

Writing a summary. Difficulties and Strategies.

Redactar un resumen. Estrategias y dificultades.

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Abstract

Writing is a basic competence that all students of higher education must develop, especially those of the Bachelor of Primary Education, who in turn will be responsible for promoting these competence in children at the primary level. The purpose of the study is to identify the difficulties and strategies for writing an abstract, which was made from the reading of an expository text. The study was developed in two phases, in the first was applied a test that consisted of reading an expository text and writing an abstract of it; and the second phase that consisted of interviews with 9 students who showed the highest and lowest performance in the first phase. In this paper are presented the results derived from these interviews. Among the results highlights the fact that although writing an abstract requires students to superficial processing of information, it is necessary to be aware that in the texts there are keys to identify ideas and do with them the abstract without altering the axis of the base text.

Keywords: Writing, Writing texts, Teacher training, Higher Education

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ISSN:0719-0409 DDI:203.262, Santiago, Chile
doi: 10.7764/PEL.55.2.2018.7

Resumen

La escritura es una competencia básica que deben desarrollar todos los estudiantes de educación superior, en especial los de la Licenciatura en Educación Primaria, quienes a su vez se encargarán de fomentar estas competencias en los niños del nivel primario. El propósito del estudio es identificar las dificultades y las estrategias para redactar un resumen, el cual se hizo a partir de la lectura de un texto expositivo. El estudio se desarrolló en dos fases, en la primera se aplicó una prueba que consistió en leer un texto expositivo y redactar un resumen del mismo; y una segunda fase que consistió en entrevistas a 9 estudiantes que mostraron el mayor y el menor desempeño en la primera fase; en este trabajo se presentan los resultados derivados de estas entrevistas. Entre los resultados resalta el hecho de que si bien escribir un resumen exige a los alumnos un procesamiento superficial de la información, es necesario que sean conscientes de que en los textos existen claves para identificar ideas centrales y hacer con ellas el resumen sin alterar el eje del texto base.

Palabras clave: Escritura, Redacción de textos, Formación de profesores, Educación Superior

During the training process of every professional, the development of basic skills, such as reading and writing, among others, happens to be a key element which needs to be considered in all institutions of higher education, including those that are oriented toward the initial training process of primary education, since those teacher are the ones that will accompany the students throughout the development of these competences.

This concern has been reflected in the curricular reform from 2012 for the bachelor's degree in primary education, valid for all the Mexican Republic, that according to the primary education reforms, has a competence-oriented focus, particularly for those that allow permanent learning, such as the ones oriented towards communicative skills in varied contexts and to appropriate oral and written communication.

For this research group, it was clear that developing general competences is an essential purpose that every higher education institution must pursue for their students to be able to face the demands of the different subjects during their training process, as well as in the future working environment.

Therefore, in this research the results obtained from a research carried out with students from a bachelor's degree in primary education in a public Teacher-Training College in Aguascalientes city, Mexico. Particularly, the results describing the process followed by the students in the aforementioned writing task of writing a review are shown, identifying the difficulties that the students present when solving the activity. For this, key concepts as the ground base of this research, the methodological pathway, interview analyses and the results description and discussion are presented.

Theoretical background

Reading and writing formulation of texts, especially the latter, have been the object of study in multiple researches and approaches that, despite of the variability, converge in what Paula Carlino (2003, 2013 and 2017) calls "Academic Literacy", which makes reference to "the group of notions and strategies needed to participate from the discipline culture, as well as text production and analysis which are required to learn during university" (Carlino, 2003, p.410). It is assumed that reading and writing are processes which involved abilities to continue developing even when students have already entered to university. That is to say, the author manifests the idea of both processes – reading and writing – "need to be object of teaching during university, not as a remedial matter, but as a responsibility from the educational institutions to share the reading and writing practices of each field." (Carlino, Paola, 2010, p.358)

According to Fernandez (2005), Carlino (2004 and 2013) and Caldera and Bermudez (2007), writing a text during university implies to attend the particularity of each field (structure and vocabulary, among others), the specific purposes to be achieved by each subject and each writing task demanded by the teachers on their subjects. At the same time, writing in order to respond to a task implies declarative knowledge about the type of text which is requested (what it is, its structure and characteristics), simultaneous to the procedural knowledge

of the writing process itself, that is to say, being aware of the abilities which allow the student to plan, translate and check the text.

