IDEA REPRESENTATION AND SUMMARIZING STRATEGIES IN ARTICLE SUMMARIES WRITTEN BY INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS

Bambang Yudi Cahyono
English Department, State University of Malang, Indonesia

Shirly Rizki Kusumaningrum
Graduate Program in ELT,
State University of Malang, Indonesia

Abstract

This study examined idea representation and summarizing strategies in article summaries written by Indonesian EFL students. When the study was conducted, the students were attending a graduate course on "the Teaching of Writing" in the Graduate Program in ELT at State University of Malang, Indonesia. This study describes the students' article summaries in terms of idea representation based on the ICF ('introduction,' 'content,' and 'finalization') frame and strategies applied in the article summaries. Data in the form of article summaries written by 16 students were collected at the end of the course. The results of data analysis show that most of the Indonesian EFL students could successfully represent the the ideas from the journal articles into their summaries. However, not all of the students consider that 'finalization' component in the frame needs to be included in their summaries. In terms of strategies in summarizing, most of the students made summaries by copying ideas and words with no or some modification, whereas only some of them write summaries by using their own expressions. This means that the students found that summarizing is not an easy task. Therefore, this study recommends EFL teachers to teach their students strategies to summarize successfully. It also encourages EFL teachers to remind the students to use their own expressions in their article summaries in order to avoid plagiarism.

Keywords: Idea representation; strategies in summarizing; article summaries; journal articles; Indonesian EFL students

Direct all correspondence to:
yudic2000@yahoo.com
shirlyrizki@yahoo.com

INTRODUCTION

One of the language skills that needs to be mastered by Indonesian students of English as a foreign language (EFL) is reading. As one of the receptive skills, reading –like listening as the other receptive skill—plays an important role. This is because knowledge that EFL students understand from reading texts serves as an input which is needed when they perform the productive skills, which are speaking and writing. Thus, reading and writing may be taught separately or in an integrated way. For instance, it is a common practice that in English Language Education Program or English Literature Program in universities in Indonesia, reading and writing courses are offered as separate subjects. This kind of situation will hinder the integration of the two language skills, an issue which has been addressed for the last twenty-five years. This article examines the relationship between EFL students' skills in reading and in writing based on a task combining reading and writing activities. More specifically, the students were assigned to read journal articles and write summaries based on the articles. The combination of reading and writing is considered to be a fruitful effort which can improve students' knowledge of the world which is important in the context of language learning (Eisterhold, 1990; Ferris & Hedgecock, 2005; Hudson, 2007).

Reading and writing can be related in some possible ways. First of all, the relationship between reading and writing can be viewed from the principles for teaching reading proposed by Nation (2009, pp. 6-8), namely: meaning-focused input, meaning-focused output, language-focused learning, and fluency development. In terms of *meaning-focused input,* reading is intended to achieve three goals, namely: to reach certain purposes (such as: reading to get the information, reading for enjoyment, and reading to critique the text); to match with the students' language proficiency; and to develop the students' proficiency. With regard to *meaning-focused output,* reading should be related to other language skills, including writing, but it is important to consider that the skills being integrated should be related to reading. In terms of *language-focused learning,* reading task focuses more on the students' knowledge as well as the students' strategies when they are engaging in reading activities. Finally, *fluency development* is aimed to enhance their fluency in reading which means that they should be motivated to read more and more besides being able to read faster.

Another possible account for the relationship of reading and writing is based on the direction of input from each of the skills. In this regard, Eisterhold (1990) explained three hypotheses of reading and writing relationship: The directional, the nondirectional, and the bidirectional hypotheses. According to the *directional hypothesis*, knowledge in reading

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provides a basis for the mastery of writing. The *nondirectional hypothesis* posits that both reading and writing have similar characteristics and mechanisms which are useful for learning development, although each of them does not influence one another. In the view of *bidirectional hypothesis*, both reading and writing are related to each other and one influences the other.

The two theoretical bases for understanding the connection of reading and writing can be used as considerations for practical purposes. In Ferris and Hedgecock's (2005) words, the use of underlying theories can help teachers "adjust the weight given to reading tasks and writing practice according to the needs and expectations of their learners" (p. 35). This means the two skills can be integrated and can be taught in an integrated manner as well (Hudson, 2007, p. 263). For example, reading and writing relationships are important in any discussion of academic literacy skills, and reading for academic purposes is commonly combined with some types of writing task, whether the task involves writing from the same source or from a number of different sources (Grabe, 2009, p. 377). A writing task which is based on the same source can be in the form of note taking, summarizing, paraphrasing, or responding to the question, whereas a writing task from different sources is in the form of synthesizing information.

