

# Primary School Students and Teachers' Opinions about Summary Writing: A Qualitative Analysis<sup>i</sup>

Pınar Bulut\*, Hayati Akyol

Gazi Faculty of Education, Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey

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**Abstract** The purpose of the current study is to elicit the opinions of Turkish primary school students and teachers about summary writing. The study group of the current research was selected by means of the criterion sampling method. The study group is comprised of 85 primary school fifth grade students and 17 classroom teachers teaching these students. As the data collection tool in the current study, a semi-structured student interview form and a semi-structured teacher interview form were used. In the analysis of the collected data, the content analysis method was employed. The findings obtained have revealed that there is a considerable consistency between the students and teachers' responses. Majority of the teachers stated that they have their students write summaries regularly and then that they provide feedbacks for their students by making corrections or writing notes on their summaries. The teachers think that summarizing develops written expression to the greatest extent and teaches students how and where to use punctuation marks. The teachers also stated that they had not taken any training about summarizing at any level of their training. The students, on the other hand, stated that their summaries are only signed by the teacher or the teacher has them read their summaries. Moreover, the students think that summary writing facilitates recall, that their teachers do not give them information about how to write a summary and that they do not show them samples of summary writing.

**Keywords** Summarizing, Summary Writing, Primary School, Primary School Teacher

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## 1. Introduction

Reading is a process that occurs as a result of the eye's leaping over lines. Yet, reading is not a language skill restricted to this physical movement of the eye. Reading relies on both physical and mental activities. Besides being a process having physiological, psychological and

sociological dimensions [1], the reading skill also involves academic, economic, social, political and personal values [2].

Good readers use different strategies and techniques to increase their level of understanding while reading a text. These strategies and techniques include guessing from the title of the text or looking at images about the text, identifying and marking important points, answering questions about the text, determining the subject and the main idea of the text, re-telling or writing the text with his/her own sentences. Summarizing is one of the strategies used to enhance understanding after reading.

Minskoff [3], states that summarization is one of the skills needed to understand what is read, because the summary contains important ideas selected from the text having been read. According to Williams [4], summarization is a multi-faceted process that requires various prerequisite skills, and most important of all is the ability to define the main idea. Klein [5], defines summarization as the ability to describe the main idea or content of the text briefly and effectively. Given the delineations above, it can be argued that the most important element to be found in a quality summary is the main idea of the text. Hence, summarization is a metacognitive strategy that allows to find the main idea of the text and to select important information in the text. As a result, summarization can be defined as the reader's finding the main idea in the text and re-writing a much shorter version of the original text with his/her own words without destructing the structure of the text and flow of thoughts by removing unnecessary details through some strategies. One of the important features of a summary is that it is shorter than the original text. Summaries are used to transfer the maximum amount of information within the minimum area, so they play an important role by providing gains in time and space [6]. The main purpose of writing a summary is to enhance the level of understanding. Summarizing improves students' comprehension and metacognitive skills [4]. Using learning strategies such as note taking and summary writing have positive effects on reading comprehension [7, 8], retention [8], and the development

of writing skills [7].

Moreover, summary instruction increases students' learning and retention levels [9]. Teaching how to make a summary enhances students' academic achievements in different courses [10, 11].

Summary writing requires the use of certain strategies because summary writing does not mean exactly copying the text or combining some parts of the texts haphazardly. Minskoff [3], argues that students gradually acquire the skill of summarizing. They first learn to summarize a paragraph, then two paragraphs, a whole section and a whole book. The amount of information included in their summary gradually increases. According to Anderson, Suzanne & Babadogan [12], teachers first should select the correct text while inculcating the skill of summarizing in their students. What is meant by selecting the correct text is selecting an easy text or a text that is not very complicated because it is easy to determine the main idea on short and easy texts. Over time, with increasing experience gained by students about summarizing, they can be provided with longer texts. Moreover, students first should be introduced to narrative texts to summarize. During the process of inculcating the skill of summarizing, students first should be allowed to look at the text while writing their summaries. While writing a summary, students can check whether they have understood when they look at the text. Then they can write their summaries without looking at the text. Yet, the existing research [13] has revealed that elementary school 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders do not have information about the use of strategies during summary writing. Students making use of some strategies during summary writing generally use direct quotation as the strategy [14]. Even in research conducted at university level [15], it was found that good summarizers mostly use the strategies of removing the unimportant information in the text and removing the unnecessarily repeating information in the text. According to Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui & Tarver [16], though it has many benefits, summarizing is a skill difficult to master by high school students. The student needs to decide which information should be included in his/her summary, which information should not be excluded and how information should be organized and which words to use to express the desired meanings.

The use of summarizing skills does not automatically occur immediately after the student reads a text. Therefore, summarizing is a skill that needs to be taught. Klein [5], points out that even though summarizing is highly understandable as an activity or an instructional technique, it is not easy. For students to master the skill of summarizing, they should be taught how a summary is written, which elements should be included in a summary and what should be taken into consideration while writing a summary by teachers. According to Rose [17], teaching students how to write a summary is a task not liked by many teachers. If teachers become aware of many benefits to be offered to students when they learn how to write a summary, then they may invest greater effort and become

more willing to teach this skill to their students. According to Brown, Day & Jones [18], while examining the development of the skill of summarizing, children should be somehow enabled to remember most of the information they are expected to summarize. There are two ways to achieve this; first, using simple stories that are easy and grammatically well-structured; thus, they will be remembered well. Second, if longer and more complex stories are to be used, it should be made possible for students to understand the text on the basis of some criteria. All this information gives rise to the question "Have the students been informed about summary writing? Or Have the students been instructed about summary writing? If they have been, how? Therefore, the current study aimed to reveal the opinions of Turkish elementary school students and teachers about summary writing. This is a subject not much investigated in the related literature. Therefore, the current study is believed to be important and to contribute to the literature.

