

## **Expository Details On Summary Skills in English Language for Beginners**

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**ABSTRACT:** *It is not everything said in the classroom that can be represented during an examination session that has a limited duration of which learners must answer questions on a particular subject, the study therefore provides expository tips that are necessary to assist learners in summary skills. Summary skills are important to propel learners to reduce lengthy passages into cogent manageable proportions without losing the vital contents. In achieving this, basic concepts like comprehension, punctuation marks, outlining, paragraphs and tenses are encouraged to be mastered by learners to aid their summary skill.*

**KEYWORDS:** summary, paragraph, outline, coherence, punctuation marks

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### **INTRODUCTION**

Nigeria has several linguistic patterns, but none is accepted by its population as the official language due to tribalism and ethnic allegiance, hindering the nation's growth and development. Nigeria has three primary languages: Hausa, Yoruba, and Igbo, along with many minor languages and several dialectical varieties. Due to the lack of agreement among Nigerians to designate any ethnic language as the official language, English holds a prestigious position at all levels of government in Nigeria, from federal to local, being used in daily operations.

National Language Policy (NLP) (2022), speaks on education and its policy that "Government recognizes the importance of language policy in education in the effort to develop, preserve, promote, and use all Nigerian language in all aspects of human endeavour". Despite the recognition of Nigerian languages by the government, it seems it pays only lip service to the implementation of the policy as the Nigerian schools at elementary and secondary levels

suffer dearth of teaching personnel as most of their languages, are either made optional or not taught at all in most schools. Most private schools even proscribe the speaking of Nigerian languages and punishments are attached to violation of it.

On the application and language use in education, the policy is explicit that in ensuring the effective delivery of instructions and attendant positive learning outcomes, the mother tongue (MT) or language of the immediate community (LIC) shall be used as the medium of instruction from early childhood care development education to the final years of primary education. In reality as shown by experience, this is a farce which has not been implemented which comes only as a pronouncement but without any implementation. Right from the lower elementary level, English language has become the medium of instruction for all subjects, not only in English language as a subject.

The section 4A:19 states that “English language shall be used as the language of instruction at the junior secondary education level. However, combine use of English language and the mother tongue or language of immediate community shall be encouraged accordingly”. The truism of language strength in Nigeria is that English language has taken over all formal activities in Nigeria. Having said this, its teaching and mastery have become a challenge to all stakeholders: government, parents, teachers, learners and others. Every individual in a formal setting must express himself in English language to be understood. English language is therefore ranked as a core subject to be taught effectively by teachers right from primary school, the foundation of all levels of education which call for competence and effective mastery of the subject matter coupled with diversified methods and strategies since English language is learnt and not acquired by most Nigerians. It is important to stress that English language cannot be taught by all teachers because of its intricacies, different aspects in language skills, grammatical structure, punctuation, literature, speech, summary and others. Most worrisome is the fact that incompetent teachers at primary schools who are not grounded in the arts of teaching English language lay faulty or insufficient foundation as they have inadequate or lack of English language fundamentals to equip and support the early learners of English language. This calls for a systemic evaluation of recruiting teachers into primary schools or redefining how this subject should be taught.

At the conclusion of each term or semester, pupils and students are required to take obligatory summative evaluations to assess their mastery of the taught material. Success in the exams relies on the ability to remember information presented in class and to effectively communicate that information in writing within a certain time frame. Students must summarise what they have heard or read to ensure they get the essential ideas. This requires a specialised ability known as summarization skills.

### **Summary skill**

Meanings play important roles in discourse. Before a reader or listener can respond appropriately to speech or writing, he must have understood what the speaker or writer says. Communication becomes only effective when meanings are generated from participants. Comprehension and generation of meanings are interrelated, for meanings to be realized, comprehension must have taken place. It is important to state that not all words convey meanings to listeners or readers, some words are supportive and functional while some convey meanings directly to the listener or reader. Words that do not convey meanings are functional words, they do not have denotative meanings, words, from closed class of words like articles, conjunctions, prepositions, pronouns and interjections while lexical words are words like verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs which are opened words. Learners are to be taught exclusively that not all words convey meanings.

