



Prospective Turkish Language Teachers' Perceptions of Summarization: Definitions, Rationales and Rules

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Article Info

ABSTRACT

Article History

Received: 26/11/2024

Accepted: 24/03/2025

Published: 30/06/2025

Keywords:

teachers,
definitions of
summarization,
rationales of
summarization,
rules of
summarization

The aim of this study was to determine prospective Turkish language teachers' perceptions of the concept of summarization. The study group consisted of 139 teacher candidates enrolled in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades of the Turkish Language Teaching department in the faculty of education of a state university in 2019. A phenomenological design, a qualitative research pattern, was employed in the research. The data analysis was conducted using the Nvivo 10 software. Research data was gathered through a standardized open-ended interview form consisting of three questions. The research findings indicated that the students predominantly summarize based on what they read ($f=76$), and hear ($f=19$), from books ($f=12$), and events ($f=12$). Regarding the definition of summarization, the students mostly defined it as "writing without changing the essence" ($f=84$), "shortening" ($f=81$), and "writing essential parts" ($f=51$). The identified rationales for summarization were primarily "providing opportunities for permanent learning" ($f=65$), "preventing waste of time" ($f=48$), and "remembering essential parts" ($f=39$). As for summarization rules, the students mostly paid attention "not to deviate from the main idea" ($f=69$), "to write essential parts" ($f=64$), and "to remove unessential parts" ($f=57$).

Citation: Özçakmak, H. (2025). Prospective Turkish language teachers' perceptions of summarization: Definitions, rationales and rules. *Journal of Teacher Education and Lifelong Learning*, 7(1), 43-52. <https://doi.org/10.51535/tell.1591372>



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INTRODUCTION

It has been seen that many definitions have been made about summarization in literature. For instance, summary as defined by Keçik and Uzun (2004, p. 88), Dilidüzgün (2013) and Neupane (2021), refers to concise written or oral narratives that highlight significant points forming the meaning while omitting the details of the text. The ability to craft a concise, precise, and accurate summary serves as a crucial foundation, particularly in the realms of analytical and technical writing (Frey, Fisher & Hernandez, 2003). Proficiency in summarization implies a student's capability to identify the crucial elements of the text, to eliminate trivial details, and, in a broader sense, to demonstrate analytical and synthetic skills.

Students can demonstrate their understanding of the entire text through summarization (Shelton, Lemons & Wexler, 2021). To summarize a text effectively, one must comprehend it thoroughly, condense provided information into a list, eliminate irrelevant details, and formulate topic sentences. Subsequently, the summarized text should be compared to the original text in terms of essential viewpoints and coherence (Görge, 1999, p. 23-28). The summary should encapsulate the main and supporting ideas of the source text, maintaining adequacy and conciseness while excluding trivial information. It should be articulated in the summarizer's own words (Aleksenko, 2021, p. 9; Gedikoğlu, 2011; Shodieva, 2023). The purpose of a summary is to facilitate the learning of the main idea and key details in a much shorter form than the original. While doing this, special attention should be paid to convey the information accurately and consistently (Frey, Fisher & Hernandez, 2003). Because it should not be forgotten that summarizing is among the high-level skills.

Summaries are mainly created with reference to what individuals read, hear, or watch. The sources utilized for reading, listening, or watching are highly diverse, encompassing books, encyclopedias, magazines, newspapers, television, computer, tablet, and phone as well as various daily-life sources such as posters, billboards, and signs not to mention the multitude of technological tools like. Technology has also made many texts accessible in visual, auditory, or audio-visual formats. However, students may find summarizing what they hear or watch more challenging when compared to summarizing what they read as it is not always possible to access the text. Despite being perceived as a simple activity or a teaching technique, summarization is not as straightforward (Gündüz & Şimşek, 2011, p. 151; Klein, 1988). In fact, Çelik and Doğan's (2022) study revealed a lack of theoretical and practical knowledge among teacher candidates in the context of summarization, emphasizing that this deficiency contributes to difficulties in creating and teaching summaries.