To this end, information about the research model, method, study group, data collection tools and data analysis will be presented.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Research Model

The current study is a qualitative research designed in the survey model. Within the context of the current study, no special application or intervention was carried out rather it was attempted to determine the participating teachers and students' opinions and practices as they were.

### 2.2. Research Method

The current study employed the individual interview method, one of the qualitative research methods. The main goal of this method is to understand what the participants mean [19]. In general, prior to the interviews, interview questions were determined. Yet, during the interviews, the order of some questions was changed and some follow-up questions were added to elicit more details.

### 2.3. Study Group

The current study employed the purposive sampling method. There are different types of purposive sampling that can be used such as "extreme/deviant case sampling, maximum variation sampling, homogeneous sampling, typical case sampling, criterion sampling, critical case sampling and snowball or chain sampling" [20]. The current study employed the criterion sampling method. The primary principle of the criterion sampling is to investigate all the cases meeting some pre-determined criteria [20]. In order to be able to make a comparison between the students' and teachers' opinions about summary writing, the criteria

of the teachers' having been teaching the same class at least for 3 years and teaching the fifth graders during the application stage of the current study were employed. Thus, before starting the application stage of the current study, data about the socio-economic levels of the schools located in the city of Ankara were obtained from the Turkish Institute of Statistics. Then schools were called and informed about the study and they were asked whether they would like to participate in the current study if they met the pre-determine criteria. Face-to-face preliminary talks were conducted with the school administrators and teachers who had accepted to participate in the study on a volunteer basis to inform them about the study and then they were re-asked again whether they would like to participate in the study. Official correspondences were made and official permissions were granted and then the study was initiated. Moreover, a great care was taken for the teachers and students in the study group to adequately represent different socio-economic levels. Thus, the current study was conducted on 6 classroom teachers working in schools from low socio-economic level, 6 classroom teachers working in medium socio-economic level and 5 classroom teachers working in high socio-economic level; thus, a total of 17 teachers and their students.

## 2.4. Data Collection Tools

In order to collect the data in the current study, a semi-structured teacher interview form was developed. According to Sencan [21], in semi-structured interviews, even if the researcher has determined the questions in advance, he/she does not strictly adhere to them; these questions only provide the necessary guidance. In the current study, although the researcher prepared the interview questions in advance, during the interviews the places of these questions were changed and alternative questions were used or some follow-up questions were asked. Bas and Akturan [22], suggested some strategies to be used when collecting the interview data. In the current study, three of these strategies were widely employed during the interviews which are active listening by paraphrasing what the interviewee has told to confirm that you have understood, showing patience by allowing the interviewee to talk freely and being flexible in case of distractions from the topic.

The interview process of the current study is comprised of three stages. These are:

1. **Opening:** The interviews were conducted in the library, in the room of the vice-principal, in the counseling service room etc., a great care was taken for any of the interviews not to be interrupted and effort was invested for the comfort of the interviewees. In this stage, first the researcher briefly introduced herself, then explained why she would like to conduct this interview, stated that the collected data would only be used for the purposes of the current study and their names would be kept confidential and both the

teachers' and students' parents' consents were sought to tape record the interviews.

2. **Asking Questions:** The researcher asked the interview questions prepared in advance by adhering to their order in the interview schedule as much as possible yet in the natural flow of the conversation with the interviewer some small changes were made in order to elaborate the given answers. However, the researcher asked all the questions in the interview form up to the end of each interview. Interviews lasted for 30-40 minutes on average. As the interview period was not too long, no break was taken during the interviews. For the recording of the interviews, only a tape-recorder was used with the permission of the teachers.
3. **Completion of the Interview:** At the end of each interview, the researcher briefly summarized what had been told by the interviewer and asked whether there was anything he/she would like to add and thanked for his/her participation.

### 2.4.1. Semi-structured Teacher Interview Form

A semi-structured interview form was used to elicit what the opinions of the participating classroom teachers about summarizing and summarizing strategies. In the preparation of the form, firstly, the related literature was reviewed yet no study employing the interview method about this issue was encountered. Considering the purposes of the current study, interview questions for the teachers were developed. The questions were submitted to the review of a professor and an associate professor working in the field of teaching Turkish and of an academician with a doctoral degree and having qualitative studies. Then, the form was piloted on five classroom teachers not in the study group. The data obtained from the pilot interviews were analyzed; some original questions were replaced with alternative questions and some questions were added; thus, the final version of the form was developed.

### 2.4.2. Semi-structured Student Interview Form

Individual interviews were conducted with the participating students to reveal whether they had any training about summarizing and summarizing strategies up to the fifth grade, whether they used these strategies, if they used, how often and how they used them and what kinds of texts they summarized. The interviews were conducted with five students randomly selected from each class by using the semi-structured interview form. In the preparation process of the form, firstly, the literature was reviewed, yet no study having employed the interview method to investigate this subject was found. Considering the purposes of the current study, questions for the student interview form were determined. These questions were subjected to the scrutiny of an expert and then they were piloted on 12 five grade students not included in the study group. The data collected from the pilot interviews were examined, some original questions were replaced with

alternative questions and some new questions were added; thus, the final version of the form was obtained.