As mentioned by Morales (2005) and Herrada-Valverde and Herrada (2018), writing a coherent and appropriate text is not carried out directly, but in several stages, in which the student needs to coordinate a group of specific procedures: planning (writing purpose, target audience, content), transcription (characteristics of the type of text, appropriate word choice, regulations, cohesion, spelling and punctuation) and edition (going back to the text, proof-reading process, evaluation). Going through these stages or sub-processes will depend on the nature of the task, since each text requires the student to follow a specific process.

Subsequently, another characteristic to consider is the fact that writing and reading tasks in higher education require different data managing from the student; in other words, the information could be treated superficially, or it could imply the elaboration of texts that require the reference of not only one, but multiple texts, which would result in a more elaborate text demanding from the students a much complex cognitive process than identifying ideas from a single text, to then arrange them into a new text asked for the teachers.

Regarding this, Mateos *et al.*, (2008, p. 258-259) classifies writing and reading tasks according to the cognitive demand they require, the number of texts needed as source and if a strict product is needed. In this way, it is established that some tasks will require a minimum of data processing, demanding only information selection from the student, reading and underlining main ideas or copying parts of the text. Students also face tasks that require a processing degree which allows him or her to select and organize ideas from a text to elaborate a diagram, a summary or a report. Finally, the students could also face tasks which demand to select, organize and elaborate information through reading of two or more texts to write an essay, a monography or reflection about their learning.

Writing task: making a summary

So far, it has been said that higher education students face different writing and reading tasks that require varied processing methods according to the type of text to be written,

A summary is a brief version of the text, in which the most important points are highlighted. Diaz Barriga and Hernandez (2010) state that a good summary needs to communicate ideas in a precise and nimble way. Writing a summary implies the student to read a text and to identify main ideas for a posterior (re)organization of them, which demands a “superficial” information process.

Writing a summary, then, demands a literal and reorganizational skill from the student. The first one aims to identify what the author explicitly says on the texts, making students focus on the textual aspect without evaluating ideas, demanding sufficient vocabulary and the required skills to find main ideas and its organization (hierarchy). In the latter, the students need to organize the text through identification of the relationship between words and main expressions, which requires to relate meaning, to analyze vocabulary and finally, to reorganize the content. Readers have not understood a text itself in which they only repeat the information as in the original document (literal level). Understanding is accomplished when students establish logical connections between ideas, been able to express them in a different way (Fernandez and Carvajal, 2002).

When a summary is written, two rules need to be considered in their elaboration. The first one requires the student to omit or suppress secondary education, or also, suppress information which could be relevant, but it is redundant. The second rule is generalization which allows students to substitute some concepts or ideas by others that are more general, to integrate them.

Making a summary then, demands students to be skilful to identify secondary or repetitive ideas, also recognizing in which moment the ideas can be concentrated in a concept that gathers others found in the text, integrating all in a coherent text.

Finally, Herrada-Valverde Gabriel and Herrada, R (2018) assert that when students face a reading task with a writing purpose, in this case a summary, both, reading and writing skills require planning, progressive building of meaning, and edition, hat is to say, similar processes. These processes are useful to distinguish mature writers-readers from the immature ones, since the use of these processes is different, as well as the strategies used and the quality of the summaries.

From the latter, Herrada-Valverde and Herrada (2018, p.509) remark that immature readers perceive the task as a text-based activity in which previous knowledge is irrelevant, not being aware of their reading purpose or believing the task involves only to remember “something” from the text, lowering the chances of achieving global understanding of it, even the comprehension of the summary. On the other hand, mature readers constantly supervise the understanding of the text, establishing reading purposes corresponding with the type of text, using pre-reading strategies. During the task they take notes or underline, asking themselves questions looking for identification of previous knowledge about the topic. When finished, they identify or generate key words and/or carries out schemes.

Methodology

The study took place in a Normal School from the Aguascalientes state, Mexico, in charge of primary school teacher training. Its aim was to learn about students’ strategies for summarizing texts and identifying the difficulties they face when doing so and how they overcome them.

Two stages (phases) with different instruments were used to meet the objectives of this study: application of a writing task and individual interviews about the task. Although these two phases are described below, the results and discussion sections refer to the results obtained in the second stage.

Research Stages

Stage 1.