The essence of reading is comprehension. Comprehension is a very complex process which is anchored on understanding of what a reader has read. Comprehension includes the act of organizing what a reader is reading, storing and later retrieving it. Hulme and Snoling (2011) define reading with comprehension as one of the primary goals of early education. The Rand Reading Study Group (2012) defines reading comprehension as the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. However, as important as comprehension is, without prior knowledge, it seems unattainable. Anderson and Pearson (1989) explain that prior knowledge affects comprehension in three ways:

First, it helps students to make inference about their reading. Second, it directs attention to information that is important in a knowledge domain. Third, it provides a plan for recall. Students with high prior knowledge will recall information in a clearer manner, make more knowledge-based influence and will have an idea of which cogent point in the text are important and which are not (Stahl, et al., 1991)

It therefore becomes imperative for teachers to strive in activating learner's prior knowledge to connect with the new learning contents so that they can comprehend. In doing this, readers need to be more knowledgeable, strategic and helpful. Strategy is a plan selected deliberately to accomplish a particular goal (Paris, et al., 1991). Teachers most especially at the elementary level must fashion out different reading strategies to attain reading comprehension. Learners may have difficulties comprehending a text on a subject with which they are unfamiliar even if they understand the meaning of the individual words in the passage (Widmayer, 2005). This is because information that does not fit into schema may not be comprehended or could be understood incorrectly.

Comprehension may be viewed from three levels: literal, interpretive and critical comprehension. The levels are progressive in nature based on varied mental structure of readers. A reader whose

cognition is high passes through these three levels while many readers with challenges or reading difficulties only attain the first level. It is important to state that interpretive and critical comprehension dovetail and the distinction between them is not glaring as inferential comprehension subsumes both. Inferential comprehension is a much higher order skill than literal comprehension. Inferential comprehension is reading between the lines to understand or figure out what an author implies but which is not directly stated in the next. This seems to be correct, however, comprehension goes beyond this as inferential comprehension is reinforced when the reader uses his/her non-usual elements to arrive at the meaning that the text conveys which are not directly stated. Inferential comprehension can only be possible where the reader has a rich and diverse non-usual element whereas literal comprehension relies solely on the usual elements of the written text, inferential comprehension relies much on the non-usual element.

As a matter of intervention, teachers must timely assist learners to develop inferential comprehension through these three processes: first, the reader must develop the skill of understanding the topic and supporting details. Second, the reader must be able to draw from his/her past experiences on background and non-textual information in order to make valid inferences. The reader must be able to interpret figurative expressions in given passages.

A good reader reads correctly the authors' mind, harmonizes and reconciles what is written in the text and what it is not written explicitly in the text through his background knowledge and his personal experiences. Teachers of English language need to be aware that vocabulary development goes a long way to impact meanings from given passages. Constructing meanings implies working collaboratively with students to extract and construct meanings from texts.

### **Vocabulary Development**

The essence of vocabulary development to learners is to strengthen students' reading abilities with strategies for inferring or learning the meaning of unknown words when encountered during reading. This process greatly assists students to increase the number of words they can use when speaking or writing.

National Reading Panel (NRP) (2000) identifies vocabulary as one of the five components of reading instruction that are essential to successfully teaching children. Other core components include phonemic awareness, phonics and word study, fluency and comprehension. Chall and Jacobs (2003) opine that there is high correlation of word knowledge and reading comprehension and that if students do not adequately and steadily grow their vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension will be affected.

Naggy and Herman (1985) estimate that at the very elementary stage, students, begin with approximately 5,000 words in their vocabulary memory, and the vocabulary grows at a rate of

about 3,000 words a year. Anderson (1990) views four ways of acquiring vocabulary by wide reading and learning through contexts. Also the use of a dictionary and direct instructions in vocabulary development. National Reading Panel (2000) in its analysis of vocabulary instruction submits that there is no best method for vocabulary instruction. It can be taught both directly and indirectly. Cooper (2006) specifies the time that vocabulary can be taught, he views that vocabulary may be developed before, during, and after reading depending on some factors.

### **Root words and Affixes**

Teachers are to painstakingly teach learners as these concepts assist learners greatly to master vocabulary. A root word is a morpheme, the basis part of a word to which affixes are added. Many words can be developed from a single root word; for example, the Latin word portare ('to carry') can yield the following modern English words: deport, export, port, and transportation.

Affixes are bond morphemes that are added to words and root words. Affixes can be prefixes and suffixes. Prefixes are added to the beginnings of words such as "im" – in import and suffixes are added to the end such as 'er' in importer. Prefixes change only the meanings of words not classes of words while suffixes change classes of words and meaning. Learners are to be taken through this process.

### **Synonyms and Antonyms**

Readers for the sake of summary are to be taught synonyms and antonyms to assist them in summary writing. Words can have the same or nearly the same meaning. English language has many words with their meanings called synonyms. The following words are examples of words and their synonyms.

Fat – Fleshy, beefy

Holy – Scared, Consecrated

Blunder – Error, Mistake

Strict – Rigid, Stern

Ridicule – Deride, Mock

It is important to emphasize that learners are to be taught that the appropriate class of words should be the substitute. Also, the relevance of context should be emphasized.

### **Antonyms**

These are words that express the opposite of words. It assists learners on generating contrasting words appropriately.