## 2.5. Data Analysis

In the analysis of the collected data, the content analysis method was employed. As there was no study conducted by using the interview method on this subject and there were no pre-determined themes on this subject and in-depth analysis of the collected data was performed, the content analysis method was preferred. As a result, the data similar to each other were gathered within certain concepts and themes. Then arranged and interpreted to be comprehensible to the reader [23]. In this regard, following operations were carried out:

1. **Coding of the Data:** By analyzing the responses of the interviewees and considering each question a section, codes made up of one or few words were assigned to meaningful units included in the responses gathered under these sections. A great care was taken for these codes to refer to concepts that would best reflect the meaning of the related section. As there was no such study in the literature, the concepts were assigned by the researcher. As a result of the coding process, under different sections; that is, different questions, emerged the data having the same or similar meanings. These data related to each other were brought together.
2. **Determination of Themes:** After the collected data had been coded, the themes that could gather the common aspects between these codes under certain categories were attempted to be reached.
3. **Organization of the Data according to Codes and Themes:** In this stage, the collected data are presented

in relation to each other under the determined codes and themes without being interpreted.

4. **Interpretation of Findings:** In this last stage, the obtained data were interpreted, the relationships between the obtained findings were revealed and the results were derived.

After the analysis of the data collected through the interview method, they were shown to the participants and in this way, the validity of the study was increased. In addition, another researcher was allowed to examine the data collected through the interview technique, their analysis, coding operations, results and interpretations and he/she confirmed them; thus, the reliability of the study was improved.

## 3. Results

In this section, the teachers' and students' responses to the same question were given, respectively and similarities and differences between the responses were determined. While presenting the results, excerpts sometimes from teachers and sometimes from students accompanied to them. While giving these excerpts, the real names of the teachers and students were not given; instead, "T" was used for the teacher and "S" for the student.

### 3.1. How Do the Teachers and Students Define Summarizing?

The responses given to this question by the teachers were examined and the frequencies and percentages related to the obtained results are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** f and % values related to the teachers' definitions of summarizing

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Writing the elements of a summary	Writing the basic (main) subjects in a text	9	52.9
	Explaining without entering into details	5	29.4
	Writing the main idea of a text	5	29.4
	Writing briefly and concisely	4	23.5
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: Writing/expressing what has been understood or recalled	Writing what has been understood from reading	8	47.0
	Reading and then writing what has been recalled	6	35.2
	Expressing what has been understood	3	17.6
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: Writing the elements of a story	Writing the plot of a story	5	29.4
	Writing the characters of a story	4	23.5
	Writing the incidences in a text in their order of occurrence	4	23.5
	Writing the topic of a story	3	17.6
	Writing the main idea of a story	2	11.7
4 <sup>th</sup> THEME: Learning a lesson	Writing the parts giving lessons in a text	4	23.5
	Reading and learning lessons from a text	2	11.7

As can be seen in Table 1, the teachers' responses were gathered under four themes "writing the elements of a summary, writing/expressing what has been understood or recalled, writing the elements of a story, learning a lesson". Under the theme of "writing the elements of a summary", the teachers seem to have more emphasized the features "writing the basic (main) subjects in a text, writing the main idea of a text and writing without entering into details". Similarly, writing a text briefly and concisely is another feature emphasized by the teachers in their definitions of the summary. While one of the teachers, T6 defined summarizing as "*Deriving information from the text without much elaboration*", T8 defined it as "*Writing down or expressing briefly and concisely what has been understood*". In this definition, it is seen that T8 emphasizes that summarizing can be both verbal and written. It can be said that while defining summarizing, the teachers emphasized the comprehension, main goal of reading. Under the theme of writing what has been understood, the teachers mostly pointed out that reading and then writing what has been understood is summarizing. Under this theme, it is also emphasized that summarizing can be both verbal and written. One of the teachers, T7 defined summarizing as "*Outlining what I have understood in the same sequence of events as in the original text*", another teacher, T5 defined it as "*Expressing in writing what has been understood from the text*". When the teachers' responses collected under the theme of writing the elements of a story are examined, it is seen that they emphasized the elements of writing the plot of a story,

characters of a story, writing the incidences in a text in their order of occurrences and writing the topic and main idea. Under this theme, the teachers defined the summarizing as writing the elements of a story or story map. This might lead us to think that the teachers' perception of the concept of text is more related to narrative texts.

The students' definitions of summarizing were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 2.

As can be seen in Table 2, the students' responses to this question were gathered under four themes. These themes are; writing the elements of a summary, writing/expressing what has been understood or recalled, writing the elements of a story and learning a lesson. Some of the students' responses are quoted below: "*Finding and deriving important things from a story*" (S.14), "*Briefly writing the main idea of a text*" (S.18), "*Briefly writing a story complying with the order of occurrence of events in the original story*" (S.11), "*Writing a text briefly without giving much detail*"(S.22). "*Reading a story and then writing down what we recall*" (S.10), "*Writing what you have understood from reading a story*" (S.17), "*Reading that thing and then writing down what you have understood*" (S.43), "*It is understanding a subject and then expressing what you have understood*"(S.56). When the students' responses are examined in general, it can be said that the most frequently emphasized element in their definitions are writing briefly and concisely, writing the important parts of a text, reading and then writing what has been recalled and writing the main idea of a text.