A task was designed which consisted of doing close reading on an expository text, followed by writing a summary of it. To design this task, a preparatory analysis of the program of studies was conducted, so as to prevent task prevent decontextualization of the task and the demands required by it. This analysis served to corroborate that there is a group of generic competences which provide context to the task for this study.

The writing task consisted was based on an expository text of 1019 words, titled “Reinventar la Profesión Docente”, authored by Margarita Zorrilla Fierro. The instructions were as follows: do a close reading of the text and then write a summary.

Stage 2. Interviews based on the task

This stage was designed to identify the strategies used and difficulties faced by the students during the writing task. For this, an interview guide was used, with 7 groups of base-line questions.

- What was the process that you followed to write the summary? (The aim of this question was to identify the strategy—or the general guidelines of the strategy—that the interviewee used to solve the task)
- What was difficult when writing the summary? Was something in particular more difficult? How did you face or overcome these difficulties? (These questions aim to identify the strategies used to solve the problems that may arise during the task)
- What type of written work have you done during your studies and which one is the most frequent? What do you regard as the hardest or most complicated aspect of writing these texts? Why? How did you decide what to include for the summary? What characteristics should a summary have? (Identify the declarative knowledge of the interviewee about the text to be written)
- How did you decide when the summary was complete? Did you check it? What did you check? (These are questions about one of the writing stages; questions, before this one, are about the other two writing stages, planning and transcribing).

Participants and Field Work

During the second semester of 2013, the instruments were designed, which were piloted with students from semesters similar to those of the sample for this study. The participants for the piloting were students from the first, third, fifth and seventh semesters of the Psychological and Pedagogical Counselling major, from a public university in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. As previously stated, this study considered the participation of students from the same set of semesters as those in the piloting, but from the Primary Education major from a Normal School in the city of Aguascalientes. The willingness of the authorities allowed the smooth application of the writing task and the interviews.

The total number of instruments applied was 240, distributed as follows: 74 for first-semester students, 71 for third-semester students, 54 for fifth-semester students and 41 for seventh-semester students. The information obtained from the task was processed and analyzed in 2014. For the interviews, 9 students were selected (3 for each semester). Those from the first semester were not considered.

The 9 participant interviewees were chosen in light of their performance on the task. 6 presented the best written summaries (2 third-semester, 2 fifth-semester and 2 seventh-semester students), and the other 3 produced poorly written summaries (1 third-semester, 1 fifth-semester and 1 seventh-semester student). It must be noted that first-semester students were not considered for the interviews because at the time of the application, they had not had enough experience in the major.

Based on the above, the following results provide information on the quality of the summaries produced by the total number of students that completed the task. Also, there is an extensive description of the interview results from the 9 selected participants.

Results

In this section, there is brief description of the global results related to the central characteristics with which the summary had to comply. To this end, a rubric was designed reflecting the 5 features that characterize a summary, and 4 for that reflect proofreading of the text. These features are mentioned in table 1. *Table 1.*

Features considered for the assessment of the summary.

Features considered for the assessment of the summary	Common characteristics for all texts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encabezado: su función es ofrecer la información básica del texto: autora, título, nombre de la revista, fecha y página. • Objetividad: el resumen es fiel a los planteamientos de la autora: incluye todas las ideas centrales, y éstas se expresan de manera clara y en orden. • Precisión: el resumen da cuenta de la idea global del texto base. Es decir define el tema englobando, en una o varias ideas principales que se desarrollan en el texto. • En su estructura, los párrafos desarrollan una idea principal que se sustenta con ideas de apoyo coherentes/pertinentes. • Refleja en su totalidad la estructura del contenido que aparece en el texto original. Es decir, incluye las ideas principales y detalles importantes del inicio, desarrollo y final del texto. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evita repeticiones de términos e ideas. • Utiliza adecuadamente los conectores y los recursos de cohesión. • Refleja la revisión de la ortografía (grafías). • Refleja la revisión de la ortografía (acentos).

For the first 5 features (criteria), 4 levels of achievement were established and for the last 4, two were established. Considering these levels, the possible maximum score a good summary could receive was 24 points and the minimum was 5. Each summary was appraised by 3 people involved in the research (1 collaborator, 1 assistant and 1 fellow). The team coincided in most of the scores assigned, and in the cases when they did not, they discussed the score and later reached a consensus.