Superior – Inferior

Legal – Illegal

Moral – Immoral

Victory – Defeat

Man – Woman

### **Figurative Expression and Summary Skill.**

Many words have literal and figurative meanings, literal meanings are the explicit denotative meanings while figurative meanings are metaphorical or use of figures of speech. There are two types of figurative language; Idioms and metaphors

Examples of idioms and metaphors

<b>S/N</b>	<b>Idioms</b>	<b>Meanings</b>
1.	To flog a dead horse	To waste ones energy
2.	Face the music	Take the punishment
3.	Bury the hatchet	To make Peace
4.	Thick in the head	Stupid

Learners must have a deep understanding of this to aid their summary skills.

Summary skill is needed in both spoken and reading activities. This is the ability of a listener or reader to reduce into the smallest unit, retaining the cogent points therein. In the classroom settings, learners need summary skills to reduce into a significant fraction of what have been heard or read. They must be able to differentiate the relevant from the irrelevant, identify the superfluous words and avoid them. The successful understanding of a given passage according to Apala (2022) is a product of five key factors that include: the motif of the writer/speaker, plot patterns of the passage, key into the definite information the reader/listener needs to hold, higher levels of reasoning and high cognitive levels of vocabulary based on the residual or prior knowledge of the reader/listener. Oyinloye (2002) defines summary as an integral aspect of reading skills, he opines that the reader must be able to identify the main fact in the passage being read, which is a daunting task for all readers and writing.

When reading for summary skills, learners are to be conscious of the reading structure of a given passage in terms of paragraphs, central ideas, topic sentences and supportive sentences. Readers are at the mercy of writers as writers choose to write in different writing structures. The structure of a passage can be made of simple sentences, compound sentences, compound sentences, and compound complex which demand for explicit reading of words. Also, learners need to be ever

conscious of different punctuation marks as they affect meanings and summary. Punctuation marks in the English language are a group of marks that reveal the main grammatical units in the text, such as the phrases, the sentence or the paragraph using digital cues, punctuation marks guide the students in identifying connections between the units of meanings in the text. (Tvanna, Arupa & Mekeko 2022). Punctuation marks underscore the essence of clarity and order to written language. Students usually need help deciphering and using most of punctuation marks. (Bennet, 2020).

Fiber (2018) states that punctuation marks are signs that show the appropriate expression of thought in a sentence. Punctuation marks if not properly managed change meanings of words and sentences. Punctuation marks enhance reading and writing literacy among learners. It is therefore important to accustom learners to the fundamental teaching of punctuation marks in aiding summary skills.

The other important aspect that learners need expository teaching is the structure of a passage. A good comprehension passage is structured into paragraphs for easy grasp of knowledge. Ideas are grouped into paragraphs for easier comprehension and progression of thoughts. Also, outlining of thoughts is fundamental in summary skills. Kramer (2021) opines that no matter what is written, outlining is crucial in the writing process. On the reason why outlining is important, Purdue University (2022) observes that there are many reasons but generally, it may be helpful to create an outline when writing to show the hierarchical relationship or logical ordering of information.

Also structuring ideas into paragraphs aid summary skills. A paragraph is a series of sentences that are organized, coherent and are all related to a single topic (Indiana University, 2023). A paragraph is made up of a central idea which is illustrated through a topic sentence while others are supportive sentences buttressing or adding values to the main idea expressed by the topic sentence. For summary skills to be easily attained, learners need to be taught different connectives that link paragraphs together and their functions as they relate to summary. Additional connectives to ideas being expressed like: again, in addition, furthermore, moreover, contrary connectives like: however, consensus connectives like: nevertheless, listing connectives like: for examples, examples include and the rest.

In summarizing, learners need to be ever conscious of appropriate tenses to be used in conveying their thoughts. Tenses are markers of time when actions take place, as well as agreements of subject-verb relationship, and agreement in numbers. Past actions are to be summarized using past tenses and other tenses as the given passages emerge.

## CONCLUSION

Learners are bound to face the undaunting task of summary skills during internal and external examinations which call for adequate foregrounding in developing enough mental abilities to reduce all learning contents into a manageable unit so as to excel. It therefore becomes expedient for teachers to simplify summary skills for learners for optimal academic achievement of learners.

## Recommendations

Sequel to the status of the English language within the Nigerian context and the importance of summary skill to the academic achievements of learners in both internal and external examinations, the following recommendations are made:

1. Learners should be encouraged to summarize teaching activities either in written or spoken form
2. Teachers should be painstaking enough to take learners through punctuation mark, outlining and paragraphs
3. Enough assignments and class works should be given to learners
4. Government at all levels should try to engage teachers in the recent pedagogical methods/strategies of teaching English language.

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