



**SUMMARY WRITING REPRESENTING STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY:
A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY**

**PENULISAN RINGKASAN SEBAGAI REPRESENTASI KEMAMPUAN
MENULIS MAHASISWA: SEBUAH STUDI DESKRIPTIF**

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Abstract

This descriptive quantitative study examines the summary writing performance of third-year English Education students and identifies the most and least effectively achieved aspects of summary writing in order to give insight for assessment design, curriculum decisions, and teacher feedback practices. Using purposive sampling to determine the participants, the research involved 20 students from a university in Pamekasan, Madura, who completed a summary writing task as the data collection method. The summaries were assessed using an analytical scoring rubric covering five aspects: length, accuracy, paraphrasing, focus, and convention. Findings reveal that students' overall performance falls into the "Good" category, with an average score of 77.75. Accuracy and paraphrasing were the strongest aspects, while length was the most challenging one. These findings suggest that although students demonstrate solid comprehension and rephrasing skills, they require further instruction in controlling summary length. This research emphasizes the importance of providing clear, structured instructions and targeted support to help students refine their summarization skills. The results offer pedagogical implications for enhancing summary writing instruction in EFL contexts.

Keywords: summary writing; writing ability; text reproduction

Abstrak

Penelitian deskriptif ini mengkaji kinerja penulisan ringkasan mahasiswa tahun ketiga Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris, dengan fokus pada identifikasi aspek-aspek penulisan ringkasan yang paling baik dan paling kurang berhasil ditunjukkan. Hasil penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan wawasan bagi perancangan asesmen, pengambilan keputusan kurikulum, serta praktik pemberian umpan balik oleh dosen. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik *purposive sampling* dengan melibatkan 20 mahasiswa dari salah satu universitas di Pamekasan, Madura, yang diminta untuk menulis sebuah ringkasan sebagai sumber data utama. Ringkasan mahasiswa dinilai menggunakan rubrik analitik yang mencakup lima aspek, yaitu panjang ringkasan,

ketepatan isi, parafrasa, fokus, dan konvensi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kemampuan menulis ringkasan mahasiswa secara umum berada pada kategori *Baik*, dengan skor rata-rata sebesar 77,75. Di antara kelima aspek yang dinilai, ketepatan isi dan parafrasa merupakan aspek yang paling menonjol, sedangkan aspek panjang ringkasan menjadi yang paling menantang. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa meskipun mahasiswa telah memiliki kemampuan yang baik dalam memahami dan memparafrasekan teks sumber, mereka masih memerlukan bimbingan lebih lanjut dalam mengontrol panjang ringkasan secara efektif. Penelitian ini menegaskan pentingnya pemberian instruksi yang jelas, terstruktur, serta dukungan yang terarah untuk membantu mahasiswa mengembangkan keterampilan menulis ringkasan secara lebih optimal, serta memberikan implikasi pedagogis bagi peningkatan pembelajaran menulis ringkasan dalam konteks EFL.

Kata Kunci: penulisan ringkasan; kemampuan menulis; mahasiswa EFL; reproduksi teks

1. Introduction

Writing is a fundamental academic skill that enables students to communicate complex ideas clearly and coherently; however, it remains one of the most demanding language skills to master, as it requires the integration of cognitive, linguistic, and organizational abilities (Hairul, 2023). A lack of writing skills, partly due to the lack of ideas to write about, may lead to writing apprehension (Wichadee, 2014). This, in turn, can result in plagiarism when students attempt to write. Therefore, mastering writing skills requires continuous and extensive practice. One such practice is summary writing, which can contribute significantly to improving students' writing skills.

As a form of text reproduction, summary writing is an effective indicator of writing ability. It requires students to fully understand a text, condense its main points, and rephrase them concisely. Summary writing involves creating a shortened version of a longer text while retaining its essential meaning. It is also a powerful learning strategy that has been found to enhance comprehension and retention of new information (Friend, 2001). Through summarization, students can paraphrase and reinterpret what they have read using their own words.

Research in second language (L2) and English as a foreign language (EFL) contexts shows that summary tasks are cognitively demanding but pedagogically valuable: they require comprehension, synthesis, paraphrase, and discourse-level organization, so performance on summary tasks can reveal multiple dimensions of a student's writing ability (e.g., identifying main ideas, cohesion, lexical choice, and accuracy)(Scott A.