Out of the 240 appraised summaries, 2 were eliminated as both students produced the same text, implying that they 'copied' one another. Therefore, the results are described considering 238 valid summaries.

Global Score

From the universe of 238 appraised texts, the maximum score achieved by a student was 23. This means that the student forgot to include the text led, the name of the magazine in which the base text appears, the date of publication and page numbers. Virtually half of the students (48.3%) achieved between 16 to 18 points. That is to say, they omitted the led or just included the title, did not reflect proofreading of spelling aspects (they changed spelling and omitted diacritics), were not able to select and organize all the central ideas of the base text in the summary, but the ones that included them, did it in order. Also, most established ideas in the

introduction and development but forgot to do the same in the conclusion. Other texts in this range did orderly include central ideas that attend to the whole structure, that is the introduction, development and conclusion. Nevertheless, the secondary ideas that they included did not entirely support the main ones.

As previously stated, the scores obtained by most students range from the 16 to 18 points, and whilst this is not significant for the score-semester relationship, most students in this range belong to the third semester cohort. Nevertheless, fifth and seventh-semester students obtained higher scores. That is, these students produced better summaries. Likewise, the student who obtained the highest score (23 out of 24) is currently enrolled in the fifth semester. Yet, what are the strategies that students followed to write the summary and what difficulties did they find when completing the task? To answer this question and meet the objectives of this study, the following section describes the strategies and state the difficulties that students mentioned during the interviews.

Strategies and Difficulties

As previously described in the Field Work section, in order to identify the strategies and difficulties of the students, 9 students were interviewed. 6 of these students obtained high scores and the other 3 students presented summaries with many deficiencies. Following Herrada-Valverde and Herrada's (2018) terminology, we will call the first 6 students *Mature Readers-Writers* and the rest *Immature Readers-Writers*. The interviewees' answers are presented below:

What was the process that you followed to write the summary? Exemplify.

This question aimed at identifying the strategies that students followed when writing the summary, in particular to the one written as part of the task for this study.

Mature Readers-Writers.

The interviewees coincide in doing exploratory reading or 'scanning' the text. Afterwards, they do more analytic kind of reading, or 'reading each paragraph calmly'. They also highlight the main ideas and write their summaries using the author's words or their own. For the seventh-semester and one female fifth-semester student, the title of the text is a key element to identify the main ideas.

The process described by the seventh-semester students is more detailed, which is understandable because they currently are looking for information for their final research project to graduate. The strategy that they follow is, for example:

- Exploratory reading. Later, they read paragraph by paragraph.
- Underline the main ideas in each paragraph. Considering the title as a key element to select what is essential.
- Take notes on the margins of the text or foot notes.
- Order the ideas hierarchically and create a mental map or graphic organizer.
- When writing the summary, the ideas selected as main can be grouped into one, either with words used by the author or by the students to give coherence to the summary.

An example is provided below:

"The first thing you do is... There are reading strategies, for example exploratory reading: reading the title of a text and looking at the pictures, in case the text has pictures, we can start figuring out the main topic; in light of this, there is another strategy called scanning. This is reading very fast, as if sweeping through the text to see how many paragraphs there are, if there are subtitles, and we start having a more schematized, more organized idea about the text. After this, there is analytic reading, which is reading the text in depth, calmly, underlining the main ideas of each paragraph, the key words; and then the summary is constructed from the main idea. We go paragraph by paragraph encapsulating ideas, for example if one paragraph has examples and we can need only use one word to connect those examples, we use just one word, same as an idea. If the text repeats many ideas, we start dismissing some and then comprising them into one and we can summarize.

For this, we use the strategy by Serafini: underline ideas or key words, main ideas, make foot notes, order the main ideas hierarchically and from them construct a text, I give it coherence. I create a mental map of how the summary should be like and I try not to lose the essence of the text. With this mental map I establish all the links. To write the summary, I did not put the map on paper, just in my mind."
(Seventh-semester student)

Immature Readers-Writers

Overall, this group of students coincide with those who obtained higher scores in the writing task, in three fundamental steps: doing a quick reading, reading calmly to underline the main ideas of each paragraph and then writing. They omit important elements such as the title, checking coherence, and the importance of hierarchically organizing the selected ideas. One interviewee states that her strategy was to copy from the text, unaware of whether what she was ‘copying’ was an important or secondary point made by the author; though this answer may be due to what was said to them during the application, that the task would not carry a mark. Some of the answers from the students are as follows:

“Well, to write the summary I first skimmed through the text to learn more or less what it was about, and then I read it completely, then I underlined the main idea of each paragraph. After underlining the main ideas, sorry, underlining the main ideas, I put it on the space we were given to write the text.” (fifth-semester student)

“First, I read and the link concepts or words that I have seen or have notion of having worked with them, and after that, from the reading and from what I feel, what I felt or asked.” (third-semester student)

“I just copied something that was from here, I think, yes.” (seventh-semester student).