**Table 2.** f and % values related to the students' definitions of summarizing

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Writing the elements of a summary	Writing briefly and concisely	33	32.3
	Writing important parts of a text	21	20.5
	Writing the main idea of a text	16	15.6
	Writing the basic (main) subjects in a text	14	13.7
	Explaining without entering into details	10	9.8
	Writing certain parts of a text	5	4.9
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: Writing/expressing what has been understood or recalled	Reading and then writing what has been recalled	40	39.2
	Reading and then writing what has been understood	33	32.3
	Expressing what has been understood	6	5.8
	Writing what has been done to retain the information	4	3.9
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: Writing the elements of a story	Writing the plot of a story	14	13.7
	Writing the incidences in a text in their order of occurrence	12	11.7
	Writing the main idea of a story	7	6.8
	Writing the characters of a story	5	4.9
	Writing the topic of a story	3	2.9
4 <sup>th</sup> THEME: Learning a lesson	Writing the parts giving lessons in a text	7	6.8
	Reading and learning lessons from a text	5	4.9

As a result of the interviews conducted with the teachers, their responses were also subsumed under four categories. Both the teachers and the students came up with short definitions focusing only a single dimension of summarizing and not mentioning other elements such as structural, linguistics aspects and the use of strategies. Moreover, both the teachers and the students based their definitions on stories as the text type. In this regard, there is compliance between the teachers' and students' responses.

### 3.2. What Are the Opinions of the Teachers and Students about the Elements to be Included in a Quality Summary?

The classroom teachers' responses given to this question were analyzed and they were subsumed under two themes. These themes are; paying attention to spelling and punctuation rules and paying attention to content elements. In Table 3, the results of the analysis conducted on the teachers' responses to this question are given.

As can be seen in Table 3, according to the teachers, the most important point to be taken into consideration under the theme of spelling and punctuation rules is "making a paragraph". Moreover, they also put great emphasis on "paying attention and writing a title" from among the punctuation rules. Under the theme of the content elements, the teachers most strongly emphasized "writing by obeying the rules of composition writing, adhering to the text and writing remarkable point in the text" to write a good summary. Two of the teachers, T12 and T15 pointed out the importance of some elements found in the textual

structure of the narrative text, T12: "There should be place, time, characters and chronology" and T15 "Within a text I have read once, if there are some people involved in the story, then the leading characters, place and time should be explained". Six of the teachers emphasized the importance of writing introduction, development and conclusion sections in a quality summary while four of them stated that it should be written like a composition. These two statements can almost the same thing. Thus, it can be said that a total of 10 teachers emphasized that a summary should be written according to the rules of composition writing. Some of the teachers expressed their opinions in this regard as follows; "Without ruining the format, there should be introduction, development and conclusion sections, the text should be adhered to, paragraphs should be developed and all the punctuation marks should be used properly" (T2) , "In my opinion, a summary should be like a brief composition. There should be introduction, development and conclusion sections." (T17) One of the most important elements to be found in a quality summary is the inclusion of a main idea. Six of the teachers emphasized that the main idea should be included in a quality summary. T1 "There should be a main idea. It should be organized to include the introduction, development and conclusion sections. The gist of the topic should be emphasized and it should not be drifted away from the topic."

The students' responses to the question "Which elements should be included in a quality summary?" were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 4.

**Table 3.** f and % values related to the teachers' opinions about the elements to be included in a quality summary

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Paying attention to spelling and punctuation rules	Making a paragraph	10	58.8
	Paying attention to punctuation marks	8	47.0
	Writing a title	8	47.0
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: Paying attention to content elements	Writing by obeying the rules of composition writing	10	58.8
	Adhering to the text	8	47.0
	Writing remarkable points in the text	8	47.0
	Writing the main idea	6	35.2
	Writing the events in their chronological order	6	35.2
	Removing (Deriving) details	5	29.4
	Revealing the main topic	5	29.4
	Including the message	4	23.5
	Writing the elements of place and time	4	23.5
	Writing the characters	3	17.6
	Presenting the supporting ideas	3	17.6

**Table 4.** f and % values related to the students' opinions about the elements to be included in a quality summary

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> : THEME: Paying attention to spelling and punctuation rules	Paying attention to punctuation marks	58	56.8
	Writing a title	35	34.3
	Making a paragraph	13	12.7
2. THEME: Paying attention to content elements	Writing what has been understood	36	35.2
	Writing by obeying the rules of composition writing	28	27.3
	Writing important points	27	26.4
	Writing the main idea	22	21.5
	Writing the topic of the text	16	15.6
	Writing main and supporting characters	15	14.7
	Writing the events in a chronological order	14	13.7
	Writing remarkable points in the text	12	11.7
	Writing the lesson learned from the text	11	10.7
	Writing without giving much detail	4	3.9

As can be seen in Table 4, 58 of the students stated that they pay the greatest attention to punctuation marks while writing, 35 stated that they pay the greatest attention to the title and only 13 to making paragraph. While 36 of the students stated that they write what they have understood while writing a summary, 27 stated that they only write the important points, 22 stated that they write the main idea, 16 stated that they pay great attention to include the subject of the text and 15 stated that they write the leading and supporting characters. When the students who said they write the summary like a composition was asked what they mean by writing like a composition, they said *"I write an introduction"(S.32), "the conclusion should be good"(S.12), "the introduction should be short, the development should be long and the conclusion should written briefly" (S.83)*. Writing a summary seems to be perceived to be the same as writing a composition by 28 students. However, there are many differences between them. A composition can include personal opinions and comments yet in a summary, adherence to the text is essential.

The elements stated to be included in a quality summary by both the teachers and the students were gathered under the themes of content elements and spelling and punctuation elements. These matching responses given by the teachers and students might be because teachers indoctrinate their students to pay attention to these elements while writing their summaries. Under the theme of paying attention to content elements, both the teachers and the students emphasized that writing the thought, writing the events in a chronological order and writing remarkable points in the text should be the points to be considered while writing a composition.