Another support about reading and writing relationship comes from Mahnam (2012) who mentioned that:

> Reading and writing are two points in dialectic of meaning-making with text. Readers read writing; writers write reading. There are many connections between the two processes, some simple and easily visible, others complex and highly theoretical. Most of the readers use writing to help process what they read. (p. 155)

Based on the hypotheses regarding the relationship between reading and writing (Eisterhold, 1990) as well as the principles of teaching reading in connection with writing (Nation, 2009), the *directional hypothesis* and the *meaning-focused output* principle can be used as the foundation of reading and writing relationship dealt with in this article. Accordingly, the ideas from the reading text (meaning-focused output) have to be represented (directional hypothesis) in the student's summary of the text. Therefore, it is evident from the review on the reading and writing connection, that knowledge that EFL students get from reading materials is internalized and it can be used whenever they write. This article focuses on one of the activities that can be used to support the process of internalizing knowledge

from reading materials, that is summarizing. It deals with summarizing as a means to represent ideas from reading texts in a written form. Sarig (1993) states that summarizing serves as a junction where "reading and writing encounters" (p. 161).

Summarizing, according to Khathayut and Karavi (2011), is "an abridgement expressing the main ideas of the text through reported speech and relating to paraphrasing; and the result of summarizing has to be shorter than the original text, contain the main idea of the text" (p. 4). Summarizing is common in academic writing field as it is one of the ways for the writers to make use the sources besides quoting, paraphrasing, and referencing. Summarizing can also be considered as what Hudson (2007) calls as "read-to-write" activity (p. 120) which means that writing activity is conducted after the students finish reading the text. In other words, summarizing is a kind of recursive activity that begins by encoding the meaning in the text which later to be decoded in the form of a written text. Further, according to Sarig (1993), the students must realize that the text is too long and complex to fully comprehend and commit to memory without direct, intentional manipulation (p. 161). In this case, the summarizing process has a big power to help the students comprehend the ideas in the text and keep them in their memory.

Even though it looks simple, summarizing involves more than simply identifying important ideas and reproducing them (Hudson, 2007, p. 273). This is because the writers do need to really understand what the text is about before they summarize the text as they have to be able to choose the most important points or the propositions from the text. In line with what has been suggested by Chambers and Brigham (1989, cited in Nation, 2009), a more teachable strategy is "summary by deletions," (p. 34) that is systematically deleting unimportant parts in the text. They explain the steps of summarizing by deletion as follows:

> (1) read the passage and delete all the sentences that merely elaborate the main sentences; (2) delete all unnecessary clauses and phrases from the main sentences; (3) delete all unnecessary words from what remains; (4) replace the remaining words with your own expressions; and (5) write the summary out neatly.
> (Chambers & Brigham, 1989 cited in Nation, 2009, p. 34)

This infers that to be able to make a short version of a text, a writer only needs to pick the main ideas of the text. In addition to what has been defined by Khatayut and Kravi (2011), summary of the text has to be written by using the writers' own word, so it does not merely copying the text and

pasting material from the reading text as a summary. However, when summarizing, one is not allowed to include a personal response to the ideas originally taken from the text. Another important thing to consider is that they need to condense those ideas in a structure recognized as the summary genre.

The review of literature above suggests that summarizing is an important activity that can be done after reading in order to get a deeper understanding of the reading materials. The review also shows the strategies that can be undertaken to summarize reading materials. However, the literature has not shown in a greater extent which ideas from the reading materials EFL students may include in their summaries and how they represent ideas from the reading materials in their summaries. One of the types of reading materials which are important for Indonesian EFL students is journal articles. Therefore, this research aims at achieving two goals which will be achieved by answering the following research questions:

What ideas from journal articles did the Indonesian EFL students represent in their article summaries?
   (1) How did the Indonesian EFL students represent ideas from journal articles in their article summaries?