What has been the hardest or most complicated aspect about writing this text? Why? Exemplify.

Mature Readers-Writers.

One of the seventh-semester students states that specifically for her, it has not been difficult to write the texts required by her teachers, because during the first and second semesters she and her classmates had a class on *Strategies for studying*, in which, among other things, they revised strategies to write different text types.

Similar to the previous student, another interviewee explains that it has not been difficult for him to write the texts required by his teachers, because they have been familiarized with different text types throughout their undergraduate studies:

“... they have made us be in touch with different text types, because in primary school different text types are also covered, from... well, in terms of academic work, students make work sheets, summary sheets, synthesis and paraphrases sheets. And regarding the use of common language, there are sheets, posters, signs, slogans, signboards, tales, comics, biographies, instructive manuals, timelines... I think we have covered a lot...” (seventh-semester students).

Another student claims the following:

“... I personally think I have the writing skill, but this does not mean we always write well, sometimes we repeat ideas; sometimes what we can say in one paragraph can be summarized in one sentence. I think that writing implies many cognitive skills; for example, thinking about the topic, developing the idea coherently, checking the spelling, positioning yourself as the intended audience of the text, if it is targeted towards an adult, a child, or the general public...” (fifth-semester student).

Two of the students do mention one specific difficulty. For one of them, it is giving coherence to the text, in other words, between what is being read and what is being written. The strategy used to overcome this difficulty is, in her words: “reread what I am writing and based on that, I keep on writing”. For the other student, in her third semester, the most difficult thing to write is her own opinion without depending on the author’s view, or in other words, to construct her own opinion.

“For example, when we read a text about educational assessment, and the author talks about assessment, in some way it is good, but for me it is not, so it is hard to contrast those work views, because sometimes it is like grading, like disagreeing with the author, that is the hardest thing...”

Immature Readers-Writers.

Among the difficulties mentioned by two students in this group there are: starting to write or writing the most important thing of a text; losing the ‘train of thought’ of what they were writing about when they are interrupted; or explaining what the teacher wants in the writing. They refer to this in the following way:

“To start writing... Because most of the times I can’t find the words, what to say or what to do. I can say it, but I can’t write; I can make a comment, but when I write it, it is harder for me... Well, what I do lately in my

assignment is, I say it aloud and I write it the same way I say it, and then obviously I write it without many fillers, so that it looks like a text, that's what I do..." (seventh-semester student)

"Well, I don't really know how to write, it is easier for me when I have an idea or perspective of what I want to write, well, in that way the ideas start flowing and I start, I don't know, writing, composing, as long as I'm not interrupted, because then I am interrupted and then my ideas are halfway developed and when I want to continue writing, well, it is difficult to go back to what you were doing, well, yes, but mostly I don't struggle to write a text..." (Fifth-semester student).

What was difficult when writing the summary? Was something in particular more difficult? How did you face or overcome these difficulties?

Mature Readers-Writers.

All of the students in this group state that they did not have any difficulty when writing the summary. Moreover, one of them claims that this was an everyday task they do at school or at home; this coincides with those who clearly describe the steps of the process or the strategy used to write. Only those two third-semester students who were not able to describe the strategy they used, mention giving coherence to the text as a possible difficulty. To succeed in making their texts coherent, they read their own summary more than once.

Immature Readers-Writers.

Two of the students coincide when stating that the most difficult aspect when writing the summary was identifying and discriminating essential from secondary information, because as they claim, the base text was too short and they 'assumed' that it was already summarized; to overcome this, their strategy was to read the text again, paragraph by paragraph.