Crossley et al., 2024). However, rephrasing others' ideas in one's own words is particularly challenging for students with limited vocabulary. Inappropriate use of source language in summary writing can be a result of students' unfamiliarity with the source texts or their inability to paraphrase information accurately. This especially often happens during timed writing tasks (Weigle & Parker, 2012). These difficulties often lead students to copy from the source text, increasing the risk of plagiarism.

Thus, analyzing students' summaries serves a diagnostic function for teachers and researchers, offering insights into students' writing abilities (Cho, 2012; Hirvela, 2004). Summarization tasks are more than reading checks, they are "reading-to-write" tasks that integrate receptive and productive skills, and therefore provide a richer picture of learners' academic literacy than isolated sentence-level tests. Empirical work comparing summary tasks with other writing tasks has shown that summaries tap distinct skills (synthesis, compression, appropriate paraphrase) that matter for academic writing (Qin Xie, 2023). Second, the effectiveness of teaching and assessing summary writing depends on clear rubrics, assessment literacy, and feedback: without shared criteria and formative guidance, students' summaries often demonstrate recurring problems (omissions of key ideas, overlong paraphrase, copying, weak cohesion), so scores can reflect both language competence and familiarity with the task (Shafiee Rad & Alipour, 2024). Evaluating summaries can reveal students' strengths and weaknesses in comprehension, synthesis, and writing expression, providing a practical approach to assessing their overall writing skills (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). For these reasons, summary writing can be used not only to assess students' comprehension of a written text but also as an indicator of their writing proficiency. Thus, enhancing students' ability to write effective summaries requires a thorough evaluation of their work from different perspectives (Chuenchaichon, 2022). By analyzing the various aspects of their summary writing, instructors can pinpoint common challenges and develop instructional strategies tailored to address those issues.

Numerous studies have examined summary writing, mostly focusing on summarization as a measure of reading comprehension. As a result, research on summary writing in the context of writing skills remains limited, particularly in Indonesia context. Moreover, few studies have examined the individual aspects of summary writing to identify the specific areas where students struggle the most. While

some research has provided general insights into students' summary writing, more detailed investigations are needed. For example, Yoshimura (2018) examined plagiarism in student summaries and found that first-year Japanese university students tended to overuse terms from the source text. The students seemed unaware that writing an English summary in their own words was essential. However, because the participants were inexperienced in summary writing, the findings may not be representative of Japanese undergraduate students as a whole. Another study by Shi et al., (2018) investigated how North American students use paraphrasing in their writing. The results showed that paraphrasing ability follows a developmental path, with students progressing from merely retelling information to transforming it by interpreting and adding their own ideas. However, the study did not evaluate the effectiveness of students' paraphrasing in terms of disciplinary writing conventions and organization.

Although the literature shows that summary writing is a useful diagnostic and pedagogical tool, several gaps remain. Many studies examine interventions to *improve* summary-writing performance (teaching strategies, collaborative tasks, technology-mediated feedback), but fewer descriptive studies analyze *how well students' summaries actually represent their overall writing ability* in real classroom populations. Whether summary-writing performance can stand as a valid proxy for broader writing competence in a given student group has not yet analyzed (Qin & Groombridge, 2023). Moreover, much of the recent work emphasizing assessment literacy and task design has not yet met the appropriate participants selection to ensure representative findings.

To better understand how students' developing reading and writing skills affect their summary writing performance, there is an urgent need for empirical research that comprehensively analyzes students' written summaries especially in Indonesian context. Such research should address both content coverage and writing quality, offering diagnostic insights into students' strengths and weaknesses in both areas. The present study aims to investigate whether third-year Indonesian students, who had already received instruction on how to write effective summaries were able to produce appropriate summaries. From the previous studies, this study used different rubrics that coverage five aspects (length, accuracy, paraphrasing, focus, and convention) and genres of source texts (expository text; news item) to determine whether different genre

text yield different results. Furthermore, it analyzed which aspects of summary writing are most and least successfully achieved by the students, providing insights into areas for improvement. Based on the purpose of this study, the research question is formulated as follows:

