

Chapter 3

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENTS' SUMMARIES USING SUMMARY SENTENCE DECOMPOSITION

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3.1 Introduction

Summary writing is a process of reducing the size and content of a text into a shorter version called summary. The production of the summary depends on the existing text which is different from other writings such as essay writing and report writing (Hidi & Anderson, 1986). However, it is important to have good summarization skills in order to determine what to include, what to eliminate, how to organize information and how to ensure that the summary retains the meaning of the original text. There are five basic rules that are essential to produce adequate summaries (Brown & Day, 1983):

- deletion of trivial information,
- deletion of redundant information,
- substitution of more general category for a list of similar items or individual parts of an action,
- selection of the main idea contained in a paragraph or text and
- creation of a topic sentence when it is not found in the text.

Summary writing is also one of the best ways to evaluate student's comprehension of a given text since it involves multiple cognitive activities such as reading and understanding a text, identifying relevant content, and generating a short version of it called summary. Consequently, automated summarization assessment has drawn a lot of interest in recent years. There are a few systems developed for this purpose, e.g. *Summary Street*® (Wade-Stein & Kintsch, 2004) and *Laburpen Ebaluaka Automatiko*a or *LEA* (Zipitria, et al., 2004). *Summary Street* is a computer-based assessment system that provides an environment where students can get feedback about the adequacy of the content and the quality of their written summary. *Laburpen Ebaluaka Automatiko*a or *LEA* is an automatic summary evaluation that gives feedback on the coherence, content coverage and cohesion, the use of language and adequacy of the summary. Although previous works have presented an invaluable contribution towards the development of the summarization assessment system, their focus is only on the output summary, viz. the quality of the summary. Automated summarization assessment for identifying students' strategies is still lacking. Due to that, we present an analysis of students' summaries to investigate whether the performance of the students in summary writing reflects directly the used of the summarizing strategies. The result of this study suggests that there is a need to develop an automated summarization assessment for identifying students' summarizing strategies in summary writing.

3.2 Summarizing Strategies

Under the *Integrated Secondary School Curriculum*, summary writing is included in the English syllabus for Malaysian schools to evaluate student's comprehension of a given text. It is also to equip the school leavers with the summarization skills needed in education during tertiary levels and many jobs. Although the skills can be developed naturally, most students require a clear