

## Assessing the Accuracy of College Students' Summary Writing

Yosep Hendrian  
English Department  
Indonesia University of Education  
email: hendrian.yosep@gmail.com  
handphone: 085722779182

### Abstract:

The study reported the investigation the ability of students' summary writing. The respondents in this article were students of English Education Department in one state university in Bandung. The respondents were given three different levels of topics to be summarized, and then the students' summary writing was scored. In general, the results showed that most of the students have good ability to summarize the topics. It can be seen that most the students' summary writing scores were good and excellent.

**Keywords:** *Writing, Summary Writing, Academic Writing, Assessment*

## INTRODUCTION

People cannot be separated from something that is written such as books, newspapers, banners, commercials, blogs, or in a specific term such as educational field. Writing is a medium for expressing one's thought and communicating ideas (Heaton, 1990). Since writing skill is important for students' academic activities, there is a need for them to master the writing skill. On the other hand, mastering writing skill needs a great effort to practice. Alwasilah (2001) states that writing, compared to other skills, is perceived as the most difficult to acquire for some reasons. It was found that the writers are lack of ideas or selecting proper language to write. In addition, the difficulties faced by the writers leads to a plagiarism.

Plagiarism can be defined as an act of taking over the ideas, methods, or written words of another, without acknowledgment and with the intention that they be taken as the work of the deceiver (American Association of University Professors, 1989).

Plagiarism which is usually found in academic writing occurs because of lack of students' writing competence, difficulties to share their own thought, etc. The students tend not to have understanding in using paraphrasing, quoting, and summarizing. This is mainly happened because of the lack of writers' writing competences. However, training a lot in making summary is one of techniques to reduce plagiarism.

According to Frey, Fisher, and Hernandez (2003) state that the ability to write a tight, concise, accurate summary of information is an essential entry point to other writing genre, especially analytical and technical writing. Frey, Fisher, and Hernandez (2003) also state summarizing is intended to convey correct information in an efficient manner so that the reader can learn the main idea and essential details through a piece that is much shorter than the original. Similar to this, Oshima & Hogue (1999) explain that summarizing as compressing large amount of information into the fewest

possible sentences. Summarizing is giving the gist of a chosen passage or work in your own words. An effective summary communicates the main points in a selection but is significantly shorter than the original. They also state several purposes of Summarizing such as: to convey a general idea, to present only necessary information, set up quoted material, to establish background, to offer overview of a topic.

There is a belief which is stated by Hill (1991) and Scott & Windsor (2000) who mention that summary writing is more complex than it may first appear, but that when explicitly taught, these writers make progress. Summary writing can be especially difficult for students with learning disabilities. It is difficult because student with reading comprehension difficulties is hard to press to identify important points. English language learners struggle with summary writing because the level of academic language necessary significantly increases the cognitive load of the task.

As mentioned Frey, Fisher, and Hernandez (2003:44) and Tuksinvarajarn (2009), there are several characteristics of summarizing; (1) shorter than the original piece, (2) paraphrase the author's words, (3) focus on the main ideas only, (4) leave out unimportant or non-informative words, (5) keep your notes short, and (6) organize your notes well.

College students should have summarizing ability because it will be helpful in writing academic writing. Summarizing can reduce the plagiarism that usually happens in academic writing. Besides, summarizing can let the students be creative to create their own word but still use the original author main idea.

In other related research, summary writing can give several benefits to the students. For example, there were research conducted by Bean and Steenwyk who investigated the use of GIST and Ruled-Governed Summarization in Sixth grade. It compared the students' summary that used GIST and rule-governed technique. The participants of the study consist of 21 students used rule-

governed, 19 students who used GIST, and 20 students who used trial and error summary technique. The result revealed that the GIST and rule-governed are effective with sixth graders. It also

explained that there is no significant difference between GIST and rule governed students' result summary. But they are both significantly better than a trial and error practice approach.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study was conducted to reveal the accuracy of students' writing summary. Hopefully the result of the study can give information about the students' knowledge in applying summarizing, which can be used for the students or others as an evaluation of their learning.

This study employed qualitative design which was aimed at identifying the accuracy of students' writing summary. There were 22 students who

participated in this study. They are second grade students of English Department in Indonesia University of Education. The participants received 3 topics which are different in level of difficulties. The students' summary writing on the 3 topics were collected and calculated as data of the study.