Research indicates a positive and significant correlation between the frequency of use of summarization strategies and success in summarization (Çetinkaya, Şentürk & Dikici, 2020). Teaching students what summarization is and the strategies employed in summarization can facilitate their learning process. However, some studies highlight deficiencies in this regard. For instance, Ulaş and Yılmaz's (2021) study addresses the challenges secondary school students face in summarization based on the perspectives of Turkish language teachers. The results of that study revealed that 97% of Turkish language teachers acknowledged that secondary school students have difficulties in summarization, with 89% noting that students tend to use sentences directly from the author, 86% observing a tendency to cover the entire topic, and 57% stating that students are not provided with examples of how to generate summaries using sample texts. According to Bahçıvan and Çetinkaya (2021), teachers often assign novel or text summarization tasks to students, if they possess summarization skills. Tasks beyond students' capabilities can lead to a negative attitude towards summarization.

Summarization varies depending on the genre and narrative characteristics of the text. Narrative texts, such as stories and novels, as well as informative texts like memoirs, essays, and travel writings, can be easily summarized. However, summarizing scientific writings like encyclopedia entries and articles proves to be quite challenging (Gündüz & Şimşek, 2011, p. 151). Narrative texts possess a linear

structure, whereas informative texts entail more complexity and often incorporate unconventional ideas (Spivey & King, 1989). Consequently, the text genre should be taken into consideration when engaging in summarization. The most effective method of teaching summarization is to instruct students on organizing their summaries according to the structure of the text. Understanding the structure of the text can facilitate the process of summarization (Yakoub & Lemzeri, 2020, p. 23). In narrative texts, the chronological order of events is crucial, whereas in informative texts, propositions that form the backbone of the text become significant when summarizing (Uzun-Subaşı, 2003).

A large body of research has indicated that the text genre significantly influences students' summarization success. For instance, in a study conducted by Bulut and Akyol (2014), it was found that both students and teachers demonstrated more successful utilization of summarization criteria in narrative texts compared to informative texts. Similarly, a study by Taşdemir and Çağlayan Dilber (2021) revealed that the means prospective teachers had in using summarization strategies in event-based texts were higher compared to informative texts. However, there are also some studies with different findings from the results mentioned here. For instance, in a study conducted by Kurnaz and Akaydın (2015), it was determined that prospective teachers found summarizing informative texts easier than narrative texts. Another study conducted by Doğan and Özçakmak (2014) evaluated three text genres, concluding that students were better at summarizing argumentative texts compared to informative and narrative texts.

Since summarization is a higher-order skill, it covers various abilities and has a function to test accurate comprehension. In recent years, there has been a noticeable increase in academic studies on summarization in Türkiye. A bibliometric study conducted by Ipek and Ensar (2022) examined 22 theses and 40 articles about summarization. The findings of the study indicated that teachers, prospective teachers, and students across different educational levels do not consistently demonstrate the desired level of proficiency in terms of summarization success and the use of summarization strategies while various methods and techniques enhance summarization. Moreover, studies have suggested that Turkish language teaching programs and textbooks do not meet the required standards in providing students with summarization skills.

As summarization is a skill acquired and developed through instruction, it necessitates teachers to serve as role models and to encourage students to write summaries (Duran & Özdiş, 2018). In a study conducted by Yüksel and Demir (2022), it was reported that prospective teachers often perceive summary as a shortened version of the main text and lack sufficient knowledge about other components of summarization. In our study, on the other hand, it was aimed to reveal how university students perceive summarization, a skill utilized by students at all stages of academic life (Epçaçan, 2018, p. 13). It is necessary to reveal how summarization, which is shown among the high-level skills and concerns all verbal or numerical courses, is defined, for what reasons and by what rules it is done, specifically for Turkish teacher candidates. In this context, this research is important as it provides more detailed insights into whether students correctly grasp the concept of summarization.

METHOD

The primary objective of this study was to determine the prospective Turkish language teachers' perceptions of the concept of summarization. The sub-objectives of the research involved determining the perceptions of the prospective Turkish language teachers in the context of "sources of summarization", "definitions of summarization", "rationales of summarization" and "rules of summarization".

Research Design

The research employed phenomenological design, a qualitative research pattern. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016, p. 69), "phenomenology establishes a suitable research framework for studies that aim to investigate phenomena that are not entirely unfamiliar to us apart from being not fully understood".

Participants

This study was carried out with voluntary participation of 139 prospective teachers enrolled in the 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th grades of the Turkish Language teaching program at a state university in 2019. The study employed “convenience sampling”, one of the purposive sampling methods. Convenience sampling involves selecting participants who are easily accessible, suitable for the research, and voluntary to participate (Gravetter & Forzano, 2012). The demographic data of the participants are presented in the table below.