**3.3. The Teachers and Students' Opinions about the Applications Related to Summarizing Strategies?**

In order to determine what kinds of applications the teachers are conducting in their classes in relation to summarizing, the teachers were asked the questions "When do you have your students do summarizing activities?, In which courses do you have your students do summarizing activities?, How often do you have your students do summarizing activities?" The obtained results from their responses to these questions are given in Table 5.

As can be seen in Table 5, majority of the teachers assign summary writing activities as homework to their students. The course in which summary writing activities are conducted most frequently is the Turkish course, which is followed by social studies and science and technology courses. It is seen that the teachers who are having their students do summary writing activities in Turkish classes most frequently have them write summaries of story books. When the teachers' responses are examined, it is seen that 11 of the teachers have their students write summaries each week or once every two-three weeks. Only 2 of the teachers stated that they do not have their students write summaries regularly. One of the teachers, T3 explained how they do summary writing activities as follows: *"Students write the summaries of books. In fact, I do not find this type of summary writing very useful. That is, at this age, students should not be expected to write good summaries. We cannot get many positive results. Instead, there are book summary pages. When they write their summaries by using the clues given on these pages about the title, topic, characters etc., then they find it more enjoyable. Therefore, we are doing in this way"*. Another teacher, T4 stated that he/she asks his/her students to write summaries to force them to read books: *"In semester breaks, I give them 3 or 4 books and ask them to write their summaries. When they come back to school from holiday, they bring these summaries. When I ask them to write the summaries of the books, they feel obliged to read these books."*

**Table 5.** f and % values related to the activities conducted by the teachers in relation to summarizing strategies

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Where summarizing activities are conducted	At home (as homework)	12	70.5
	During the lesson	5	29.4
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: In which courses summarizing activities are conducted	Turkish	15	88.2
	Social Studies	5	29.4
	Science and Technology	3	17.6
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: How often summarizing activities are conducted	Once every two-three weeks	5	29.4
	At the end of each week	4	23.5
	In semester breaks	4	23.5
	When students finish a story book	2	11.7
	Not doing regularly	2	11.7

**Table 6.** f and % values related to the activities done by the students in relation to summarizing strategies

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Where summary writing activities are done	At home (as homework)	58	56.8
	During the lesson	26	25.4
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: In which courses summary writing activities are done	Turkish	56	54.9
	Social Studies	23	22.5
	Science and Technology	19	18.6
	Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge	2	
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: How often summary writing activities are done	At the end of each week	29	28.4
	Sometimes	26	25.4
	Once a week	25	24.5
	Rarely	13	12.7

The students' opinions about the applications conducted in relation to summarizing strategies are given in Table 6.

As can be seen in Table 6, 29 of the students stated that they do summary writing activities at the end of each week, 26 stated that they sometimes do and 13 stated that they rarely do. While 36 of the students stated that they write the summaries of story books, 16 stated that they write the summaries of the topics in their textbooks (science and technology, Turkish, social studies, religious culture and moral knowledge). Thus, it seems clear that the students write more summaries of narrative texts when compared to informative texts.

While 56 of the students stated that they write summaries in Turkish classes, 23 stated that they write them in social studies classes, 19 in science and technology classes. Though both the teachers and students stated that the course in which most summary writing activities were conducted is Turkish, this was more strongly emphasized by the teachers.

### 3.4. The Teachers and Students' Opinions about the Applications Conducted for the Assessment of Summaries?

As all the teachers stated that they use summarizing in

their classrooms, they were asked how to assess students' summaries and how to give feedback. The students' responses to this question were analyzed and collected under two themes. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 7.

As can be seen in Table 7, 6 of the teachers check their students' summaries only through homework check. That is, they only check whether students have written their summaries or not. Thus, there is nothing done in relation to the content of summaries during these checks. In addition, the teachers stated that they most give feedback in the form of making corrections on summaries or writing notes to students. Moreover, 6 of the teachers have students verbally present their summaries (reading or narrating) in the class and then these summaries are assessed as the whole class. While the teachers are giving feedbacks, they mostly focus on spelling mistakes and punctuation marks. None of the teachers seems to pay attention to any elements of quality summary writing while assessing students' summaries. One of the teachers, T13 expressed his/her thoughts in this regard as follows: *"First, I explain to some students. Then I collect all the notebooks and assess them in terms of punctuation and written expression. While correcting them, I both write the correct forms and write*

notes under them. For example, drawing attention to how proper nouns are written. If there is a well-written summary, I do not focus on small mistakes, ignore them". Of the teachers, T5 and T14 stated that they mostly focus on misexpressions: "We point out their mistakes on their summaries, write some small notes next to them and then we give them back. Next time, they do not make similar mistakes. Misexpressions can be punctuations mistakes. Next time, they try to correct them" and "I make corrections on misexpressions". T1 stated that he/she have

students narrate their summaries and then assess their narrations: "I have them narrate, while the student is narrating, I look into his/her summary. If sentences are not coherent, I immediately recognize it; they were haphazardly brought together." On the basis of the analysis of the teachers' responses, it can be concluded that they give their feedbacks without considering any criteria. The students' opinions about how their summaries are assessed are presented in Table 8.