This study used rubric for assessing summary writing created by Frey, Fisher, and Hernandez (2003) to measure students' writing summary, the rubric can be seen as follows:

**Table 2. Rubric for Assessing Summary Writing**

	4	3	2	1
Name: _____				
Date: _____				
Summary Title: _____				
Period: _____				
Length	6-8 sentences	9 sentences	10 sentences	11+ sentences
Accuracy	All statements accurate and verified by story	Most statements accurate and verified by story	Some statements cite outside information or opinions	Most statements cite outside information or opinions
Paraphrasing	No more than 4 words in a row taken directly from story	One sentence contains more than 4 words in a row taken directly from story	Two sentences contain more than 4 words in a row taken directly from story	3+ sentences contain more than 4 words in a row taken directly from story
Focus	Summary consists of main idea and important details only	Summary contains main idea and some minor details	Summary contains main idea and only minor details	Main idea of story is not discussed
Conventions	No more than one punctuation, grammar, or spelling error	2-3 punctuation, grammar, or spelling errors	4-5 punctuation, grammar, or spelling errors	6+ punctuation, grammar, or spelling errors

Overall grade: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

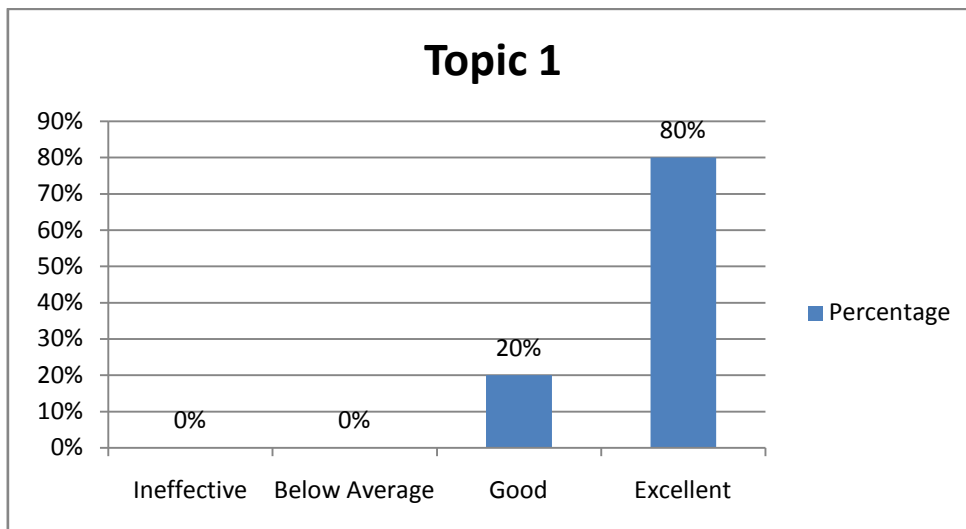
### FINDING AND DISCUSSION

After examining the summaries from the students, the result can be shown

as follows. In addition, the discussion is based on the difficulty topic given to the students.