Table 1. *Demographic data of the participants*

Grade	Gender		N	%
	Female	Male		
1st Grade	20	20	40	29
2nd Grade	19	14	33	24
3rd Grade	22	19	41	29
4th Grade	14	11	25	18
N	75	64	139	100
%	54	46	100	-

Table 1 shows that 54% of the participants are females, while 46% of them are males. 29% of the study group are first graders, along with 24% second graders, 29% third graders, and 18% fourth graders.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study collected data using a standardized interview form with the aim of revealing students' perceptions of summarization. “Interview forms are used to obtain similar information from different individuals by focusing on similar topics” (Patton, 2002).

In the interview form, the students were asked the following questions:

1. What is summarization?
2. Why do you engage in summarization?
3. What aspects do you pay attention to when summarizing?

In the study, based on the students' perceptions, “definitions of summarization” were determined through the first question, “rationales of summarization” were identified through the second question, and “rules of summarization” were derived from the third question. Additionally, “sources of summarization” were analyzed based on the students' responses. The data were analyzed using the Nvivo 10 software program. Content analysis was employed to analyze the students' opinions. Content analysis is defined as “the process of coding and quantifying what people write and say in a clear manner by systematically analyzing written and verbal materials” (Simon & Burstein, 1985, p. 193). To prevent data confusion, each student was assigned a unique code. The qualitative analysis process, beginning with the first paper of the first-grade teacher candidates, was completed with the last paper of the fourth-grade teacher candidates. Throughout the process, the analysis was restarted by going back to the beginning and incorporating the new themes into the existing ones whenever new themes emerged. To prevent data loss, the themes were checked three times from the beginning to the end. Initially, the sources of summarization were identified based on the students' opinions. Subsequently, within the context of the questions in the interview form, the students' “definitions of summarization”, “rationales of summarization”, and “rules of summarization” were determined.

During the process of writing their responses, the students were not subjected to paper or time constraints, and they were informed that they could end the task at any time. The implementation, conducted in one lesson hour for each grade level, was completed within four lesson hours. No explanations were provided regarding summarization to avoid influencing the students' perceptions, and

it was paid special attention to ensure that the students did not exchange views during the implementation.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the internal validity of the study, a literature review was conducted, and studies like the subject of the research were reviewed in terms of the processes followed. During the analysis, attention was paid to formulating themes that encompassed the relevant components while excluding the irrelevant ones, and the data were checked three times. To enhance the external validity of the research, the processes followed in the study were detailed in the section of method. To ensure reliability, the “intercoder agreement” suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994) was utilized. The agreement rate between the coders, the researcher and a Turkish language education expert, was 88%. This rate was considered sufficient for the reliability of data.

Ethics

I hereby confirm that scientific and ethical principles were adhered to throughout the preparation process of this study, the subjects willingly participated in the research, and all the studies benefitted from were included in the references. Also, the data of the research were collected in 2019.

FINDINGS

Based on the prospective teachers’ perspectives, sources, definitions, rationales, and rules of summarization were included in this section.

Table 2. *The sources of summarization according to the prospective teachers*

Source of Summarization	<i>f</i>	%	Source of Summarization	<i>f</i>	%
What they read	76	46	Novels	4	2,0
What they listen to	19	12	Articles	2	1,2
Books	12	7	Paragraphs	2	1,2
Events	12	7	Presentations	2	1,2
Speeches	10	6	Situations	1	0,6
Ideas	7	4	Visuals	1	0,6
Lecture notes	6	4	Conferences	1	0,6
Stories	5	3	Statements	1	0,6
What they watch	4	2	Total	165	100

As shown in Table 2, the prospective teachers primarily consider what they read, listen to, books, and events, respectively, as the most significant sources for summarization.