**Table 7.** f and % values related to the teacher assessment of summaries

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: How summaries are checked	Checking homework, signing	6	35.2
	Writing correction notes for students	4	23.5
	Having students read the good summaries	4	23.5
	Making corrections on them	3	17.6
	Having students narrate their summaries	2	11.7
	Reading, giving verbal feedback	2	11.7
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: What is assessed in the check	Misspelling	5	29.4
	Punctuation marks	4	23.5
	Nice and neat writing	3	17.6
	Misexpression	2	11.7
	Written expression	2	11.7

**Table 8.** f and % values related to the students' opinions about how their summaries are assessed by their teachers

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: How their summaries are checked	Signing	35	34.3
	Having them read	28	27.4
	The teacher reads them	21	20.5
	Having them narrate	16	15.6
	Asking questions	14	13.7
	Writing "well-done" and putting stars	8	7.8
	Peers' checking them	5	4.9
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: What is assessed during the checks	Spelling mistakes	41	40.1
	Punctuation marks	18	17.6
	Nice and neat writing	11	10.7
	Writing something different from the textbook	11	10.7
	Briefness of the summary	5	4.9

As can be seen in Table 8, while 35 of the students stated that their teachers only sign their summaries, 28 stated that their teachers have them read summaries, 21 stated that teachers themselves read and 16 stated that their teachers have them narrate their summaries. Some students' opinions about this theme are as follows: *"They do not make any corrections, just look at and sign"* (S.70); *"They read, and then have us read them, hang the ones they like on the writing corner"* (S.77); *"They don't generally make any corrections but ask questions"* (S.59); *"They correct our spelling mistakes; if it is good, they write 'well-done'"* (S.49). When the students who stated that they have their peers check their summaries were asked who these peers are and how they do this, all the students said that this person is the most successful student in the class and he/she just looks at whether the summary is on the notebook or not. On the basis of the analysis of the responses given to this question, it can be concluded that while giving feedbacks, teachers do not give feedback about the quality of the summary rather assess students' summaries according to whether they have done or not and whether correct punctuation and spelling rules have been used. While 41 of the students stated that their teachers only check their spelling mistakes, 18 of them stated that their teachers only pay attention to punctuation mistakes, 11 stated that their teachers only check whether their writings are nice and neat and 11 stated that their teachers only pay attention to whether their writings are different from the textbook. To this question, the teachers responded that they put their signature while checking their students' summaries and have students read good summaries. On the basis of these findings, it can be argued that the students' answers and the teachers' answers concur. On the basis of the students' responses, it can be said that the teachers focus on physical and aesthetic features of writings rather than their content. The teachers responding to this question stated that they check spelling mistakes, punctuation marks and neatness of

writing while controlling students' summaries, which indicates compliance between the teachers and students' opinions.

### 3.5. What Are the Teachers and Students' Opinions about the Benefits of Summary Writing?

The teachers' opinions about the benefits of summary writing were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 9.

As can be seen in Table 9, the teachers stated that summary writing most develops written expression and teaches students where to use punctuation marks. One of the teachers, T10 indicated that summary writing enhances reading comprehension and written expression as follows: *"Through summary writing, they can express whether they have understood or not. I tell the student 'write and bring your summary'; when he/she brings the summary I see pages of writing but there is nothing, messy, if it is a text you haven't read, you cannot make sense of it. Another student wrote a half page, but it is good as there are the main points. This child understands what he/she reads. This is important in terms of both writing and self-expression"*. Stating that summarizing develops both writing and written expression, T16 expressed his/her opinions as follows: *"Summarizing makes positive contributions to both written expression and writing well."* Thus, it can be said that the teachers see summarizing as a means of facilitating recall, understanding the gist of a subject and improving reading comprehension skills, which are all related to content as well as teaching some other skills such as writing neatly and clearly, writing by paying attention to punctuation rules, which are not related to the content.

The students' opinions about the benefits of summary writing to themselves were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 10.

**Table 9.** f and % values related to the teachers' opinions about the benefits of summary writing

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Contribution to retention	Facilitating recall	3	17.6
	Reading the summary and immediately remembering the text	1	5.8
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: Contribution to writing skills	Enhancing written expression	6	35.2
	Making writing nicer and neater	4	23.5
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: Contribution to learning spelling and punctuation marks	Learning where punctuation marks are used	5	29.4
	Learning punctuation rules	4	23.5
4 <sup>th</sup> THEME: Contribution to saving of time	Saving time	3	17.6
	Allowing understanding the gist	3	17.6

**Table 10.** f and % values related to the students' opinions about the benefits of summary writing

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: Contribution to retention	Making learning more permanent	27	26.4
	Facilitating recall	18	17.6
	Reading the summary and immediately remembering the text	12	11.7
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: Contribution to writing skills	Making writing nicer and neater	15	14.7
	Enhancing summary writing skill	12	11.7
	Making writing faster	5	4.9
	Developing the skill of brief writing	3	2.9
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: Contribution to learning spelling and punctuation marks	Learning where punctuation marks are used	11	10.7
4 <sup>th</sup> THEME: Contribution to saving of time	Saving time	6	5.8

As can be seen in Table 10, 27 of the students stated that summary writing makes learning more permanent, 18 stated that it facilitates retention, 12 stated that when they read the summary again, it makes them remember the story. Some of the students stating that it facilitates retention expressed their opinions as follows: *“It prevents forgetting”* (S.71), *“It strengthens our memory”* (S.3), *“It makes us remember that book”* (S.46) *“We can re-read what we have written there, this improves our retention.”* (S.88). While 15 of the students stated that summary writing makes their writing more beautiful, 12 stated that it improves their summary writing skill, and 5 stated that it develops their writing skill. In this regard, some students expressed their opinions as follows: *“While we are writing something, we make it shorter”* (S.4), *“It helps me understand better and develop my summary writing skill”* (S.36). Eleven of the students stated that summary writing helps them learn punctuation marks. For summary writing to contribute to the proper use of punctuation marks, students' summaries should be evaluated in terms of spelling and punctuation by the teacher and then feedbacks should be given to the students. While 41 of the students stated that when their teachers evaluate their summaries, they only check their spelling mistakes, 18 of them stated that they only pay attention to punctuation marks; thus, it seems to be quite normal for the students to view summary writing as a means of learning the use of punctuation marks. In fact, the teachers also stated that summary writing contributes to learning where punctuation marks should be used.