1. *What is the level of students' proficiency in summary writing?*
2. *Which aspects of summary writing are most and least successfully demonstrated by the students?*

The findings of this study are anticipated to offer valuable insights into the strengths and weaknesses of students' writing proficiency, particularly in the context of summary writing. A focused descriptive study will (a) document common strengths and weaknesses in student summaries using an analytic rubric, (b) compare summary performance against established criteria of writing competence (e.g., idea selection, cohesion, paraphrase, grammar/accuracy), and (c) identify sources of misalignment (for example, when a technically accurate summary nevertheless fails to show higher-order organizing skills). Such evidence is directly useful for assessment design, curriculum decisions, and teacher feedback practices. Understanding how summary tasks reflect writing competence supports course design that better prepares students for academic writing demands.

2. Theoretical Basis

Summary writing plays a crucial role in developing academic literacy, particularly among EFL learners. It serves as a bridge between reading and writing by fostering comprehension, critical thinking, and concise expression. (Zafarani & Kabgani (2014) emphasize that engaging in summary writing significantly enhances students' reading comprehension, illustrating its dual function in reinforcing both receptive and productive language skills. Complementing this, Yeh et al., (2020) note that summarization activities promote higher-order thinking skills, such as analysis and synthesis, which are fundamental for academic success.

An essential aspect of summary writing is paraphrasing, which demonstrates a writer's ability to restate ideas in original language. According to Shi et al., (2018) effective paraphrasing indicates a deep understanding of the source material and helps maintain academic integrity by avoiding plagiarism. This ability to reformulate content in one's own words is key to producing original and credible academic work.

Accuracy and objectivity are equally critical in summary writing. A well-written summary must reflect the source text faithfully, without introducing personal opinions, additional information, or misrepresentations. Frey et al., (2003) highlight that accurate summaries clearly and concisely present the main ideas while remaining grounded in the original content. Similarly, Idris et al., (2011) assert that summarizing requires writers to make thoughtful decisions about what to include or omit, ensuring that the summary preserves the coherence and logical flow of the source, the focus of the summary is important to keep the summary brief while also include all the main ideas.

The mechanical and convention of writing also significantly affects the effectiveness of a summary. (Hyland, 2016) emphasizes that syntactic accuracy and appropriate punctuation are essential for maintaining coherence and formality in English writing. Lastly, length conciseness is a defining feature of summary writing, an effective summary should typically range from one-quarter to one-third the length of the original text. This guideline helps students focus on extracting and presenting only the essential information while avoiding unnecessary elaboration or detail (Nation, 2009). By doing so, summaries fulfill their purpose as clear, concise representations of larger texts.

Together, these dimensions namely paraphrasing, accuracy, mechanics, and convention, illustrate the multifaceted nature of summary writing. Mastering them not only reflects students' writing proficiency but also enhances their ability to process and reproduce academic content effectively.

Collectively, these elements not only reveal students' writing ability but also reflect their capacity to critically engage with texts, interpret key ideas, and reproduce information effectively within academic contexts.

3. Research Method

This study adopted a quantitative approach with a descriptive research design. The primary objective was to systematically describe and analyze the phenomenon of summary writing produced by third-year students enrolled in the English Education Program at a University in Pamekasan, Madura.

The purposive sampling method was conducted for 6th semester undergraduate students who already passed Academic Writing and Critical Reading and Literacy courses, in which summary writing was formally taught. There were 20 students taken

as samples because the students already passed the two courses, they were asked to make summary distributed by the instructor.

To evaluate the students' summary writing abilities, a written test was administered. The participants were required to summarize an expository text with an educational topic. The participants were given 60 minutes to complete the task. Prior to starting the test, the researcher provided a detailed explanation of the task requirements, such as the length requirement, and the students needed to use their own language. To ensure reliability, the summaries were scored by two independent raters: the researcher and a lecturer from the institution. The inter-rater reliability was assessed, following the principles outlined by (Weigle, 2002), to ensure consistency and agreement between the raters.

