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Exploring Students' Perceptions of the Summary Method as a Reading Comprehension Strategy in Japanese Language Learning

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Abstract

This study investigates students' perceptions of implementing the summary method in the Advanced Reading 2 course of the Japanese Language Education Study Program at Brawijaya University. Conventional reading classes generally emphasize reading aloud and translating, which often leads students to focus on literal translation rather than comprehension (Trahutami, 2017). To overcome this limitation, the summary method was introduced to integrate reading, writing, and speaking skills, encouraging active language use during lessons. The study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design involving eight purposively selected students. Data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The findings show that most students viewed the summary method positively, noting that it improved their understanding of reading texts and enhanced their language proficiency. However, students with moderate and lower academic performance experienced difficulties simplifying sentences due to limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Overall, the summary method proved effective in fostering comprehension and promoting language integration. Future research is recommended to include participants from different educational levels to provide broader insights into the method's implementation in reading instruction.

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INTRODUCTION

Reading (*dokkai*) is one of the core subjects in the Japanese Language Education Study Program at Brawijaya University. The reading courses are divided into three levels: *shokyuu* (beginner), *chūkyū* (intermediate), and *jōkyū* (advanced). While the beginner and intermediate levels primarily focus on reading comprehension through conventional methods, the advanced-level course introduces an innovative approach—the summary method. In this class, students not only engage in reading activities but are also assigned to write summaries and present the contents of the reading passages (*saiwa*). This approach aims to foster deeper comprehension and active use of Japanese.

In the context of Japanese language learning, a strong grasp of *kanji* and vocabulary is fundamental for effective reading and comprehension. Reading activities help learners connect new information with prior knowledge (Mafulah & Purnawati, 2020). Consequently, reading skills are essential for acquiring knowledge, enhancing comprehension, and broadening one's intellectual horizons (Bano et al., 2018). The ultimate goal of reading instruction is to help students grasp meaning. According to Trahutami (2017), there are three main perspectives in teaching reading: (1) learning to read as pronunciation practice, (2) learning to read as word identification and comprehension, and (3) learning to read as understanding meaning through contextual connection. However, in beginner and intermediate classes, reading instruction often emphasizes individual reading, translation, and comprehension questions, leaving limited opportunity to develop broader language skills (Trahutami, 2017).

Because language skills are interdependent, integrating reading with writing, listening, or speaking allows for more comprehensive learning (Trahutami, 2017). The Advanced Reading 2 course therefore implements the summary method to enhance students' engagement and communicative competence. This method combines reading

comprehension with written summarization and oral presentation, allowing students to consolidate understanding through multiple language skills. The process of summarizing enables students to translate comprehension into writing and prepares them to articulate the main ideas effectively during presentations.

A summary is a written text that condenses the key ideas of an original passage. Writing a summary involves several cognitive processes: reading and understanding the source, identifying essential information, and reconstructing it into new sentences (Idris et al., 2009). Importantly, summarizing requires capturing the author's intended meaning rather than simply extracting sentences from the text (Hiroshima Shudo University, n.d.). Thus, the ability to write an accurate summary depends on a comprehensive understanding of the original material.

According to Hiroshima Shudo University, the process of writing a summary involves four stages: (1) grasping the overall structure of the text, identifying main points and arguments, (2) reading thoroughly using skimming techniques while highlighting relevant sentences, (3) filtering information by identifying keywords and deleting unnecessary parts, and (4) composing the summary logically and coherently. Similarly, Keraf (in Setiati & Priyadi, 2014) outlines four stages: reading for general understanding, rereading while taking notes, organizing the content, and composing new sentences. Both frameworks emphasize clarity, coherence, and fidelity to the source text. Effective summaries must maintain the main ideas, follow the original structure, and convey meaning accurately without distortion (Keraf in Setiati & Priyadi, 2014; Hiroshima Shudo University, n.d.).

This research was inspired by the transition from conventional reading instruction to the summary method in the Advanced Reading 2 class. As Sperling (in Aida, 2014) notes, prior experiences shape how individuals interpret new learning contexts. Students' previous exposure to translation-based reading activities likely influences how they perceive and

adapt to this new method. Perception, as Robbins (in Akbar, 2015) explains, involves processing new information and integrating it with existing knowledge. Because perceptions are shaped by individual differences and learning experiences (Walgito in Akbar, 2015), students' views of the summary method are expected to vary. This study therefore explores how students evaluate the summary method after experiencing it directly in reading classes.

