

**SUMMARY: BUILDING THE HIGHEST READING  
COMPREHENSION ABILITY  
(An EFL Learning for Reading Comprehension)**

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**ABSTRACT**

As there are readers, there can be strategies for comprehension. One of the best ways for comprehension is “summary”. Summary is the condensed message of what a reading text has as a whole; and the summary is made by readers. Although it is condensed, but it has all necessary message a text contains, main ideas and some necessary details attached to every main idea. Students have to be trained to make summary. The summary is made through some steps. By the summary students make, they do show their comprehension of what they read. Even, it shows their best level of understanding the text they read.

**Key Words:** *reading comprehension, strategy, step for summary making, summary*

## **INTRODUCTION**

One of so many ways to reflect comprehension to a reading material being read is the summary that a reader makes. In the summary, the totality of the essence of a reading material is obviously seen. Thus, comprehension to a reading material from readers is reflected. Very noticeably, the making of summary is concerned with a complexity of the text, but he must be able to synthesize all information in a concise form without neglecting any of important ideas and some necessary details which are to be included in the summary. The synthesis competence of a reader is, among others, what enables readers to make a summary.

This article is an attempt to discuss what are related to the making of summary. The points to include in this article are as follows: reading and comprehension, comprehension strategies, definition of summary, good summary, steps in making a summary and conclusion.

## **READING AND COMPREHENSION**

Presently, it is a literacy era, an era which recognizes the ability and the habit of human beings to read and to engage with reading activities, in their lives. In such a modern era wherein human beings live and work currently, the engagement to reading is one of the significant indicators for being humans. Almost none is literate (although there are many in Indonesia still unable to read). To say quite differently, almost all of human beings in the worlds, included here are the Indonesian, are able to read or say so that they are literate. Aside from this jovial information, it is crucial to see that what is really central to reading. What is really central to reading is comprehension. Thus, understanding of what is being read is what really matters in reading. Talok (2011) in his article "*Semantic Mapping: An EFL Learning Strategy for Reading Comprehension*" quoted what Ur, reading means "reading and understanding". In this way of seeing reading, comprehension is the core layer in reading. Thus, when reading is discussed, the starting point is from the core layer to another layer; from inside to outside. In other words, comprehension is much more important than other factors affecting reading, such as ability to spell every letter, to pronounce words, to make correct pause, to make appropriate stress and rhythm. It does not necessarily mean that the so-called the other factors are not important in reading. They are, indeed, important. Even they become basic needs for readers to be good readers.

Only for beginners, the other factors are needed. Carell (1986) calls this the "bottom-up approach" in reading. For more advanced readers, it is the "top-down approach" that matters in the latter approach. The other factors can be discussed provided that comprehension has been thoroughly established. In this approach the discussion of the other factors function to refresh EFL learners regarding their ability to spell, to pronounce, to make correct pause, to make appropriate stress and rhythm. As well, it is to guarantee that EFL learners are good in these factors.

## **COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES**

Currently, ways to detect comprehension are varied. Say for examples, from low level to high questions: True-False, Yes- No Questions, Question Words Questions, Semantic Mapping (Talok, 2011), summary making, and still many others. What is important here is that there are definitely some ways used to measure to what extent readers' comprehension is. Readers exert many strategies to comprehend reading texts.

In the setting of classroom reading, the most common strategy used to measure students' comprehension are some questions constructed with question – word questions (comprehension questions). But if closely observed, comprehension questions are of low level. These questions are to identify literal message from a reading text. Some questions are not of comprehension at all. They are concerned with meanings of some unfamiliar words in the reading text. Only very few, may be one or two, are of inferential questions. They demand readers to draw conclusion based on provided data in the reading text or to do necessary interpretation wherein the response/answer reflect the combination of some ideas available in the text.

Among so varied strategies for comprehension, summary deserves attention that is one of so many for detecting readers' comprehension. Even, it is one of highest strategies for comprehension. Nevertheless, very rarely, the summary is used in the classroom reading of school setting. Thus far, no reasons have been brought forward relating to the rare use of summary in classroom reading. Yet, undeniably, a summary making demands the working of a more complex mental drives of readers. To make a summary readers must incorporate all information from a text in a concise form, but with a guarantee that all information has been included in that condensed form. In addition, it requires of readers quite a lot of time to spend. Making a summary is indeed time-consuming. Readers have to spend sufficient time to read, possibly several times to read critically. Critical reading is commonly done quite slowly, paragraph per paragraph; and sometimes it is done repeatedly. Such reading will stop if readers are sure that they already comprehend very well the materials they read.