The four themes derived from the analysis of both the teachers and the students' responses to this question were found to be the same. Moreover, the teachers stated that summary writing develops their students' written

expression and makes their writing more beautiful. Thus, summary writing is seen as a tool to develop beautiful writing. On the basis of these findings, it can be argued that the teachers' and the students' responses match.

### 3.6. What Are the Teachers and Students' Opinions about Teaching/Learning How to Write a Summary?

All of the classroom teachers participating in the current study stated that they teach summary writing. Therefore, they were asked how to teach summary writing and the results obtained are presented in Table 11.

As can be seen in Table 11, the teachers' responses to this question were subsumed under four themes. These themes are; the dimension of written expression, the dimension of content, the dimension of comprehension and the dimension of summarizing rules. When the teachers' responses to this question are examined, it is possible to say that none of the participating teachers teaches summarizing by using a specific method or in an applied manner. The teachers wanted their students to write summaries only by making some explanations and instructing about the rules of summary writing. T5: *“I made explanations such as a summary should be short and important points should be included .....I did not show them how to do it on a text.”* Instead of providing guidance, the teachers seem to have directed their students in the process of summary writing by only explaining what should be considered while writing a summary.

The students' opinions about the summary instruction given to them by their teachers were analyzed and the results are presented in Table 12.

**Table 11.** f and % results related to the methods used by the teachers to teach summary writing to their students

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: The dimension of written expression	Asking them to write the sections of introduction, development and conclusion	8	47.0
	Asking them to write briefly and concisely	6	35.2
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: The dimension of content	Asking them write in a chronological order	7	41.1
	Asking them to include the important parts in the text	5	29.4
	Asking them to write the main idea	5	29.4
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: The dimension of comprehension	Asking them to read and write what they recall	10	58.8
	Asking them to write what they have understood	8	47.0
	Asking them to re-read if they cannot remember	5	29.4
4 <sup>th</sup> THEME: The dimension of summarizing rules	Asking them to write a title	4	23.5
	Asking them not to write exactly the same things in the text	2	11.7
	Asking them to write briefly	2	11.7
	Asking them to use their own words	2	11.7

**Table 12.** f and % results related to the students' opinions about the methods used by the teachers to teach summary writing

Themes	Codes	f	%
1 <sup>st</sup> THEME: The dimension of written expression	Asking them to write the sections of introduction, development and conclusion	13	12.7
	Asking them to write briefly and concisely	15	14.7
2 <sup>nd</sup> THEME: The dimension of content	Asking them to write in a chronological order	15	14.7
	Asking them to include the important parts in the text	12	11.7
	Adding their own thoughts	8	7.8
	Asking them to write the main idea	4	3.9
3 <sup>rd</sup> THEME: The dimension of comprehension	Asking them to read and write they recall	18	17.6
	Asking them to write what they have understood	6	5.8
	Asking them to re-read if they cannot remember	4	3.9
4 <sup>th</sup> THEME: The dimension of summarizing rules	Asking them to write a title	15	14.7
	Writing without looking at the text	15	14.7
	Asking them not to write exactly the same things in the text	12	11.7
	Asking them to write briefly	12	11.7
	Asking them to use their own words	9	8.8

As can be seen in Table 12, while 15 of the students stated that their teachers ask them to write their summaries briefly and concisely, 14 of them stated that their teachers ask them to write their introduction well, and 13 stated that their teachers ask them to include the sections of introduction, development and conclusion. While 15 of the students stated that their teachers ask them to write the events in their summaries in a chronological order; 12 stated that their teachers want them to include the important parts in the text; 8 stated that their teachers ask them to add their own opinions, and 4 stated that their teachers ask them to write the main idea. Nearly half of the teachers participating in the current study stated that they ask their students to write the sections of introduction, development and conclusion in their summaries and that they also ask them to write their summaries briefly and

concisely. These results show that the teachers see summary writing as equal to composition writing and they make their explanations about summary writing in this connection.

While 18 of the students stated that their teachers ask them to read their summaries to themselves, 6 stated that their teachers ask them to write what they recall and 4 stated that their teachers ask them to read again if they do not remember. One of the students stated "*Our teacher asks us to write what we recall, and if we cannot remember the story, he/she asks us to read it once more.*" (S.75). Ten of the teachers stated that they want their students to write what they remember, 8 stated that they ask them to write what they have understood. Thus, it can be argued that there is a match between the teachers and students' responses.

## 4. Discussion

For accomplishing the main objective of reading; that is, comprehension, it is necessary to know some strategies and use them during pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading activities. Summary writing is one of them. When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that there is no study directly focusing on students and teachers' opinions on summary writing. Therefore, in this discussion section, the findings of the current study are discussed in light of the theoretical knowledge presented in the related literature.

