.

The observation reveals that pupils respond to summary questions by using incomplete sentences, direct lifting, unreadable writing and paraphrasing riddled with errors which attracts penalties.

Teachers' Responses to Open Ended Question

Responses to the two open ended questions are summarised as:

1. How do pupils respond to summary questions:

- (a). They use their own words to write summary.
- (b). Some copy from the passage.
- (c). Some use the main ideas.
- (d). Some pupils leave out important points.
- (c). Some read and retell the story.

Based on the findings, it is clear that pupils respond to summary questions by using direct lifting of sentences, paraphrasing and omission of cogent points in the course of summary writing.

2 List the problems encountered by pupils during summary writing:

- (a). Some cannot read and understand
- (b). Some do not have books.
- (c). Understanding of difficult words.
- (d) Some of them omit important ideas.

Thus, it is quite apparent that inability to read and understand and lack of reading materials are the constraints against summary writing identified by teachers.

DISCUSSIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings of this study reveal that the responses of pupils in summary fall under three major categories: abstractive (correct and incorrect), extractive (correct and incorrect) and hybrid (correct and incorrect). These three techniques were extensively used by the respondents/pupils in their responses to the four set questions.

Abstractive Technique

From the marked scripts, the following are excerpts from the scripts as responses to the following questions.

Question 1. In one sentence, summarise the kind of person Ahun is.

Responses:

- (a) Ahun is a greedy man. (Correct)
- (b) Ahun is a very greedy person. (Correct)
- (c) Ahun is a very greedy man. (incorrect)

Question 2. In one sentence, summarise what Ahun lost.

Responses:

- (a) Ahun lost 40 gold coins. (correct)
- (b) He lost his 40 gold coins. (correct)
- (c) He took 40 coins. (incorrect)

Question 3. In one sentence, summarise the decision of the judge in the passage.

Responses:

- (a) The judge said the found coins did not belong to Ahun. (correct)
- (b) Ahun is not the owner of the money. (correct)
- (c) The judge told the greedy man that it is a body report they had lost 50 coins. (incorrect)

Question 4. In one sentence, summarise what the story teaches us.

Responses:

- (a) The story teaches us always be honest and dishonesty never pays. (correct)
- (b) It is not good to be stingy. (correct)
- (c) Ahun did not thank his friend. (incorrect)

Though responses C above are not correct, the responses show that the pupils are well knowledgeable in the art of summary writing because they were able to use their own words to write the responses which made them to

earn marks; this is what is encouraged among pupils (WAEC, 2022). Though, responses C are not correct, they are still abstractive and the error associated are common with abstractive summary (Allahyari, 2017 and El-Kassas, et.al 2021). The consciousness that abstractive summary techniques is the only one allowed during examinations, made the percentage of pupils' responses to be higher than others as depicted on tables 3 (65.2%), 4 (62%) and 5 (68.8%).

Extractive Technique

Question 1. In one sentence, summarise the kind of person Ahun is.

Responses:

- (a) Ahun like everything to be his own. (correct)
- (b) Ahun is a greedy man and he like everything to be his own. (correct)
- (c) One day Ahun lost 40. (incorrect)

Question 2. In one sentence, summarise what Ahun lost.

Responses:

- (a) 40 gold coins. (correct)
- (b) One day, Aun lost 40 gold coin. (correct).
- (c) Ahun did not thank his friend or his daughter. (incorrect)

Question 3. In one sentence, summarise the decision of the judge in the passage.

Responses:

- (a) The judge the told the greedy man that that if anybody reported that they had found 50 gold coins he would send for him. (correct)
- (b) The judge told the greedy man that the gold coins did not belong to him. (correct)
- (c) The judge then said their gils. (incorrect)

Question 4. In one sentence, summarise what the story teaches us.