The primary data collected for this study consisted of the students' summary writing scores. These scores were analyzed using descriptive statistics to assess the students' overall performance. The summaries were assessed based on five key aspects of summary writing: length, accuracy, paraphrasing, focus, and conventions. These criteria were adapted from Frey et al., (2003), ranging from 1 to 4 in each aspect. Then, the total score was multiplied by 5 so that the maximum score was 100. To assess the students' levels of proficiency, the summary writing scores were categorized into five performance levels: excellent (100-80), good (79-70), fair (69-60), poor (59-40), and fail (39-0), based on a classification system adapted from (Heaton, 1988). Before administering the test instrument, a validity and reliability test was conducted to ensure the appropriateness of the rubric. The validity test results showed that all items had an *r*-count greater than the *r*-table value (0.378), with a significance level of $p < 0.05$. This indicates that all items were valid and appropriate for measuring the constructs of the study. Therefore, the instrument was considered suitable for use in the main research. Additionally, a reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha was conducted to measure internal consistency. The results indicated a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.781 at a 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Since the *r*-count (0.781) exceeded the commonly accepted threshold of *r*-table (0.70), it can be concluded that the instrument is highly reliable, meaning that it consistently measures what it is intended to assess.

The data analysis process in this quantitative descriptive study focused on systematically organizing, calculating, and interpreting the collected data to describe frequencies, and tendencies related to the research variables. The primary analytical tool employed in this study was descriptive statistical analysis, which aimed to determine the overall summary writing proficiency of the participants and to identify which aspects of summary writing were most and least successfully achieved. The mean score was computed using the formula adapted from (Gay et al., 2012):

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

\bar{x} = Mean score of students' summary writing

$\sum x$ = Total score obtained by all students

N = Total number of students

In addition to the overall performance analysis, each aspect of summary writing was examined individually to determine students' strengths and weaknesses. The percentage achievement for each aspect was calculated using the following formula:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{N}$$

\bar{x} = Mean score of students' summary writing

$\sum x$ = Total score obtained by all students

N = Total number of students

(adapted from (Arikunto, 2009))

The descriptive data were organized into frequency tables, percentages, and mean scores, allowing for a detailed interpretation of the findings. The results were then qualitatively described to provide a deeper understanding of the students' performance patterns. The results were then presented in the form of tables and descriptive statistics to provide a clear and objective representation of the findings.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Result

A total of 20 student summaries were evaluated using an adapted version of the summary writing rubric developed by Frey et al. (2003) which originally employed a

4-point scale across five key aspects, yielding a maximum possible score of 20. For the purposes of this study, the scoring scale was converted to a 100-point system by multiplying the total score by five, in order to enhance the clarity and comparability of the assessment results. The average score was used as the final score for measuring students' summary writing ability.

From the data, by divided the total final score and the total number of participants it was found that the mean score of the participants' score in general was 77.75. From the description of the rating scales made by Heaton (1988) it was categorized as Good. In general, the students' summary writing ability demonstrates a satisfactory comprehension of the source material. While the main ideas are generally identified, they are not consistently articulated in the students' own words, with some direct language from the original text retained. The summary contains minor factual inaccuracies and several grammatical and mechanical errors that may interfere with clarity.

An analysis of students' summary writing performance was conducted by organizing the mean scores according to the proficiency level descriptors outlined by Heaton (1988). The resulting classification of scores was illustrated in the table below:

Table 1 Summary Writing Scores Classification

Score levels	Frequency	Percentage	Category
80-100	9	45%	Excellent
70-79	11	55%	Good
60-69	0	0%	Fair
40-59	0	0%	Poor
0-39	0	0%	Fail

From the table above, it can be seen that the participants are all already have decent ability in making summary. 45% of the participants demonstrates a thorough comprehension of the original text by clearly articulating the main ideas along with pertinent and substantive supporting details. The summary was succinctly expressed in their own language, reflecting clarity and coherence. It was logically structured and devoid of grammatical or mechanical errors that could hinder understanding. The length of the summary aligned precisely with the requirements specified in the

assignment, further reflecting the student's ability to follow academic guidelines effectively. Meanwhile 55% of the participants exhibits an adequate grasp of the source material, with a concise articulation of central ideas; however, the use of original phrasing was inconsistent, and portions of the text are reproduced verbatim. The response contains occasional factual inaccuracies and was marked by several grammatical and mechanical errors that may impede overall coherence and readability. Moreover, the length of the summary slightly exceeded the specified task requirements, but the deviation was not substantial.