Previous studies have examined students' perceptions of summary writing. Aida (2014) found that summary writing enhances grammatical awareness and contributes to long-term language development. Alawaji (2020) reported that collaborative summary writing improves second-language writing proficiency and teamwork motivation. Similarly, Sugesti and Humaera (2024) demonstrated that summarizing facilitates comprehension, retention, and paraphrasing skills, which are essential for academic writing.

Building on these studies, the present research extends previous findings by analyzing not only students' perceptions but also the stages they follow in writing summaries. By examining the elements contained in students' written work, this study provides deeper insights into how learners differ in performing or skipping key stages of the summarization process. Accordingly, the purpose of this research is twofold: (1) to describe students' perceptions of the implementation of the summary method in reading courses, and (2) to identify factors that influence success in producing effective summaries.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study design (Sugiyono, 2013) to explore students' perceptions of the summary method and to analyze the linguistic and structural elements found in their written summaries. The qualitative approach was chosen to provide a detailed, context-sensitive understanding of students'

experiences and attitudes toward the instructional method.

Participants

Participants were selected through purposive sampling (Sugiyono, 2013), targeting students who had completed the *Advanced Reading 2* course in the Japanese Language Education Study Program at Brawijaya University. Eight students participated in this study. All participants had direct experience using the summary method during the course, which made them suitable informants for examining its implementation and perceived impact.

Data Collection

Data were collected through questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and document analysis.

- **Questionnaires** (distributed via Google Forms) gathered students' initial impressions and overall perceptions of the summary method after its implementation.
- **Interviews** were conducted to obtain more in-depth insights and clarifications related to their questionnaire responses, focusing on the benefits, challenges, and learning outcomes of the method.
- **Document analysis** involved examining students' written summaries to identify structural and linguistic patterns and to determine the stages they followed or skipped during the summarization process.

Analytical Framework

The analysis drew upon two theoretical frameworks for summarization: (1) Keraf's model (in Setiati & Priyadi, 2014) and (2) the framework proposed by Hiroshima Shudo University. Both frameworks emphasize comprehension, selection of key information, organization, and rephrasing in the summarization process. From these theories, analytical indicators were developed, focusing on students' ability to:

1. Identify main and supporting information,
2. Construct summaries using clear and simple sentences,
3. Maintain logical and coherent structure, and

4. Preserve the original meaning of the source text.

Data Analysis

The analysis process consisted of several stages. First, students' summaries were examined according to the established indicators to assess how they represented and simplified the source text. Next, patterns were identified regarding which stages students followed or omitted during summary writing and how these patterns related to the quality of the final summaries. Data from questionnaires, interviews, and document analysis were then integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions and performance.

To ensure data validity, triangulation and member checking were applied (Miles & Huberman in Sugiyono, 2013). Triangulation involved cross-verifying findings from different data sources and methods, while member

checking allowed participants to confirm the accuracy and credibility of the interpreted results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Data obtained from the questionnaires and interviews were organized according to key indicators and summarized in Table 1. This table presents an overview of students' perceptions and experiences regarding the implementation of the summary method in the *Advanced Reading 2* course. Meanwhile, the results of the document analysis, which examined sixteen student summaries based on two reading texts Chapter 1 and Chapter 11 are illustrated in Figure 2. The analysis focuses on the presence of summary elements, including the identification of main ideas, sentence simplification, and logical organization, to evaluate students' performance and the stages they followed in the summarization process.

Table 1. Summary of Interview Data

Indicator	Answer
Initial Perspectives on the Summary Method	<p>Initial Perspectives at the Early Implementation of the Summary Method:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially, it felt difficult because summarizing was required. (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7) The summary method is interesting, even though it demands more effort to understand the text. (P4, P5, P8)
Reading Comprehension	<p>The role of practice questions in the book 「読んで考えて話しましょう」 :</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The questions in the exercises can serve as clues to understand the main idea of the reading. (P1, P2, P8) The questions in the exercises help in understanding the meaning of vocabulary and simpler sentences. (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7) <p>Difficulty in reading Japanese reading texts.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I feel difficulty in reading if the text hasn't been simplified because of the new kanji and vocabulary, as the level is already advanced. (P1, P6, P7, P8) I didn't have difficulty reading, because I had already searched for the meaning of difficult words so I didn't have any difficulty. (P2, P3, P4, P5)
Summary Writing Ability	<p>Step of writing a summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the entire text, look for the meaning and how to read new vocabulary, look for the gist, compose a summary in <i>yasashii nihongo</i>. (P1, P2, P6, P8) Read and identify the main point of each paragraph, make conclusions, then summarize and simplify. (P3, P5, P7) Summarize important information in Indonesian, then convert it into simple Japanese with the help of a digital dictionary. (P4) All students found it difficult to simplify vocabulary and understand the content of the reading. <p>Important Information:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on the main paragraph or main idea of the text. (P1, P4, P6) The relevance of the information to the title and theme of the reading. (P2, P5, P7) Find words that appear frequently in paragraphs. (P3) Take facts and examples. (P8)
Benefits of applying the summary method	<p>Feedback from the Lecturer (Learning Needs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Grades and comments. (P1, P3) Corrections with circles or underlines. (P2, P5, P6, P8) Grades, stamps, and corrections. (P4) Suggestions provided after the presentation (<i>saiwa</i>). (P7) <p>Duration for Completing the Summary Writing Assignment (Learning Needs):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate, because the given theme was clear, so I could start working on it right away. (P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8) Depends on the length of the reading. (P5) Insufficient, because it was difficult to understand the content and summarize. (P6) <p>Improvement in Language Skills:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students experienced improvement in their language skills (reading, writing, speaking), though in different aspects. <p>Benefits obtained and assessment of the summary method.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Suitable, although there were adaptation difficulties at first, but the benefits felt more significant compared to the Beginner and Intermediate classes. (P1, P4) Helps understand the reading, adds vocabulary, trains paraphrasing skills, and improves speaking skills. (P2, P5)

