

Teaching Summarizing Skills Using Interactive White Board in an ESL Classroom

Dr Nikhat Bano

Assistant Professor, TT & NFE, F/o Education, Jamia Millia Islamia, New Delhi – 110025

Abstract: This paper is about teaching summarizing skills to senior secondary students using an Interactive White Board. Summarizing skills is one of the most important skills to learn in the 21st-century era. This era is specifically marked by technological advancements in almost all fields, including education. Technology in Education has played a major role in making teaching-learning easy, accessible and fun-filled all the time. It helps in explaining a concept using real-life examples and enhances learning. We are living in a time of knowledge explosion, students studying at senior secondary levels must know what to look for in a sea of information. They must know the skills of searching, skimming, scanning and processing this information using their intellect, saving it and using it when needed. All these skills become easier to teach and learn in a large classroom when facilitated with an Interactive whiteboard (IWB). The teachers of ESL (English as a Second Language) find it difficult to teach the nuances of this skill, where the students have to compress a given passage in one-third of the original text. The senior secondary level students are preparing to enter adult life and get absorbed in the world of work. They will face work-related challenging situations, where they are needed to communicate useful information and leave behind not-so-useful ones. For that, they must know summarizing skills. The paper presents a collaborative classroom activity using Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) accompanied by non-ICT materials to teach summarizing skills.

Key Words: Summarizing skills, Interactive White Board, ESL Classroom

INTRODUCTION

The skills of Summarization

Summarizing Skills are important in today's world where knowledge is exploding in all quarters every minute. In fact, we are living in an information age, where students need to sieve useful information from the rest of the lot. These skills are also important for them to make them dexterous on their job front, in the academic rise and adaptable in a social set-up. It helps students to select important information and leave

behind repeated, unimportant or not-so-important ones from a paragraph or a passage and compress them into a concise form. It is done for an audience who is not present at the time of sharing that particular information or he is only interested to know the main points of that piece of information. Usually, during summarization, the original piece of information is shortened to one-third, including the main points.

There is a close connection between reading and writing skills. Unlike oral-aural skills they need print medium and communication is done with the help of these printed signals, these texts are processed in our cognitive domain and then decoded. The skills of summarization and paraphrasing come within the purview of reading and writing skills and it needs high levels of cognitive skills. These are essential skills in academic writing. Here, the students are expected to extract the key points from a given text and rewrite them in a smaller number of words than the original text, basically writing important information in their own words, termed as a summary.

Why summarizing skills are important for senior secondary students?

Summarizing is one of the most important skills in an academic field. This skill is needed at every step of their education, from high school to university level. The next stoppage of the students studying at the secondary stage level is into adult life. After choosing a career-oriented course they have to enter into the world of work, where this skill becomes extremely essential for a successful career. So, it is of utmost importance to teach them from the secondary school level and through persistent practice master them at the senior secondary level.

Teaching Summarizing Skills through Technology

Today man is surrounded by technology, be it running a home or an institution, education or fashion, industry

or a factory, jobs or merchandising, hospitals and cinema halls, supermarkets or street vendors, in solitude or in gathering, everywhere technology is seen moving along with men, women and children. They are part and parcel of our lives now. And the most amazing part of technology is – it compels us to move along at its pace.

It's an admissible fact that technology has eased our lives. It has greatly contributed to almost all fields including education. Children cannot think of studying without having a computer or smartphone. In this paper, the summarizing skills will be taught using an interactive whiteboard.

The interactive whiteboard is a low-cost, easy-to-handle educational technology, useful in teaching summarizing skills. It's a digital whiteboard where the students can be kept engaged with the content and each other at the same time. It's a useful feature-rich and real-time digital board for a large class.

It is proven that students excel better when they stay engaged. And IWB is one of them, here;

- Students can be kept engaged and participating for longer as they are provided interactive media such as animations and embedded audio/video along with the targeted teaching content.
- Teachers-students and students-students work in collaboration.
- Enhance classroom communication using all the skills of the English language, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing.

SUMMARIZING TOOLS FOR THE TEXT

Tools: 1. Identifying the Topic/Main Idea and Supporting Details

2. Re-expressing the Information in Fewer Words

The overall structure of a passage/paragraph

Every passage/paragraph has got the main idea and the following facts/evidence/details that support the main idea of the passage or paragraph. These are;

Overall Structure of a Passage/Paragraph

	Name of the Student:			
TOPIC (Most important)				
MAIN IDEA (Most important)				
PRIMARY SUPPORTING DETAILS				
SECONDARY SUPPORTING DETAILS (Least important)				

1. Topic: Subject (who and what is it about?)
2. Main Idea (what about the topic being discussed?)
3. First supporting details (primary supporting details)
4. Second supporting details (secondary supporting details, elaborates on primary details)
5. Extra facts, evidence and details

CAPTURING CONTENT POINTS

The students have to find out those content points that capture the essence of the passage, taking all the relevant points and leaving them behind irrelevant ones.

Materials provided and preparations done before the commencement of the class activity.

- Interactive Whiteboard (IWB)
- A Personal Computer of the teacher
- One Projector
- They will be supplied with a class dictionary or they can ask the teacher the meanings of certain words.
- They are given blank paper to note down points, a pencil and an eraser.
- Also, worksheets having different sub-headings will be distributed to each student for writing the relevant points.
- A few copies of a revised version of the grammar book should be made available in the classroom.
- The class will be divided into groups of three.