METHOD

This research study describes idea representation and summarizing strategies in article summaries written by Indonesian EFL students. It involved 16 graduate students who were at the Graduate Program in ELT at State university of Malang, Indonesia. Most of these students are secondary school teachers and university lecturers who teach English and they came from various provinces of the country. As graduate students, they have completed the undergraduate education in ELT-related programs and completed over 140-credit courses, including three levels of writing courses: basic, intermediate, and advanced writing. When the study was conducted, these students were attending a graduate course on "The Teaching of Writing." The course has two credits and aims to provide the English teachers with theoretical background of the teaching of writing and classroom practical application. The course activities include discussion on theories in the teaching of writing, issues in the teaching of writing across education levels, and the use of technology in the teaching of writing.

At the end of the semester, the students were given a task to summarize a journal article of their own choice by focusing on the technique of teaching ESL/EFL writing used or discussed in the journal article. They were asked to choose journal articles published from 2009 to 2012 and write

the summary in about 200 words. In addition, they were asked to give opinions about the content and applicability of the article. However, for the purpose of this research study, only the summaries of the students were analyzed. There were 14 articles that were summarized by the students as two students summarized journal articles which were used by two other students. The list of the journal articles is shown in Appendix 1.

In order to know the idea representation in the students' article summaries, the submitted summaries were analyzed by using content-analysis. The contents of the students' summaries were matched with the contents of the journal articles and scored in terms of three components, within the ICF frame, namely:

I – Introduction
The introduction gives general information on what the article is about.
C – Content
The content outlines the techniques of teaching writing used in the article.
F – Finalization
The finalization provides remarks that appropriately end the summary.

To analyze the idea representation we also served as raters, Rater 1 (the first author) and Rater 2 (the coauthor). We decided to score the students' summaries separately and used the two sets of scores to examine the inter-rater reliability. The maximum score of a summary is 100 and it is broken down into the weightings for components of 'introduction' (25%), 'content' (50%), and 'finalization' (25%). Before scoring, we set out the criteria for scoring and discussed points of disagreement. In this case, two article summaries, those written by Student 1 and Student 3, were used in the discussion process of scoring. From the discussion, for instance, we achieved the agreement that the summary of Student 1 gained 0 (zero) for the absence of 'introduction', 25 for the incomplete coverage of 'content,' and another 0 (zero) for the absence of 'finalization.' Meanwhile, we decided to give Student 3 the following scores: 20 for 'introduction,' 35 for 'content,' and another 20 for 'finalization,' due to incomplete information in each of the components.

In order to examine the students' strategies in summarizing the articles, the students' summaries were compared to the articles based on the organization and sentence construction. In terms of the organization, the summaries were analyzed to find out whether ideas were organized according to the logical sequence of the presentation of ideas in the articles. In terms of the sentence construction, the analysis focuses on how the sentences in the summaries are represented on the basis of the sentences used in the articles. We divided strategies in summarizing into 6 categories:
A = Representing ideas using one's own expressions

B = Copying ideas and words with no modification
C = Copying ideas and words with some modifications
D = Representing ideas in the form of graphic organizers
E = Representing ideas in the form of a list
F = Representing ideas not in a sequential order

RESULTS

The data of this study were 16 article summaries written by the Indonesian EFL students. The summaries were analyzed in accordance to the research questions. The results of analysis are presented in two parts: (1) Idea representation in the Indonesian EFL students' article summaries, and (2) the Indonesian EFL students' strategies in summarizing.

Idea Representation in the Indonesian EFL Students' Article Summaries

The scores of the students' summaries in terms of the 'introduction' (I), 'content' (C), and 'finalization' (F) components and the total scores ( ) from two raters are shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
Scores of the students' summaries given by Rater 1 and Rater 2

Students	Scores of Summaries							
	Rater 1				Rater 2			
	I	C	F		I	C	F	
1	0	25	0	25	0	25	0	25
2	25	50	20	95	25	50	20	95
3	20	35	20	75	20	35	20	75
4	25	20	25	70	15	20	25	60
5	20	45	25	90	25	50	25	100
6	25	30	20	75	20	30	20	70
7	25	45	0	70	25	50	0	75
8	25	45	0	70	20	50	0	70
9	25	50	25	100	25	50	25	100
10	25	45	0	70	20	50	0	70
11	15	30	0	45	15	40	0	55
12	20	40	15	75	25	30	25	80
13	10	10	10	30	10	10	10	30
14	25	40	25	90	25	40	25	90
15	25	50	0	75	25	50	0	75
16	25	75	0	75	20	50	0	70

Table 1 shows that, in terms of the components, the two raters agree that not all of the students included the three components in their summaries, especially the components of 'introduction' (1 student) and

'finalization' (7 students). An examination on the list of the total scores from Rater 1 and Rater 2 shows that many of the scores are the same and some others are slightly different in 5 or 10 points. An inter-rater reliability test was conducted and the result shows that Rater 1 and Rater 2 agreed significantly on the components to be scored as shown in the coefficient reliability 0.97 for the total scores of the students' summaries.