The Result on Each Aspects of Summary Writing

To analyze students' proficiency in a specific aspect of summary writing in relation to the other assessed components the formula in finding the percentage of each aspect and mean score of each aspect was utilized. From the mean score that has been found, the percentage of each aspect was sought to find out which aspect had the highest and lowest percentage. From the calculation results, the following results were found.

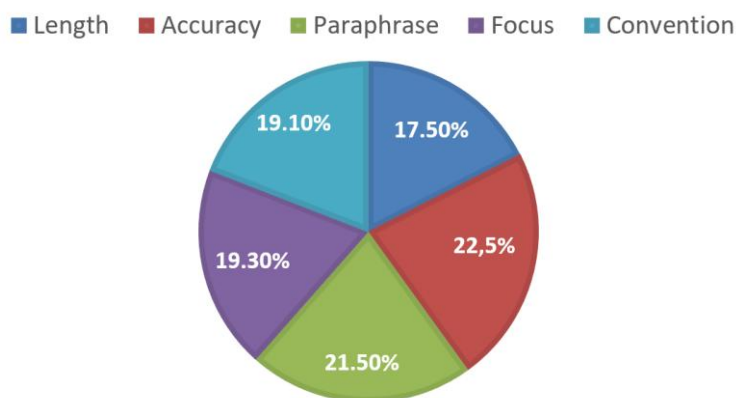


Figure 1 The Score Percentage of Each Aspect of Summary Writing

The results indicated that accuracy ($M = 87.5$) and paraphrasing ($M = 83.75$) were the most successfully achieved components, both falling into the "Excellent" category. This suggests that students were generally capable of identifying accurate content and using appropriate paraphrasing techniques. These results aligned partially with the findings of Yoshimura, (2018), who observed that Japanese university students tended to copy large portions of the source text and showed limited awareness of the need to use their own words in summary writing. In contrast, the present study found that students demonstrated relatively strong paraphrasing skills, with a mean score of 83.75, categorized as "Excellent". This suggests that the students

in this study, who had prior instruction in academic writing and summary techniques, were more adept at rephrasing ideas, possibly due to their advanced level of study and greater exposure to summarization tasks in various courses.

The focus ($M = 75$) and conventions ($M = 75.6$) aspects were both categorized as “Good”, indicating reasonable control over the inclusion of relevant content and adherence to grammatical norms, though some inconsistencies were still present.

On the contrary, while the aspects of accuracy and paraphrasing were most successfully achieved, length was found to be the most problematic area for students. The length aspect had the lowest mean score ($M = 68.1$), placing it in the “Fair” category. This implies that a considerable number of students struggled to condense the source material appropriately within the expected word range. The students tended to over-extended their summaries or failed to appropriately condense the content.

These results suggest that while the students have generally developed the foundational skills necessary for summary writing, particular attention should be given to improving their ability to control text length and further refine language use to avoid grammatical and mechanical errors. This analysis provides valuable insights into the areas in which students excel and those that require additional instructional support.

4.2 Discussion of the Research Result

Overall, the findings indicate that while students demonstrate competence in understanding and paraphrasing the source material, there is still a need for focused instruction on how to control summary length and maintain grammatical accuracy. The students in the current study, having reached their third year and completed relevant coursework, appeared to be in this transitional phase. Their performance reflects the development of paraphrasing strategies, as evidenced by the high average score in this area. However, issues such as inconsistency in focus and occasional grammatical and mechanical errors are still evident, it means that paraphrasing and summary construction require more refined integration and transformation of ideas.

Unlike some earlier studies which observed widespread deficiencies in paraphrasing or accuracy, the present study reveals that students can perform well when

appropriate instructional support is provided. This underscores the importance of integrated reading-writing instruction and strategic training in summary composition.

The occurrence of factual inaccuracies and grammatical or mechanical errors in the work of over half the participants may also be influenced by their developing language proficiency. Hinkel (2004) notes that L2 writers often struggle with syntactic and lexical accuracy, which can impact the clarity and correctness of academic writing. These challenges are often compounded by the cognitive load of processing source content, especially when students are not yet confident in filtering and rephrasing information effectively.