Indicator	Answer
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not only makes it easier to understand the reading, but also helps understand the underlying meaning. (P3, P6) • Encourages regular reading habits. (P7) • Helps filter important information and think critically. (P8)
	Readiness to Speak in Japanese:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More confident because I have a good understanding of the text through the summary writing process. (P1, P3, P4, P7) • Not very significant in boosting confidence, but it successfully trained speaking skills in Japanese. (P2, P8) • Confident because the class is accustomed to answering any questions in Japanese. (P5, P6)

Students' Initial Perceptions of the Summary Method

Table 1 summarizes data from the questionnaires and interviews, organized according to thematic indicators. The questionnaire results show that at the beginning of the implementation of the summary method in the *Advanced Reading 2* class, five out of eight students (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7) expressed initial resistance toward the summarizing and retelling assignments. They believed that reading classes should focus solely on reading comprehension, without additional writing tasks. These perceptions likely stemmed from their previous experiences with conventional reading instruction, which emphasized translation and comprehension questions. In contrast, three students (P4, P5, P8) responded positively, stating that simplifying sentences through summarization helped them better understand the content of the texts.

Writing a summary inherently involves comprehending the text. Most participants reported that the reading materials from the textbook *読んで考えて話しましょう* ("Read, Think, and Discuss") were challenging due to the inclusion of new *kanji*, vocabulary, and complex grammar typical of the Advanced 2 level. However, after practicing the summary method, students

agreed that the process of simplifying sentences significantly improved their understanding of the readings. As noted by P3, "the text becomes more detailed and easier to understand after going through the summarization process."

Variation in Students' Perspectives

The findings indicate that students held diverse perspectives on the summary method, influenced by their individual learning characteristics and prior experiences. As noted by Walgito and Robbins (in Akbar, 2015), perception is

shaped by the interaction between new information and existing knowledge and memory. Thus, students' differing responses reflect personal differences in learning style and linguistic background.

Several students, particularly those with limited vocabulary, expressed difficulty in composing summaries, which hindered their comprehension of the text. These results are consistent with findings by Sugesti and Humaera (2024), who reported that students often struggled with unfamiliar words and expressions when reading Japanese texts. Despite these challenges, most participants acknowledged that summarizing encouraged deeper engagement with the material and promoted more active language use.

Figure 1. Steps of writing summary

The Steps Undertaken to Write a Summary	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
Reading and understanding the text as a whole	✓	✓				✓		✓
Reading and understanding paragraph by paragraph			✓				✓	
Identifying the correlation between paragraphs					✓			
Searching for the readings and meanings of <i>kanji</i> words	✓	✓				✓	✓	
Translating parts that are difficult to understand		✓		✓				
Determining the main idea or important sections	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Simplifying complex vocabulary and grammar, then writing the summary	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 1 presents the interview findings on the steps students followed when composing their summaries. The analysis of the summaries was guided by a set of indicators derived from the alignment between expert theories (Table 1) and the students' reported writing processes (Figure 1). This dual framework enabled a detailed examination of how theoretical principles were reflected in actual student performance. The subsequent section discusses the results of this analysis for two reading texts: Chapter 1, a biographical text on Tezuka Osamu, and Chapter 11, an analytical text addressing the issue of school caste.