In order to describe the idea representation in the students' article summaries, the average scores for the summary of each of students from Rater 1 and Rater 2 were computed and presented and Figure 1. The results were then interpreted in terms of five categories: very good (81-100), good (61-80), fair (41-60), poor (21-40), and very poor (1-20).

FIGURE 1
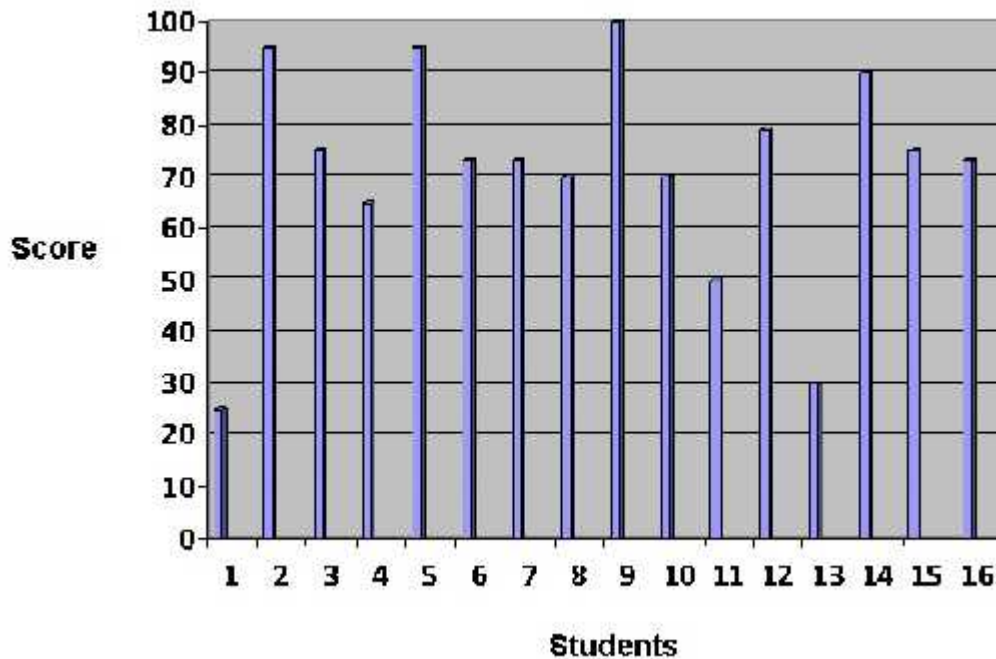Idea representation in the students' article summaries

Figure 1 shows that 4 of the 16 students' scores (Students 2, 5, 9, and 14) are categorized as *very good* (25%), 9 students' scores (Students 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 10, 12, 15 and 16) are *good* (56%), 1 student's score is *fair* (Student 11), and 2 students' scores are *poor* (Students 1 and 13).

The Indonesian EFL Students' Strategies in Summarizing

To investigate the Indonesian EFL students' strategies in summarizing, the way the students represent ideas in their article summaries was compared with the way the ideas are presented in the journal articles. The analysis

results in the description of the students' strategies in summarizing which are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
Students' strategies in summarizing

Strategy	Description	Students	Total
A	Representing ideas using one's own expressions	2, 4, 9, 14	4
B	Copying ideas and words with no modification	3, 6, 12, 13	4
C	Copying ideas and words with some modifications	1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15	6
D	Representing ideas in the form of graphic organizers	16	1
E	Representing ideas in the form of a list	11	1
F	Representing ideas not in a sequential order	11	1