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

1. Classroom Activities for Identifying the Topic/Main Idea and Supporting Details

Step I

The students will be provided with a worksheet, one for each student. They will be told to write their names on their worksheets for later evaluation of their work. The sample worksheet is given below.

Step II

The students will be shown a paragraph or a passage on the IWB. The selected passage will be appropriate to their proficiency level and grade level. The class will read the passage silently, they will be given time to read it. They can ask a couple of questions to their teachers or to their fellow students but not much, as it will disrupt the teaching of the target skill. When the reading is done, they will be asked certain questions and their answers will be going to summarize that passage. The order of these questions will be;

Question No. 1. Find out the topic of this passage.

Probable answer - The students will come up with many options. The teacher will underline those on the interactive whiteboard. After underlining the options, she will again ask which option is the closest one, seeing the content of the passage. After a little bit of brainstorming in small groups, the students will come to know what the passage is all about. The students will write it in the worksheet in the space provided. After the completion of Step I, the teacher will erase the underlines on the IWB.

Step III

Question No. 2. What is the main idea of the passage?

Probable answer – by this time students have a fair idea of the topic being discussed in the passage. They will come up with answers or point to the lines which discuss/talk about the topic. She will start underlining those lines. The students will be allowed to discuss in groups of three. Out of many options, the students will be able to tell the main idea contained in the passage. They are instructed to write down on their individual worksheets. After the completion of Step III, the teacher will erase the underlines on the IWB.

Step IV

Question 3. What are the primary supporting facts/evidence/details you see in the passage?

Probable answer – Here, the students may mix up primary and secondary details. But the teacher will underline all those lines on the IWB pointed out by the students. The teacher will again give them time to discuss in their groups. They will brainstorm once again and on the basis of the main idea of the topic already known, they will come up with the answer. All through this activity the teacher's role would be of a facilitator only. The primary supporting details will be

kept and the secondary supporting details will be erased from the IWB. The teacher will ask the students to write them down in the boxes provided for the primary supporting details.

Step V

Question 4. What are the secondary supporting facts/evidence/details you see in the passage?

Probable answer – this step is going to be easier for the students as everything has been sorted out - the topic, the main idea of the text, and the primary supporting details. They will easily point out the secondary supporting details given in the text. She will underline them and ask them to note them down in their worksheets. Later on, she will erase those underlines to move on to another set of group activities.

2. Classroom Activities for Re-expressing the information in fewer words

Techniques of Summarizing

To make a text concise needs techniques, where all the supporting facts, evidence and details are present become one-third of the original text without getting repeated. For this, the content points have to be condensed and rephrased. Below are some techniques to be used during the group activity in an ESL classroom;

Technique 1: Substitution with a collective noun

Group Activity: The selected passage/paragraph will be displayed on the IWB once again. The teacher will ask the class to find out groups of words that can be replaced by a collective noun. They will work in groups to find them. The teacher will underline the lines or groups of words pointed out by the students. The teacher will ask them to take the help of a dictionary or google the suitable collective noun for those words. She will help the students replace the words wherever possible. Before moving on to the next technique the underlines will be erased.

Technique 2: Substitution with suitable synonyms (one word only)

Group Activity: The selected passage/paragraph will be displayed on the IWB once again. The teacher will ask the class to find out word/s that can be replaced by suitable synonyms. They will work in groups to find them. The teacher will underline the word/s pointed out by the students. The teacher will ask them to take

the help of a dictionary or google the suitable synonyms for that word/s. She will help the students replace the words wherever possible. Before moving on to the next technique the underlined word/s will be erased.

Technique 3: Re-expression by changing word form

Group Activity: The selected passage/paragraph will be displayed on the IWB once again. The teacher will ask the class to find out sentences that can be re-expressed by changing the word forms. They will work in groups to find such word forms. The teacher will underline those sentences pointed out by the students. The teacher will ask them to discuss in groups, take the help of English language applications or google them. Once found the teacher will help them re-express those word forms wherever possible. Before moving on to the next technique the underlined sentences will be erased.

Technique 4: Re-expression by re-structuring sentences

Group Activity: The selected passage/paragraph will be displayed on the IWB once again. The teacher will ask the class to find out sentences that can be re-expressed by re-structuring them. They will work in groups to locate such sentences. The teacher will underline those sentences pointed out by the students. The teacher will ask them to discuss in groups, take the help of English language applications or google them. Once found the teacher will help them re-structure those sentences wherever possible. Before moving on to the next technique the underlined sentences will be erased.

Teaching Summarizing without using IWB

Not every school is equipped with ICT tools, so in that condition, the above skill can also be taught without using IWB. In such cases, a teacher can use the Xerox copies of a carefully selected text along with the workable worksheets. Here, the teacher can distribute one copy to a group of three students. The teacher and the students will repeat all the aforementioned steps of Group Activities 1 and all the techniques of Group Activities 2 the same way as done using the IWB.

CONCLUSION

Summarizing skills taught with the help of Interactive Whiteboard (IWB) will definitely make the

teaching/learning process a lasting experience. It will help the students to master the techniques and to use them wherever it is needed. Skills learnt through group activities and in collaboration teach not only the target skill but add to the learning of all language skills like listening, speaking, reading, writing and language elements like grammar and vocabulary. Usually, in an ESL classroom, the students are of multi-proficiency levels and with different socioeconomic statuses and personality traits. The teacher can use these individual differences to create a conducive classroom atmosphere where peer-group teaching/learning can be carried out in collaboration. And skills like summarizing need such a classroom atmosphere.

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