Figure 2. Result of Summary Elements Analysis

Indicators	P1		P2		P3		P4		P5		P6		P7		P8	
	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11	Ch. 1	Ch. 11
Able to identify facts	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to identify examples	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to identify arguments	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to extract key terms from the main idea of each paragraph	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to construct sentences using new phrasing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to construct sentences with remaining structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to create logical sentence structures	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Able to write a summary without deviation in meaning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

Figure 2 illustrates the students' performance across the different stages of summary writing. The analysis shows that many students struggled to construct sentences that were both logical and grammatically accurate. In *Chapter 1*, which features a biographical text about Tezuka Osamu, participant P8 identified factual details and examples as key information but encountered difficulties in forming coherent sentence structures. For instance, the original sentence.

「憧れディズニーアニメの一つ一つシーンを頭に吹き込むとともに、映画館の観衆がアニメにすっかり夢中になって泣いたり笑ったりしている表情をみて、まるで我が事のように喜んだ。」

(“While trying to memorize each scene of the beloved Disney animation, he watched the audience become so absorbed that they laughed and cried as if it were their own experience”) was simplified by P8 as

「映画館に大好きなディズニー・アニメのシーンを覚えるつもりですが、突然アニメーションを見なが、泣いたり笑ったりする他人を見ました」.

The phrase 「覚えるつもり」 (“intend to memorize”) inaccurately replaces 「頭に吹き込む」 (“trying to memorize”), since 「～つもり」 expresses intention or plan rather than active engagement. According to the *Takoboto* dictionary, this change shifts the meaning from a completed action to an unrealized intention, thereby distorting the nuance of the original sentence. Such inaccuracies in structure and word choice may lead to confusion or misinterpretation of meaning.

In contrast, participant P1 demonstrated greater accuracy and cohesion by focusing on the main ideas of each paragraph. P1 simplified the same sentence using 「覚えようとした」 (“tried to memorize”), which, according to *Takoboto*,

expresses an ongoing or attempted action toward a goal. This reformulation more accurately reflects the meaning of the source text and exemplifies effective simplification using new yet logical sentence constructions. However, some inconsistency in the use of formal and informal forms was observed, suggesting areas for improvement in stylistic control.

Challenges in Sentence Simplification

Interview results revealed that all students agreed the most difficult aspect of summarizing was simplifying sentences. Several participants stated that understanding the text content and rewriting it into simpler forms was time-consuming, primarily due to their limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge. Despite these difficulties, most students found that feedback from lecturers was particularly helpful in improving their summaries. They also agreed that the time allocated for the assignment was adequate for completing the task. These findings complement Alawaji's (2020) research, which emphasized that time constraints and linguistic limitations are common challenges in summary writing.

Perceived Benefits of the Summary Method

Overall, students expressed positive perceptions of the summary method and acknowledged its benefits for improving their language skills. The activity not only enhanced their understanding of the reading texts but also expanded their vocabulary and strengthened their paraphrasing skills. Additionally, several students noted that presenting their summaries orally—without relying on a written script—helped build confidence in speaking Japanese.

Since the *Advanced Reading 2* course requires active oral participation, many students reported feeling more confident in speaking Japanese after completing the summarization process. These findings align with previous studies (Aida, 2014; Sugesti & Humaera, 2024), which highlight that summary writing promotes vocabulary enrichment, text comprehension, and cognitive engagement. Therefore, the students' positive perceptions in this study are consistent with broader research evidence supporting the summary method as an effective strategy for integrating reading, writing, and speaking in language learning.

CONCLUSION

This study examined students' perceptions of the implementation of the summary method in the *Advanced Reading* 2course within the Japanese Language Education Study Program at Brawijaya University. Initially, many students expressed reservations toward the method, largely due to expectations shaped by their prior experiences with more traditional reading instruction. However, after engaging in the summary-based learning process, students reported increased motivation to read entire texts, greater awareness of paraphrasing strategies, and improved comprehension.

The analysis of students' written summaries revealed clear differences across proficiency levels. High-achieving students (e.g., P1) produced more comprehensive and coherent summaries closely aligned with the source texts, while those with moderate and lower academic performance (P2–P8) encountered difficulties simplifying sentences and maintaining logical flow—challenges often attributed to limited vocabulary and grammatical knowledge.

Although one participant provided responses that appeared subjective, the use of triangulation—combining questionnaire, interview, and document analysis data—helped ensure the reliability and credibility of the findings. Future studies are encouraged to continue employing triangulation to validate participants' perspectives and to extend the scope of research to include learners from different educational levels, such as senior high school students. Such studies would contribute to a broader understanding of how the summary method can enhance reading comprehension, writing fluency, and language integration across diverse learning contexts.

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