Additionally, the slight overextension of summary length among this group could reflect a misunderstanding of the summarization task itself. Rather than condensing content, students may include unnecessary information in an effort to demonstrate comprehension or meet perceived expectations. Friend, (2001) highlights that one of the common pitfalls in summary writing is the inclusion of excessive detail, which stems from either a lack of judgment about what constitutes main ideas or uncertainty about academic expectations. These findings highlight the need for targeted pedagogical interventions that focus not only on paraphrasing and accuracy, but also on improving students' ability to distill essential content and manage summary length. Instructional approaches that emphasize summarization as a strategic, selective process—such as guided summarizing, scaffolded tasks, and modeling—can help students better internalize the purpose and structure of academic summaries (Hirvela & Du, 2013).

In sum, the disparities observed in students' summarization performance likely stem from varying degrees of proficiency in language, critical reading, and academic writing conventions. This underscores the need for targeted instructional support, particularly in developing summarization strategies, paraphrasing skills, and linguistic accuracy, to better equip students for academic writing tasks. Nevertheless, the provision of explicit, well-structured instructions plays a crucial role in facilitating students' ability to produce coherent and effective summaries. Therefore, it is imperative that educators clearly articulate the task expectations and summarization guidelines prior to assigning summary writing activities.

This study has demonstrated that summary writing, as a form of text reproduction, effectively reflects students' broader writing abilities. The observed strengths in

paraphrasing and content identification indicate that students are developing essential skills required for academic literacy, suggesting that summary writing serves not only as a comprehension exercise but also as a diagnostic tool for assessing writing competence. At the same time, persistent challenges in areas such as grammatical accuracy and appropriate summary length highlight gaps in students' ability to produce precise and well-structured texts. These findings reaffirm the value of summary writing as an indicator of students' writing proficiency, aligning with the study's aim to explore how well summary writing represents overall writing ability. To fully realize its potential in this role, summary writing must be supported by targeted instruction that reinforces critical reading, linguistic accuracy, and concise expression, all of which are essential components of academic writing development.

5. Closing

The findings of this study reveal that the third-year students of the English Education Program demonstrated a generally strong performance in summary writing, with an overall mean score of 77.75, categorized as *Good* according to Heaton's (1988) scale. This result indicates that most students possess a satisfactory ability to comprehend source texts, identify main ideas, and restate them in their own words. Among the five assessed aspects which are length, accuracy, paraphrasing, focus, and conventions, the highest achievements were observed in accuracy and paraphrasing, both classified as *Excellent*. These results suggest that students have developed adequate skills in understanding content and expressing it appropriately through rewording and sentence reconstruction.

However, the length aspect, which received the lowest mean score (*Fair* category), indicates a persistent difficulty in condensing source material effectively within the required limits. This challenge suggests that while students are capable of accurate and coherent paraphrasing, they tend to over-extend their summaries, possibly due to uncertainty in determining essential versus supporting information. Additionally, the occurrence of minor grammatical and mechanical errors points to the need for greater attention to linguistic accuracy and proofreading practices.

Overall, the analysis confirms that summary writing effectively represents students' overall writing ability, reflecting both their strengths and their developing areas. Strong performance in paraphrasing and content accuracy demonstrates the students' growing

academic literacy and comprehension skills, whereas weaknesses in summary length and conventions highlight ongoing areas for instructional improvement.

In conclusion, summary writing functions as both a comprehension exercise and a diagnostic tool for assessing students' writing competence. The findings reveal that while students demonstrate strong skills in paraphrasing and content accuracy, challenges remain in controlling length and ensuring grammatical precision. To address these issues, writing instruction should focus on three key areas: (1) developing critical reading and content selection skills, (2) improving conciseness and length control, and (3) reinforcing linguistic accuracy and conventions. Strengthening these aspects will not only enhance students' ability to produce coherent and concise summaries but also foster their overall academic writing proficiency.

By integrating these focuses into teaching practices, educators can strengthen students' summarization skills and, more broadly, their academic writing proficiency. Furthermore, the findings suggest that future research should incorporate larger samples and process-oriented methods, such as think-aloud protocols, to gain deeper insight into the cognitive and linguistic strategies students use during summarization.

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