

Summarizing

Another way to use borrowed information from an outside source is to summarize it. What is the difference between a paraphrase and a summary? When you retell a story that someone has told you, you repeat the story in your own words. If your retelling is about the same length as the original, it is a paraphrase. If you shorten the story—retelling only the most important points and leaving out the details—it is a summary.

MODEL

Paraphrase and Summary

Original Passage (85 words)

Language is the main means of communication between peoples. But so many different languages have developed that language has often been a barrier rather than an aid to understanding among peoples. For many years, people have dreamed of setting up an international universal language which all people could speak and understand. The arguments in favor of a universal language are simple and obvious. If all peoples spoke the same tongue, cultural and economic ties might be much closer, and good will might increase between countries (Kispert).

Paraphrase (63 words, about the same length as the original)

Humans communicate through language. Because there are so many different languages, however, people around the world have a difficult time understanding one another. Some people have wished for a universal international language that speakers all over the world could understand. Their reasons are straightforward and clear. A universal language would build cultural and economic bonds. It would also create better feelings among countries (Kispert).

Summary (28 words, much shorter)

People communicate through language; however, having different languages creates communication barriers. A universal language could bring countries together culturally and economically as well as increase good feelings among them (Kispert).

Writing Technique Questions

1. How many sentences are there in the original passage? In the paraphrase? In the summary?
2. Compare the paraphrase and the summary. What two details were left out of the summary?

PRACTICE 4

Choosing the Best Summary

Read the original passage and the two summaries that follow it. Then answer these questions.

1. Which of the two is the better summary? Why?
2. Which summary contains an idea that was not in the original? Which sentence expresses this added idea?

Original Passage

Source: The following passage is excerpted from a newspaper article written by Marc Lacey. It appeared on page A3 of the *New York Times* on November 12, 2004. The title of the article is "Using a New Language in Africa to Save Dying Ones."

Swahili speakers wishing to use a "compyuta"—as *computer* is rendered in Swahili—have been out of luck when it comes to communicating in their tongue. Computers, no matter how bulky their hard drives or sophisticated their software packages, have not yet mastered Swahili or hundreds of other indigenous African languages.

But that may soon change. Across the continent, linguists are working with experts in information technology to make computers more accessible to Africans who happen not to know English, French, or the other major languages that have been programmed into the world's desktops.

There are economic reasons for the outreach. Microsoft, which is working to incorporate Swahili into Microsoft Windows, Microsoft Office, and other popular programs, sees a market for its software among the roughly 100 million Swahili speakers in East Africa. The same goes for Google, which last month launched www.google.co.ke, offering a Kenyan version in Swahili of the popular search engine.

But the campaign to Africanize cyberspace is not all about the bottom line. There are hundreds of languages in Africa—some spoken only by a few dozen elders—and they are dying out at an alarming rate. The continent's linguists see the computers as one important way of saving them. UNESCO estimates that 90 percent of the world's 6,000 languages are not represented on the Internet and that one language disappears somewhere around the world every two weeks.

Summary A

People who speak Swahili who want to communicate using a "compyuta," which is the Swahili word for computer, are unable to do so in their own language. It makes no difference that computers have huge hard drives and sophisticated software. They cannot operate in Swahili or other African languages, of which there are hundreds. Soon, however, they may be able to. Linguists in Africa are working with information technology specialists to make computers operable to Africans who do not know any of the languages currently used on the Internet. Economics is bringing about this change. Microsoft sees a market for its software among Swahili speakers in East Africa. Google now has a search engine for speakers of Swahili in Kenya. Other software companies will probably soon develop products for African consumers. In addition to economics, there is another reason for making the computer accessible to Africans. Hundreds of African languages are dying out, and linguists view the computer as a way to save them. According to UNESCO estimates, 90 percent of the world's 6,000 languages are not on the Internet, and one language becomes extinct every day somewhere in the world. The hope is that computers can help save them (Lacey).

Summary B

Many Africans who do not speak any of the major languages on the Internet have been unable to use computers in their native languages. Computers cannot yet accommodate languages such as Swahili. However, that situation may soon change. Linguists and computer experts are working to develop computers that work in Swahili and other African languages. Economics is one reason for doing so. Computer companies such as Microsoft and Google see a potentially huge market for its products in Africa. Another important reason is to save languages that are in danger of becoming extinct (Lacey).

PRACTICE 5

Writing Summaries

Write a one-paragraph summary of each of the following passages.

- Step 1 Read the original passage several times until you understand it well. You may find it helpful to underline the main points.
- Step 2 Make notes in the space provided, changing vocabulary words wherever possible.
- Step 3 Write a summary of each passage in your own words.
- Step 4 Add an in-text citation at the end of each summary.

Original Passage 1

Source: Various paragraphs of a news article written by Randolph E. Schmid. It was published online by the Associated Press on February 26, 2004. The title of the article is "Share of people who are native English speakers declining." The article is 25 paragraphs long. The Web site address is <<http://pqasb.pqarchiver.com/ap/571281251.html?did=571281251&FMT=ABS&FMTS=FT&date=Feb+26%2C+2004&author=RANDOLPH+E.+SCHMID&desc=Share+of+people+who+are+native+English+speakers+declining>>.

The world faces a future of people speaking more than one language, with English no longer seen as likely to become dominant, a British language expert says in a new analysis. "English is likely to remain one of the world's most important languages for the foreseeable future, but its future is more problematic—and complex—than most people appreciate," said language researcher David Graddol (Schmid, pars. 1–2).

He sees English as likely to become the "first among equals" rather than having the global field to itself (par. 3). . . . The share of the world's population that speaks English as a native language is falling, Graddol reports in a paper in Friday's issue of the journal *Science* (par. 5).

"There is a distinct consciousness in many countries, both developed and developing, about this dominance of English. There is some evidence of resistance to it, a desire to change it" said [Scott] Montgomery [the author of another article published in the same issue of *Science*]. For example, he said, in the early years of the Internet it was dominated by sites in English, but in recent years there has been a proliferation of non-English sites, especially Spanish, German, French, Japanese, and others (pars. 19–20).

Nonetheless, English is strong as a second language, and teaching it has become a growth industry, said Montgomery, a Seattle-based geologist and energy consultant (par. 21).

Graddol noted, though, that employers in parts of Asia are already looking beyond English. "In the next decade the new 'must learn' language is likely to be Mandarin" (par. 22).

Notes

Summary