Table 3. *The definitions of summarization according to the prospective teachers*

Definition of Summarization	<i>f</i>	%	Definition of Summarization	<i>f</i>	%
Writing without changing the essence	84	19	Limiting the topic	4	0,9
Shortening	81	19	Accessing the key words	4	0,9
Writing essential parts	51	12	Writing while adhering to the plot structure	4	0,9
Finding the main idea	35	8	Getting prepared for the topic	3	0,7
Eliminating trivial details	32	7	Writing according to the text genre	2	0,5
Writing in one’s own words	31	7	Reconstructing the text	2	0,5
Writing what is retained in the memory	22	5	Writing chronologically	1	0,2
Writing in an explanatory manner	17	4	Writing by considering the titles.	1	0,2
Writing regularly	11	3	A method	1	0,2
Transforming into a text	11	3	Keeping in electronic format	1	0,2
Writing for easy learning	10	2	Avoiding from adding own comment	1	0,2
Getting preliminary information	10	2	Writing the parts of introduction, body, and conclusion	1	0,2
Writing one’s own comment	6	1	Writing the topic	1	0,2
Taking notes	5	1			
Explaining verbally	5	1	Total	437	100

According to Table 3, 139 prospective teachers expressed 437 opinions under 28 themes. It was found that the prospective teachers defined summarization as “writing without changing the essence” (f=84), “shortening” (f=81), “writing essential parts” (f=51), “finding the main idea” (f=35), and “eliminating trivial details” (f=32). The ratio of these opinions to all opinions was approximately 65%.

Table 4. *The rationales of summarization according to the prospective teachers*

Rationales of Summarization	f	%	Rationales of Summarization	f	%
It provides opportunities for permanent learning.	65	13	It helps me classify the text.	7	1,0
It prevents waste of time.	48	10	It provides me with prior knowledge.	5	1,0
It helps to remember essential parts.	39	8	It gives me to criticize accurately.	4	0,8
It provides convenience during exams.	38	8	It prompts creative thinking.	3	0,6
It saves me from unessential information.	37	8	It simplifies the text.	3	0,6
I reach the main idea directly.	36	7	It provides psychological relief.	3	0,6
It helps me learn the main points.	36	7	It improves reasoning skills.	2	0,4
I understand how much I have learnt about the subject.	27	5	I am getting prepared for new learning.	2	0,4
It enables fast learning.	25	5	It improves my ability to form sentences.	2	0,4
It enables concretization of the subject.	22	4	I can convey my learning to others.	2	0,4
It provides concise expression.	22	4	It can be used in every aspect of life.	1	0,2
I can't keep the entire topic in my mind.	20	4	It allows me to review the subject last time.	1	0,2
It makes my tasks easier.	14	3	It leads me towards conducting research.	1	0,2
I access useful information.	12	2	It improves concentration.	1	0,2
It helps remembering.	11	2			
It makes information organized.	7	1	Total	496	100

As indicated in Table 4, the prospective teachers' 496 opinions were gathered under 30 themes, and their summarization justifications were listed as “It provides opportunities for permanent learning” (f=65), “It prevents waste of time” (f=48), “It helps to remember essential parts” (f=39), “It provides convenience during exams” (f=38), and “It saves me from unessential information” (f=37). The ratio of these opinions to all opinions was approximately 46%. “not to deviate from the main idea” (f=69), “to write essential parts” (f=64), and “to remove unessential parts”

Table 5. *The rules of summarization according to the prospective teachers*

Rules of Summarization	f	%	Rules of Summarization	f	%
Not deviating from the main idea	69	13	The length of the original text	6	1,0
Writing essential parts	64	12	Writing down the memorable parts	5	1,0
Removing unessential parts	57	11	Listening to carefully	5	1,0
Writing in one's own words	40	8	Writing in simple present tense	4	0,8
Shortening the text	38	7	Being useful	4	0,8
Making the text comprehensible	34	7	Paying attention to the words to be chosen	4	0,8
Creating a summarization plan	32	6	Telling in brief	3	0,6
Not writing all the things	19	4	Obedying spelling and orthographic rules	3	0,6
Writing consistently	18	4	Making the writing legible	3	0,6
Reading carefully	16	3	Summarizing by purpose	2	0,4
Avoiding from direct transfer	12	2	Generating grammatically correct sentences	2	0,4
Not including one's own comments	11	2	Writing the details as well	1	0,2
Ordering the events chronologically	10	2	Reading too many books	1	0,2
Writing by identifying key words	8	2	Conducting research about the text	1	0,2
Summarizing by text genre	8	2	Making sure that I understand the text	1	0,2
Writing supporting ideas	8	2	Necessary materials for summarization	1	0,2
Expressing with the main lines	7	1	Summarizing without wasting time	1	0,2
Adhering to the text	7	1	Interpreting	1	0,2
Providing accurate information	6	1	Using fluent language	1	0,2
Not equivocating	6	1	Total	519	100

As indicated in Table 5, it was revealed that the rules the prospective teachers paid attention to in summarization were “not deviating from the main idea” (f=69), “writing essential parts” (f=64),

“removing unessential parts” (f=57), “writing in one’s own words” (f=40), and “shortening the text” (f=38). The ratio of these opinions to all opinions was approximately 52%.