"Retrieving, what is important and what is not; because generally I include everything, I like to include everything and for it to be clear. But I have problems with this, with distinguishing what to include and what not to, well, what is really difficult for me is to retrieve the most important information from short texts, because supposedly, everything is already summarized; I mean, I think that if it is important and if I need to include it, maybe for the oral presentations we were given many texts and we had to retrieve the most important information to present it, that was a really difficult thing for me. Strategy: go paragraph by paragraph." (seventh-semester student)

One of the students noted that in general what is hard for her when writing summaries is the type of vocabulary used by the authors, and because of this the student must read the text more than once, although they claim that this was not the case for this task.

Another student also referred to the lack of time as one of the difficulties, because, as he states, he requires more time for reading and proofreading the written summary.

The last aspect to consider in the interview refers to the importance of proofreading (correction) the text so that it is coherent and there are not spelling mistakes or diacritics omission. Table 2 presents the data worth highlighting from the students' answers regarding their strategies and difficulties.

Table 2.
Strategies and Difficulties in *mature* and *immature* readers-writers when writing a summary.

Estrategias Maduros	Estrategias Inmaduros
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lectura exploratoria o de escaneo • Lectura más analítica (leer “con calma”) cada párrafo • Subrayar ideas principales considerando el título como elemento clave. • Redactar el resumen combinando palabra del autor del texto base con las propias. Hacen referencia (algunos) de las reglas de omisión, sustitución y supraordenación (generalización) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leer el texto • Regresar al principio para recordar de qué se trataba • Empezar a escribir la lectura • Sacer lo más importante • Dividir el texto y copiar las ideas centrales
<p>Dificultades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Los alumnos más avanzados en sus estudios manifiestan no tener dificultad alguna. • Conscientes de las habilidades cognitivas y metacognitivas que se ponen en juego al escribir • Coherencia entre lo que se lee y se escribe • Escribir su propia opinión y desprenderse de la visión del autor. 	<p>Dificultades</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comenzar a escribir/escribir lo más importante • Perder la secuencia de lo que se incluye • Explicar lo que está escribiendo

Some of the questions included in the interview refer to two important elements when talking about reading and writing, which are necessary to understand and write a text, which are: previous experience in performing a writing task and the declarative knowledge of the characteristics with which a summary must comply. The interviewees’ claims are reported and summarized below in Table 3.

• **What type of written work have you done during your studies and which one is more frequently? (previous experience)**

All the interviewees (mature and immature) coincide in that the most frequently text their teachers ask them to write are essays on a particular topic related to the content they are covering in class. Likewise, they are asked to produce reports on their practicums, and third and fifth-semester students state they must write their opinions on given topics. Additionally, all students refer to other text types, although less frequently: free texts, summaries, synthesis, poems, tales and song lyrics; that is, there is no difference concerning mature and immature readers-writers. However, it must be noted that producing a summary is one of the task they mentioned less frequently.

• **What characteristics should a summary have? (declarative knowledge)**

Mature Readers-Writers.

Two of the students coincide that a summary means identifying the most important information in a text, “... *From the topic seen, to extract the most important points, summarized what the text is about.*” (fifth-semester student).

“*A summary should be the retrieval of the most important ideas of the author, as one might say... the most relevant content from a text, what... what is really important.*” (third-semester student).

One of the seventh-semester students refers more to one strategy for summary writing than to the characteristics of the text type.

Immature Readers-Writers.

Three students from this group express that a summary means retrieving the most important points when reading and putting them on a text; that linking words should be used when writing a summary to connect ideas and sometimes they can express their ideas using their own words. Some of their answers are as follows:

“*A summary must have, like, the main ideas, right? The ideas, like, general ideas, the most important point in each paragraph, well, in many occasions there are paragraphs that don't say anything, and we have to discard*

them completely. But the essence of a summary in itself is that of the main ideas of a text, if sometimes we are not able to put it together, no? and we have to use linking words to, like, so that it is clear, not what one wants to write on the paragraph that is being rewritten, well, that's just it" (fifth-semester student).

One of the students from this group was not able to describe clearly the strategy she used to write the summary. For example, her answer was as follows:

"After reading the text, I had to go back to the start to remember what it was about and to start describing the text, and summarize it. It talks a lot about, like history, what I did was like retrieving the most important aspects of history through time; I divided the story, what is the teacher, how is the teacher; I mean... I first put the stages of the education". (third-semester student).