Responses:

- (a) Always be honest. (correct)
- (b) Dishonesty never pays. (correct)
- (c) Friend's daughter. (incorrect)

The responses are excerpts from the scripts of the respondents to questions 1, 2, 3 and 4. These are direct lifting from the comprehension passage and that account for the reason why errors are minimal in these responses. These responses are not allowed and they attract little or no mark as remarked by NECO (2010) because they are not allowed in summary writing (WAEC, 2022). The low percentage representation of the technique in each centre as can be seen on tables 3 (21.4%) 4 (20.7%) and 5 (22.6%) shows that pupils are aware of the penalty of using extractive summary called verbatim lifting (NECO, 2010 and WAEC, 2022).

Hybrid Technique

Question 1. In one sentence, summarise the kind of person Ahun is.

Responses:

- (a) Ahun is a person who liked everything to be his own. (correct)
- (b) Ahun is greedy did not like sharing things. (correct)
- (c) Ahun is a primary school. (incorrect)

Question 2. In one sentence, summarise what Ahun lost.

Responses:

- (a) Ahun lost 40 golds. (correct)
- (b) Ahun lost his forty gold coins. (correct)

Question 3. In one sentence, summarise the decision of the judge in the passage.

Responses:

- (a) The judge decided to judge the case by telling Ahun that the gold coins did not belong to him. (correct)
- (b) The judge then told the greedy man that the gold coin did not belong to him and asked the girl to take the money. (correct)
- (c) The judge then decided that if anybody asks of 40 gold coins. (correct)

Question 4. In one sentence, summarise what the story teaches us.

- (a) The story teaches us always be honest and be kind. (correct)
- (b) This story teaches us the we should not be greedy. (correct)
- (c) The story teaches us that if the girl found 40 and not 50 gold coins. (incorrect)

This technique was least used of the three as found out in this study. This is because it required a combination of extractive and extractive technique; a glide from abstractive to extractive or vice versa. The technique, as shown on the above tables, reveals 12.9%, 17.3% and 8.6% on tables 3, 4, and 5 respectively.

Though, examiners' observations and teachers' comments portray, to some extent that pupils' responses are marred with errors, pupils' responses to summary questions show the techniques used in their responses indicate good performance. The summary of the tables above show that pupils use acceptable technique, the abstractive techniques which is writing responses in pupils' sentences. Tables 3, 4 and 5 reveals 200, 213 and 232 correct responses respectively, which made the respondents to earn high marks as can be seen on Table 6 where the overall performance in Centres A, B and C were 69.4 %, 66.3% and 63.6% respectively. The errors committed by pupils are errors associated with abstractive summary because they are not done by computers but by man and apart from Centre A, in other centres, incorrect abstractive responses were the least recorded. As recommended by El-Kassas, et.al (2021) and WAEC (2022) abstractive technique was the highest used by the respondents which led to good performance.

Though El-Kassas, et.al (2021) recommends the use of hybrid summary technique, it was the least used in all the centres; 12.9%, 17.3% and 8.6% respectively in Centres A, B and C. Also, extractive technique was not frequently used. Tables 3, 4 and 5 show 21.4%, 20.7% and 22.6% respectively for Centres A, B and C. This finding aligns with the position of WAEC (2022) which disallow any form of lifting from a given passage. This was one of key observations of the examiners and penalised accordingly. Though, the overall performance was high, some responses were riddled with grammatical errors, most especially responses C and responses A and B under hybrid question 4.

CONCLUSION

From the responses of pupils, it is crystal clear that pupils can respond to summary questions using the appropriate techniques, though some responses were not error free which invariably attracted sanctions; their scores on Tables 3, 4, and 5 and the level of performance on Table 6 are clear indicators. The techniques used are appropriate and in line with the position of El-Kassas, et.al (2021) and the recommendation of WAEC (2022).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, it is hereby recommended that:

Pupils should learn how to write summary answers in their own words to avoid verbatim lifting of sentence and penalties.

Teachers should teach their pupils how to write legibly to avoid mis representation of ideas.

Pupils should learn how to write correct simple sentences.

Spelling drills should be encouraged to guide against spelling errors.

Pupils should master the rules of concord to avoid grammatical errors.

Teachers should teach the differences between extractive and abstractive summary techniques for pupils to understand the differences.

Emphases should be laid on abstractive techniques so that pupils will master the technique.

Teachers should make pupils to realise that extractive technique is not allowed in summary writing to avoid penalties.

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