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS

In our study, it was revealed that the prospective teachers predominantly use reading materials, listening materials, books, and events as sources of summarization. Regarding the definitions of summarization, it was found that the prospective teachers mostly incorporate definitions such as “writing without changing the essence” (f=84), “shortening” (f=81), “writing essential parts” (f=51), “finding the main idea” (f=35), and “eliminating trivial details” (f=32). Based on the prospective Turkish language teachers’ perspectives, summarization can be defined as “a novel form in which essential information is extracted, trivial details are omitted, and the main ideas are preserved without changing the essence of the original text, resulting in a shortened version.” It was also understood that some prospective teachers confused the concepts of summarization and note-taking (f=5). In fact, a study conducted by Özçakmak and Sarıgöz (2019) revealed that 3.3% of prospective teachers confused notetaking and summarization. It was implied from the definitions of some prospective teachers (f=6) that “summarization involves interpretation”. However, Gao, Chen, Li, Ren, Bing, Zhao and Yan (2019) stated that interpretation does not fit well into a summary. In a case study conducted by Xiaodan (2019), the impact of a candidate’s weak perception on the validity of summarization was investigated. The interventions, conducted in the form of teaching, experience, practice, and reading, resulted in an increase in the candidate’s summarization scores. It was claimed that the ability to distinguish main ideas and details improved.

In terms of rationales of summarization, it was determined that the prospective teachers predominantly emphasized opinions such as “it provides opportunities for permanent learning” (f=65), “it prevents waste of time” (f=48), “it helps to remember essential parts” (f=39), “it provides convenience during exams” (f=38), and “it saves me from unessential information” (f=37). Accordingly, the prospective teachers’ rationales of summarization were mainly related to learning and exam anxiety. In addition to these, there were also some who put forward rationales such as narrative ability (f=22), text classification (f=7), accurate criticism (f=4), creative thinking (f=3), psychological relief (f=3), and developed sentence formation skills (f=2). In a study conducted by Iguasnia Guala (2021), it was noted that the participant students provided responses about summarization such as “it helps me understand the main idea” and “it assists me in comprehending the text more easily”. Similar to our study, Dilidüzgün (2013) reported that the teachers engaged in summarization with purposes such as “assessing understanding”, “developing comprehension skills”, “understanding and expressing the text in general terms”, and “analyzing the subject, main idea, and message”.

As for the rules of summarization, the prospective teachers predominantly emphasized expressions such as “not deviating from the main idea” (f=69), “writing essential parts” (f=64), “removing unessential parts” (f=57), “writing in one’s own words” (f=40), and “shortening the text” (f=38). Therefore, the majority of the prospective teachers paid attention to finding the main idea, distinguishing between important and unimportant information, writing in their own sentences, and shortening the text when summarizing. On the other hand, some prospective teachers considered different aspects while summarizing. Some prospective teachers mentioned rules of summarization such as paying attention to the text genre (f=8), adhering to the text (f=7), considering the length of the text (f=6), using simple present tense (f=4), ensuring the legibility of the writing (f=3), and summarizing without wasting time (f=1). Görgen (2014) reported some findings supporting our results indicating that the most successfully obeyed rule in students’ summaries is “removing sentences containing unimportant and irrelevant information”. Hare and Borchardt (1984) formulated the effective summary indicator as the division of the number of important ideas by the number of words used in the summary. Therefore, it can be suggested that the most fundamental rule in summarization is to identify essential information and write it in a concise form.

LIMITATIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Teachers should assess whether students have misconceptions or deficiencies in summarization by asking them to define summarization. For students with misconceptions about summarization, teachers should provide informative and practical activities. To be more helpful to students, teachers should enhance their own summarization skills. They should promptly address any theoretical and practical shortcomings in summarization. For this, they can investigate and implement summarization strategies to be used in their lessons. They can provide students with enlightening information about why summarization is used and what rules it covers, as summarization is a skill and strategy used in many courses.

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