Table 2 shows that there are 6 strategies that are used by the students in summarizing the articles they read. From the Table 2, it can be clearly seen that 4 out of 16 students (Students 2, 4, 9, and 14) used their own expressions to represent their ideas from the text into their summary (25%). In this case, the students took the idea from the overall points of the article and wrote their summaries by using their own words. Moreover, another 25% of the students (Students 3, 6, 12, and 13) looked at the exact location of the technique of teaching in the article and copied exactly the same words and sentence construction. Next, 6 out of 16 students (Students 1, 5, 7, 8, 10, 15) also looked at the exact location of the technique of teaching in the article, but they made some modifications in terms of the vocabulary and the sentence structure that are copied from the articles (37.5%). Furthermore, one student (Student 16) preferred putting the main ideas from the text into a graphic organizer in the form of table (6.25%). Finally, another student (Student 11) chose listing and flipping as her strategies in summarizing the article. In other words, she put the main ideas in the form of pointers and the way she presented the ideas written in her summary was not in a sequential order as the ones presented in the article (6.25%). In order to make this explanation clearer, the students' strategies in summarizing articles can be shown in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
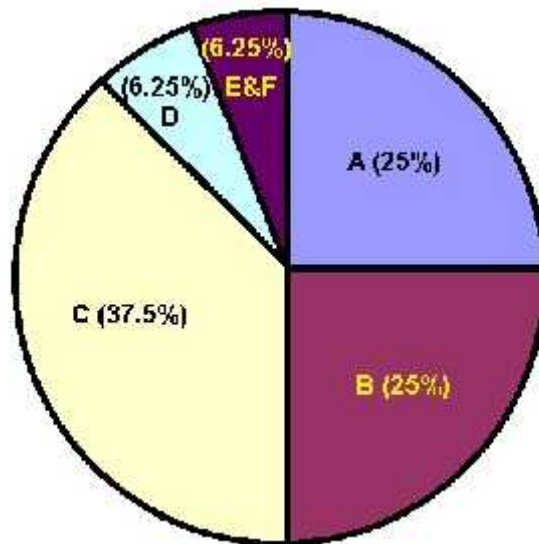Students' strategies in summarizing the articles

Figure 2 shows the types of strategies in summarizing and the proportions of the students who applied each of the strategies. Based on the proportions, the most frequently applied strategy in summarizing was 'copying ideas and words with some modifications' (Strategy C). The next strategies frequently applied were 'representing ideas using one's own expressions' (Strategy A) and 'copying ideas and words with no modification' (Strategy B). The last strategies applied by the students were 'representing ideas in the form of graphic organizers' (Strategy D), 'representing ideas in the form of a list' (Strategy E) and 'representing ideas not in a sequential order' (Strategy F). Samples of the students' article summaries are shown in Appendices 2A (representing ideas using one's own expressions), 2B (representing ideas in the form of a table), and 2C (representing ideas in the form of a list and not in a sequential order).

DISCUSSION

The research deals with idea representation and summarizing strategies in article summaries written by EFL Indonesian students. Summarizing is basically a short written version of ideas based on a longer reading text. Thus, summarizing is an activity that integrates both reading and writing. It has been mentioned earlier, reading and writing skills are two skills that are closely related (Eisterhold, 1990; Hudson, 2007). Summarizing as a microskill in writing has been known as one technique which can reinforce understanding of reading passages. As stated by Sarig

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(1993), the summary that a student wrote helps him or her comprehend the ideas from the reading text and with a summary it is easier for the student to keep the ideas in the memory.

There have been various ways in summarizing recommended in the literature. One way is to delete the ideas and words which are not important in the reading text (Chambers & Brigham, 1989 cited in Nation, 2009). However, regardless of the varieties in summarizing, there are two important points that need to be kept in mind. First, as stated by Chambers and Brigham (1989 cited in Nation, 2009), in the final step a summary should be written "neatly" and it should be written in someone's "own expression" (p. 34). These requirements suggest two implications.

First, a summary should be written in the form of a paragraph containing the introduction, content, and finalization. According to the theories in paragraph writing, a paragraph consists of two major components: 'introduction' and 'body' (Smalley, Ruetten, & Kozyrev, 2001). A third component, which is optional, may be added, that is 'conclusion.' Therefore, the components of 'content' and 'finalization' in a summary are similar to the components of 'body' and 'conclusion' in the a paragraph, respectively. Meanwhile, there is no difference in the component of 'introduction.' With regard to idea representation in article summaries written by Indonesian EFL students, the findings of the present study suggest that most of the students were successful in representing the ideas from the journal articles into their summaries. This is indicated by the big proportion of the students (81%) who were at the level of "very good" and "good" in the way they selected the ideas from journal articles into their summaries. A successful summary contains the components of introduction, content, and finalization. Although most of the Indonesian EFL students were successful in making summaries based on journal articles, not all of them included the 'finalization' component of the summaries. This is understandable because they might consider that finalization is an optional part in a summary, just like the 'conclusion' part in a paragraph.