#### 1) Students' summary on Topic 1

Percentage Students' Summary writing topic 1

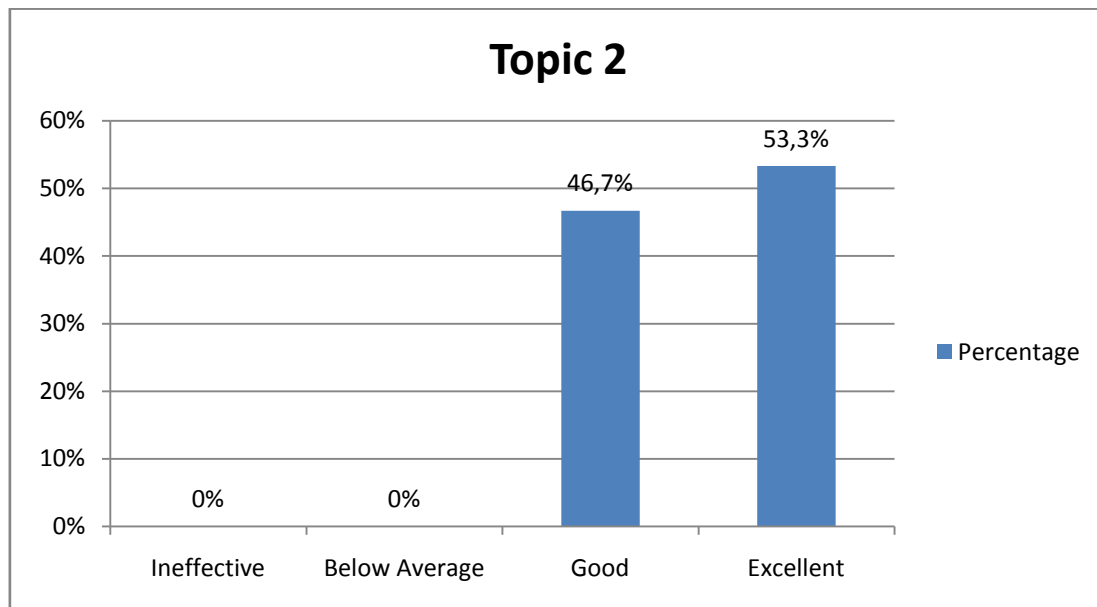


The table above shows the percentage of students' summary on topic 1. From general calculation on the table, the data show that 20% of the students had made good summary writing and 60% of the students had made excellent summary

writing. There are 0% of the students who had below average and ineffective summary. It means that most of the students have good knowledge and ability to summarize the topic 1 which is quite simpler than topic 2 or 3.

## 2) Students' summary on Topic 2

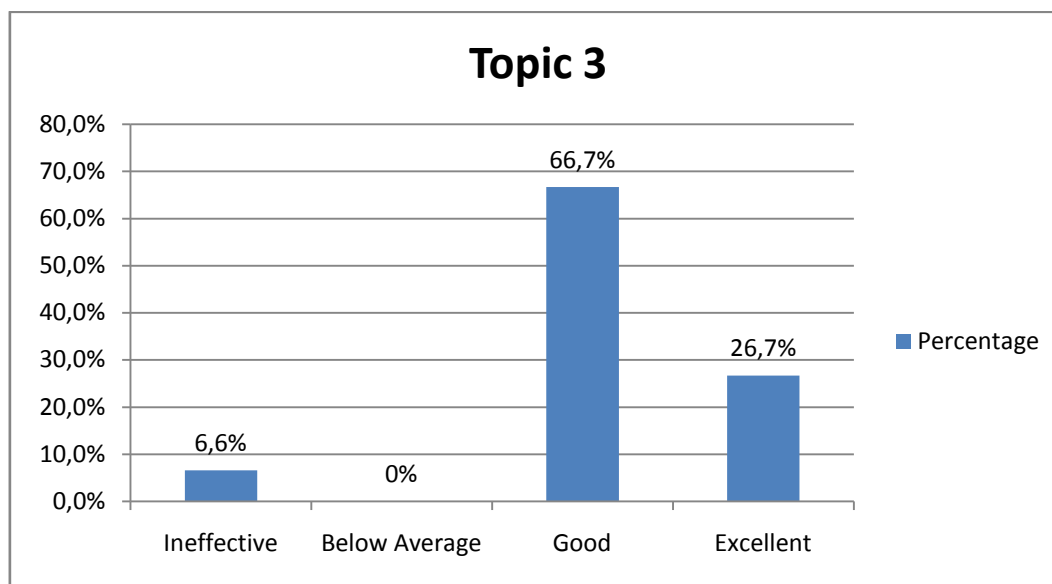
Percentage Students' Summary writing topic 2



The table above shows the percentage of students' summary on topic 2. From general calculation on the table, the data show that 46.7% of the students made good summary and the rest 53.3% of the students made excellent summary. There are 0% of the students made below average and

ineffective summary. It means that most of the students have ability to summarize the given topic. The percentage of excellent summary writing on topic 2 is decreasing after being compared with topic 1. This may lead to the assumption that topic 2 is more difficult to summarize.

### 3) Students' summary on Topic 3



The table above shows the percentage of students' summary on topic 3. From general calculation on the table, the data show that 66.7% of the students made good summary, and 26.7% of the students made excellent made excellent summary. The data also show that 6,6% of the students made ineffective summary. On the topic 3, the percentage of the excellent summary is decreasing, and it is different from topic

1 and topic 2. The good summary is always increasing from topic 1, topic 2, and topic 3. There is only 6,6% of the students made ineffective summary. Besides, the excellent summary is decreasing compared with topic 1 and topic 2. For that reason, that topic 3 is assumed as the most difficult topic so that the decreasing of excellent summary occurred.

### CONCLUSION

Summary is part of writing skills that requires practices. It deals with rewriting others writing without claiming as the writer's. The difficulties

in making summary are mainly caused by the lack ideas, writing techniques, and practices. A lot of practices are believed as one of the ways to solve those.

After examining the data which were gained from students' summary, this study may conclude that the students have good ability in summarizing text. This is because they might be familiar with any kinds of

academic writing practices. However, the students usually still found the difficulties to summarize texts which contain complex sentences, new vocabularies, and tricky important point of the texts.

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