In the current study, when how the teachers and students define summarizing is examined, it is seen that both groups emphasize the characteristics such as writing without giving much detail, writing briefly and concisely and writing what has been understood. In addition, they also emphasize some other elements in their definitions of summarizing such as writing the plot of the story, writing the characters, writing the events in the text in a chronological order, writing the topic of the story and writing the main idea of the story. They also stated that in a quality summary, there should be a leading character, event, place and time elements. Thus, both the teachers and the students perceive the texts to be summarized as narrative texts. One reason for this is that elementary school students mostly read narrative texts. Another reason is that the structures of narrative texts and informative texts are different; informative texts have more difficult structures than narrative texts; the diversity of the relations between the elements of informative texts is greater and the variety of contents in informative texts is greater [24]. Williams [4], argues that informative texts generally include words and concepts not very familiar to students. Therefore, it is more difficult to summarize informative texts because the first requirement of summarizing a text is to understand it well. If the number of unknown words and concepts is high, then it becomes more difficult to understand this text; accordingly, to summarize it. According to Anderson, Suzanne & Babadogan [12], selection of important ideas from narrative texts is easier than selecting them from other types of texts. The longer a text is, the more it needs to be shortened. If the structure of a text is complex, then it becomes necessary to use different strategies to determine which ideas are important. The students state that while they are writing summaries, they use what they have learned about the structures of narrative, informative and poetic texts because the structure of a text indicates the important ideas and the relationships between them [25]. In light of these findings, it can be suggested that students should be provided with different types of texts to summarize.

In the current study, the teachers and students provided similar responses related to the characteristics to be found in a quality summary. The teachers and students stated that paying attention to punctuation marks, writing a title,

writing by adhering to the rules of composition, writing by adhering to the text, writing about remarkable points in the text and writing the main idea of a text are the indicators of a quality summary. Summary writing is perceived as equal to composition writing. However, there are many differences between them. A composition can include personal opinions and comments while adherence to the text is essential in a summary. There are some points emphasized by researchers in relation to how to write a good summary and what elements need to be included in a summary. According to Kaya, Ozturk, Yılmaz, Altun, Selimhocaoglu [26], the reader should use his/her own words and sentences. However, very important words and sentences can be directly quoted from the text. Pressley et al. [cited in 3] argue that while writing a summary, students need to determine the main idea, exclude unnecessary information and unnecessarily repeated information and establish links between the main idea and supplementary ideas. Akyol [27], states that while engaged in an effective summary writing process, adherence to the original text should be ensured, important information in the text should be selected and some information should be developed. Moreover, it is emphasized that knowing the structure of a text also affects the process of summarization. The summary should be short, include the most important ideas of the writer and be written with the student's own statements [28]. According to Clouse [29], a summary should include the main points emphasized by the writer, basic and supporting details, include only the writer's opinions, be shorter than the original text and the person who summarizes should use his/her own words and sentences. Moreover, when suitable words cannot be found, the writer's own words can be used. In this connection, when the teachers and students' responses were examined, it was found that aside from writing briefly and adhering to the text, no other characteristics of summary writing were pointed out.

While the teachers stated that they conduct the highest number of summary writing activities in Turkish classes, which are followed by social studies and science and technology classes. It was concluded that the teachers getting their students engaged in summary writing activities use story books for these activities. In this connection, the students' opinions comply with the teachers' opinions. Thus, in their definitions of summarizing, it seems quite normal for both the teachers and students to point to narrative texts because most of the teachers ask their students to summarize the story books they have read.

As a result of the current research, it can be argued that the teachers check student summaries only during homework checks. Accordingly, there is no evaluation of the content of summaries during these checks. The teachers stating that they give feedbacks by making corrections or writing notes on student summaries focus on spelling mistakes and punctuation. In this regard, the students'

opinions concur with the teachers' opinions. None of the teachers seem to pay attention to any of the elements related to writing a quality summary. Thus, summarizing is not considered to be a reading comprehension strategy. Summary writing is evaluated as doing something in compliance with grammar rules. Any homework needs to serve the function of developing the sense of responsibility in students. In addition, summary writing is an important comprehension strategy. Therefore, content should also be evaluated. While doing this, unnecessary or unnecessarily repeated information should be excluded, generalizing terms should be used and topic sentence should be selected [18].

The findings of the current study show that the teachers see summary writing as a tool to facilitate recall. Understand the gist of a subject and improve reading comprehension skills, which are all related to content as well as to teach some other skills such as writing neatly and clearly, writing by paying attention to punctuation rules, which are not related to the content. The students also provided similar answers. Senemoglu [30], points out that summary writing helps to make sense of information and to store in the long term memory and directs students to read for comprehension, distinguish important ideas and to retell the information with their own words. In this regard, the teachers and students seem to have provided responses agreeing with the literature in terms of the positive effects of summarizing on retention; that is, storing the information in the long term memory.

As a result of the current research, it is possible to say that the teachers cannot teach summary writing to their students by means of a method or through practice. The teachers asked their students to summarize by making some explanations and telling how to write a summary. However, when in the literature, it is strongly emphasized that summary writing must be taught [5, 16]. According to Brown, Day & Jones [18], while investigating the development of summarizing skill, children should be enabled to remember most of the information they are expected to summarize. There are two ways of achieving this; first, using simple stories that are easy and grammatically well-structured; thus, they will be remembered well. Second, if longer and more complex stories are to be used, it should be made possible for students to understand the text on the basis of some criteria. According to Yıldırım, Doganay & Turkoglu [31], before starting to write a summary, selection of the text, outlining the selected text, determining the basic concepts and points and careful investigation of the introduction, development and conclusion sections of the text will make summary writing easier. Kintsch and van Dijk [cited 32] argue that for summaries to be effective, first thing that should be done by students is to distinguish important information from unimportant information and then to make a list of the important information. Thus, students can come up with a list of important ideas, categorize these ideas and prioritize

them. Finally, students write the summary including these basic concepts with their own words.

All the findings of the current research indicate that both the teachers and students' knowledge about summary writing is inadequate; therefore, they cannot attain effective outcomes from their applications.

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