Second, a summary should not contain expressions which are exactly like those in the summarized reading text. It is necessary for the student to paraphrase the original sentences or expressions from the reading text before putting the ideas into a summary. Thus, strategies such as 'copying words with no modification' and 'copying words with some modifications' should be avoided. With regard to strategies in summarizing in article summaries written by Indonesian EFL students, the findings of the study suggest that only one-fourth of the students (25%) wrote their summaries by 'representing ideas using one's own expressions,' which is the expected norm in summarizing. On the other hand, almost two-thirds of Indonesian

EFL students (62.5%) have not been familiar with this convention in summarizing. They wrote their summaries by 'copying ideas and words with some modifications' (37.50%) or simply by 'copying ideas and words with no modification' (25%). In short, except for the topic or the keywords that cannot be modified, a summary should be able to show the writer's genuine expressions.

It is important to mention other strategies applied by two Indonesian EFL students when summarizing journal articles. One student summarized the reading text by 'representing ideas in the form of graphic organizers,' namely a table. While the strategy may result in representation of the ideas that have been presented in the journal into the summary, this strategy does not conform to the most important requirement that summarizing should be presented in a paragraph form. The other student summarized the reading text both by 'representing ideas in the form of a list' and 'representing ideas not in a sequential order.' Like the previous student, this student should have transformed the ideas from the journal article into a full paragraph in order to present her summary. Moreover, rearrangement of ideas into a different sequence may mislead the reader in understanding the order of idea presentation in the original text.

The findings outlined above have some pedagogical implications. First of all, summarizing should not be taken for granted for the Indonesian EFL students although they are already at a graduate level. The students at this level are considered to have mastered various skills in academic writing. This is because they have finished their undergraduate education where they learned various kinds of writing: basic (paragraph), intermediate (expository essay), and advanced (argumentative essay) writing. However, skill in writing does not necessarily reflect skill in summarizing as they are essentially different. In writing, the students are required to depend on how they generate ideas and develop them into a paragraph or an essay. Whereas, in summarizing, they have to read and understand the ideas in the reading text before they are able to represent them into a summary. In summarizing, the problem may come not only from the writing activity which requires them to represent the ideas which conform to the ideas in the reading text, but also from how to understand the ideas in the reading text (Hudson, 2007).

Secondly, many of the students are not familiar with how to represent ideas from a reading text by using their own expressions. Failure to use other people's words, be it intentionally or unintentionally, they may lead to allegation of plagiarism other people's words. That is why, strategies in summarizing which do not fulfill the ethical considerations should not have been applied. In order to avoid plagiarizing other people's ideas or words, students should be trained to make summaries by following

procedures which avoid the practice of academic misconduct such as copying and copying with some modifications.

CONCLUSION

This article has shown that when asked to summarize journal articles most of the Indonesian EFL students could successfully represent the ideas from the journal articles into their summaries. However, some of the students excluded the 'finalization' component in their summaries as they might think that this component is optional. This finding suggests that although Indonesian EFL students know what they need to do when summarizing, they need to be reminded that including the 'finalization' component in their summaries will make their summaries even more successful.

Dealing with the way the students used to represent their ideas in their summaries, there were 6 different strategies in summarizing that the students applied, namely: representing ideas using one's own expressions, copying ideas and words with no modification, copying ideas and words with some modifications, representing ideas in the form of graphic organizers, representing ideas in the form of a list, and representing ideas not in a sequential order. Among these six different strategies, the most frequent strategy used by the students was 'copying ideas and words with some modifications' (Strategy C). This means that the students tended to look at the exact location of the technique of teaching writing in the article, copied the explanations from the location, but they only made some modifications in terms of the vocabulary and the sentence structure. It seems that the students have not been familiar with the appropriate strategies to write a summary. Accordingly, it is necessary for teachers of EFL writing to teach their students strategies to summarize successfully. The students should be reminded that when summarizing they have to represent ideas using their own expressions in order to avoid plagiarism.

THE AUTHORS

Bambang Yudi Cahyono is a Professor in Applied Linguistics at State University of Malang, Indonesia. He earned his Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics from Concordia University, Montreal, Canada, and PhD from the University of Melbourne, Australia. His interest includes second language writing, English teachers' professional development, and the use of ICT in ELT.

Shirly Rizki Kusumaningrum is currently a student in the Doctorate Program in English Language Teaching at State University of Malang. She has been a presenter at some national and international conferences on English Language Teaching.

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