Concerning the process or strategy that students follow to write a summary, one key point is identifying main and secondary ideas; in particular, to examine how students decide what is most important, or in other words, how they decide what is it that they consider to be a main and non-secondary idea that can be included or omitted in their summaries. This was the objective of the next two questions in the interview.

How did you decide what to include in the summary? How do you identify a main idea?

Mature Readers-Writers.

All the students who obtained higher scores for their summaries express that in order to identify the main ideas, and/or discriminate between main and secondary ideas, they considering the title of the base text is key. One of the students mentions that when proofreading the text before submitting it, she checks that all ideas give coherence to the text and that this makes sense. Through this, she ensures that she effectively includes all main ideas or important elements mentioned by the author of the base text.

Out of this group, two third-semester students are not able to describe the elements they consider when deciding and discriminating between the important from the secondary; their answers illustrate this:

"I imagine that what is interesting for me is the essential. Even though I'm not sure. I just know that the main ideas of what the text wants us to understand." Upon further asking on how she identifies the main ideas, she expresses that: *"I read the conclusion, so (I) know what is essential. I include what I understand in the summary, and if I don't understand it, I omit it."* (third-semester student).

"Well, about the author, what I particularly found most interesting, because I thought, this, what I just read is interesting, I like it, I like how it sounds, how it is written, and I decided to include like that, like a quotation but without quoting it; and what about my opinion... after reading it, the way I thought about it, I would write it..." (third-semester student).

Immature Readers-Writers.

Among the aspects used to discriminate between main and secondary ideas, as mentioned by the students in this group, are for example: what gives sense to the text, looking for the essence of the text; in other words, they are not clear in their answers. They are not able to identify those elements which help them make those decisions. Rather they refer to elements of the writing strategies previously discussed. Some of their answers were:

"I looked for the essence of the whole text. Now that I'm rereading it many ideas that I underlined, I could have omitted and include in a more general way many things that happened, especially in the part of the story that is being mentioned, yes, and focus more on the reform, right? We are talking about reinventing the teaching profession, it is good to talk about the past of the text to know how things were, yes, but if I had focused more on that, on what is said about the reform and how the teacher must be seen, as a guide, a knowledge facilitator, like how what was said about a teacher was seen, well, in general the main ideas that I underlines and tried to order in a way that they could be understood in the text I wrote after..." (fifth-semester student).

"What caught my attention, what I thought was good, well, important or interesting, well I think that when the text is given as homework, it is like it is personal, so what I feel, or think was interesting or what caught my attention." (third-semester student).

Related to the previous questions, the following ones asked students about the difficulties they faced when writing the required summary and the measures taken to overcome them.

Table 3.
Other elements to consider when writing a summary of a base text.

Maduros	Inmaduros
Tipo de trabajos que cotidianamente elaboran en sus materias	Tipo de trabajos que cotidianamente elaboran en sus materias
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensayos • Informe de prácticas • Opinión sobre algún tema • Textos libres y resúmenes son los menos habituales 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensayos • Informe de prácticas • Opinión sobre algún tema • Textos libres y resúmenes son los menos habituales
Características que debe tener un resumen	Características que debe tener un resumen
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identificar lo más importante. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rescatar los puntos importantes • Se deben usar conectores para enlazar las ideas • En ocasiones expresar las ideas con sus propias palabras.
Cómo decidió lo que incluyó en el resumen / Identificación de ideas centrales	Cómo decidió lo que incluyó en el resumen / Identificación de ideas centrales
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decidir lo central de lo secundario. El título es clave para ello. • Revisar si el resumen tiene coherencia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Decidir lo que le da sentido al texto • Buscar la esencia del texto
Cómo decidió que el resumen estaba completo	Cómo decidió que el resumen estaba completo
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifiestan que lo revisaron antes de considerarlo terminado. • Revisan ortografía, coherencia, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manifiestan que lo revisaron antes de considerarlo terminado • Revisan ortografía, coherencia,
How did you decide when the summary was complete? Did you check it?	

All the students manifest having proofread the summary before they considered it finished. To proofread it, they read the text, if they have to, they correct spelling mistakes, and above all they make sure that the summary does not lose its essence, that is, that it is coherent. One of the students states that he proofreads as he writes it, and in that way, he can give it coherence at the same time; this is important for the writing process of any text type.