### **WHAT IS “SUMMARY”?**

Summary is the concise condensed message made by readers of a reading text they are reading. Thus, there are two characteristic of summary, namely concise and condensed. By concise it is meant that the summary is only of one paragraph or at the most one page in line with what text is read and how long the text is. In the context of classroom reading, as the nature of reading texts are relatively limited in their lengths, the summary is commonly very short. It is even in a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, at the most, several paragraphs, but not in one page. Students may supply the title on the text they read, provided that the topic is deliberately deleted. The supply done requires the so called summary ability of readers. From the summary the readers make, the title may possibly be made either in a word, a phrase or a sentence. The one paragraph commonly comprise of several sentences which are coherently woven together.

Meanwhile, with the “condensed” it is meant that the content of the summary covers all necessary points the reading text contains. A summary is, therefore, able to give information to those who read it. The readers do not need to go to the text anymore since the summary is able to give all they need to know from the text. In addition, readers only spend shorter time to get needed information from the text.

### **GOOD SUMMARY**

A Summary is “good” if it can give the needed message to its readers. By the needed message, it is meant that what readers need to know from what is read is found in the summary. Readers, indeed, need to get some general message and their necessary details. Hence, they may postpone, even totally stop, reading the whole text.

In the above definition of summary, the “good” characteristic have been given the making of summary. There are two characteristics, namely concise and condensed. The former indicates that the good summary is characterized by the length of the made summary. The summary recommended is at most a page depending on the length of the reading text. While the latter indicates that the good summary is also characterized by the information represented in the summary. Commonly, all main ideas of a reading text and their necessary details must be incorporated in the summary that it reflects the wholeness of th reading text. In a reading text, readers can easily discover main ideas. As well readers can indicate what details are to incorporate to every single main idea which will occupy the made summary.

In addition, a good summary is commonly and clearly characterized by well-woven effective sentences. Sentences used must be grammatical. Effective sentences do not only refer

to the grammaticalness of the used sentences, but also they reflect the essence of the whole text. To make sentences effective, in addition to grammaticalness, the summary maker indeed adopts well-chosen words in order to underline the intended meaning to be communicated in the summary.

### **HOW TO MAKE SUMMARY?**

To ensure the making of summary, the following are some steps that readers may have practiced thus far or they follow in order that they are able to make summary of the reading text they are reading. The steps are as follows:

- a) Read the text thoroughly and carefully. The summary maker must read the text from the beginning to the end. Still, it is not adequate to help make a summary. He has to understand very well the text he reads. Thus, the thorough reading has to be accompanied with complete understanding of the text.
- b) Jot down from each paragraph the main idea and its necessary details or as some paragraphs only play some complementary functions, some relevant ideas or details need to be identified as well.
- c) Recheck if all ideas and their necessary details have been jotted down in correct order from the text.
- d) Try to make the summary with the main ideas and their necessary details. Here, the summary maker is required to have synthesized competence. He has to weave the data he has in such a way that the summary he makes does reflect the whole essence of the text.
- e) Consider the content and length of the summary. Here the summary maker can reread and, if needed, drop some words or phrases, even sentences, provided that the summary he makes has fulfilled the two characteristics, namely “concise and condensed”.
- f) Reread the made summary to control whether or not sentences used are grammatical; in addition, to control the use of words. All aim to guarantee that the summary communicates all message of the text, organized in the so called “concise and condensed” manner.

### **CLOSING**

To make a good summary is not an easy task. It demands a sophisticated process. A summary maker has to operate his cognitive devices to enable him to construct a summary. The thorough reading (of a reading text) has to be accompanied with a careful reading. Comprehension is the key to the making of a good summary. Thus, a summary maker needs to have general message of what is read. In addition, he has to be able to identify main ideas of every paragraph and their necessary details. With these, he can start making the summary by incorporating all into a one brief but coherent meaningful paragraph.

There some other points to consider in addition to make a good summary. Sentences must be grammatical and contains some selected words. These aim to guarantee that the intended message can be retained in the summary. The last is that the summary must be at a brief length and the content must reflect the wholeness of the text.

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