Discussion

Writing a summary from a base text is a task which, as different scholars on this topic such as Herrada-Valverde and Herrada (2017), Doardi Davide (2017) and Carlino (2013 y 2017) state, makes the construction of knowledge easier when the strategies or procedure to write without difficulty are known. They also assume that the cognitive process we used to read and write are similar, which allows the integration of these processes when writing a summary.

These elements, which converge when reading and writing (e.g. planning, transcribing-constructing meaning and proofreading), the school experience (the semester in which they are enrolled) and the frequent exposition to these type of tasks allow to distinguish clearly between novice and mature or expert readers-writers, as is the case in Herrada Valverde and Herrada (2017), Fernández and Carvajal (2002), and Mateos (2008).

Then, if we consider that writing a summary supposes understanding and identifying how the ideas are coherently and hierarchically organized, as well as identifying the structure of the base text (in this case, introduction, development and conclusion), the school experience appears again (the semester in which they are enrolled). This becomes essential to resort to strategies such as rereading and/or the initial exploration of a text. Only some readers with less school experience mention underlining or writing notes on the margin as indispensable techniques to understand the base text. They also do this to ensure that the summary includes the structure of the base text and its main ideas, even if these are copied from the base text. That is, even if readers-writers present a surface reading level.

Additionally, the results obtained are similar to those in Herrada-Valverde y Herrada (2018): novice readers perceive reading based solely on the text, without considering that previous knowledge is essential. Besides, they do not identify the task objective or goal. To them, the summary should include what they remember about the text.

On the other hand, mature readers, as these authors claim, constantly supervise their degree of comprehension. *Rereading* is a basic step to overcome any possible comprehension mistake. Likewise, they set objectives, make use of underlining or make notes on the margin as techniques to highlight important information, although few of the summaries produced for this study present underlining or notes on the margin. Linked to *rereading* and *underlining*, there is also *prereading* as a key element to identify the structure of the base text (Herrada-Valverde 2018, Doardi, 2017, Caldera 2007 y Morales, 2005).

The students who more clearly express the strategies used to write a summary and to overcome some difficulties on the way, describe scanning or exploratory reading as part of their strategies, as well as considering the title as a key element to help identify the main ideas, footnotes or notes on the margin, and sometimes using a graphic organizer to establish connections.

It should be noted that only one of the students from the advanced semester refers to the essential rules when writing summaries. That is, those rules referring to deleting or omitting what is secondary or redundant, and the rule of supraordination or generalization through which the concept or idea that contains others from the base text is construed.

In this regard, Lotito, Liliana, Ornaini, C. and Yeannoteguy (2010) in a similar study, state that it is common for students to list strategies like underlining, listing main ideas, or mentioning the use of graphic organizers, etc. and highlight rereading as “the favorite and indispensable resource to arrive to a whole comprehension of a text... [rereading] is vital to overcome comprehension difficulties...” (p. 565).

These scholars also signal that in a school setting in which students are asked to write summaries to confront what they say they are doing with what they are actually doing, which is also the case for this study, students strive to reorganize information instead of reproducing it. Although in our case, the latter tended to happen more than the former; there was an attempt at paraphrasing, and also at suppression or reformulation. Therefore, it is clear that students possess declarative knowledge about what a summary is, but the difficulties arise when they have to put that procedural knowledge into practice: How to start? What is the objective? What do I include? Can I say it in my own words? This is knowing how to write a summary.

The results confirmed what previous research has shown. That is, although writing a summary is a task which does not imply many difficulties as it demands superficial information processing, it is necessary for the reader to consider that there are key elements that allow identifying the main ideas and write statements without altering the axis of the base text. What is true is trying to summarize or construct a different text, according to Lotito, Ornaini, C. and Yeannoteguy (2010). The situation can change when the writing task implies producing a summary with a text type that is not expository, descriptive or informative, and in which authors make a series of arguments about a particular subject of study.

This leads to considering once again that in each subject that integrates the programs of study of any institution and particularly with proposals that can stem from academic work, they must attend to the development of the basic writing competence (without denying the importance of reading). However, above all, this implies that each and every training teacher should consider these processes as an opportunity to think of students (future teachers) as knowledge producers and not just students who reproduce knowledge. Also, that students possess diverse experiences concerning the contact they have had with reading and writing in their previous school years.

The original article was received on December 14th, 2017

The revised article was received on October 1st, 2018

The article was accepted on October 22nd, 2018

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