

Revisiting Precis Writing Pedagogy: An Experimental Comparison of Conventional and Innovative Teaching Methods

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Abstract

Precise writing is an important academic skill that enables learners to summarize information accurately, concisely, and coherently. Teaching of precise writing continues to rely on conventional teacher-centred approaches that often limit student engagement and critical thinking. The present study investigates the effectiveness of innovative teaching methods in improving students' precis writing skills compared to traditional instructional practices. The study employs a quantitative experimental research design involving forty undergraduate ESL students divided into a control group and an experimental group. Both groups undergo a pre-test to assess their initial precis writing abilities. The control group receives instruction through conventional methods, including lectures, rule-based teaching, and individual practice, while the experimental group is taught through innovative approaches such as collaborative learning, peer feedback, guided summarization, and process-based writing activities. Following a four-to-six-week instructional period, a post-test is conducted to evaluate students' progress. The findings reveal that students exposed to innovative teaching methods achieve significantly better performance in terms of content accuracy, coherence, organization, grammar, and conciseness than those taught through conventional methods. The study contributes to the field of Applied Linguistics by providing empirical evidence regarding effective pedagogical practices for teaching precis writing and offers practical implications for language teachers, curriculum designers, and educational policymakers.

Keywords: Precis Writing, Writing Pedagogy, Innovative Teaching Methods, Conventional Teaching Methods, ESL Learners, Collaborative Learning, Applied Linguistics.

Introduction

Précis is indeed a very important part of English composition. Its importance cannot be overestimated. Those who want to acquire proficiency in the art of writing, frequent practice in précis writing is indispensable for them. The ability to write a good précis of a longer passage is a useful skill to acquire. It can help students in many situations in real life. Very few people have the time to read a long report or an article and ask for a summary. The general observation of the teachers reveals that the students remain incapable of expressing themselves even after doing a lot of writing exercises in the institutions. That is why examiners always set questions that test the learner's ability to write a précis, a summary of a long passage. Unfortunately, examination papers

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in précis writing are, with few exceptions, disappointing, and the students never learn to précis the long passage and never write clearly, correctly, and meaningfully.

The main aim of précis writing is to bring out faithfully the salient or main idea, theme, or meaning of an original document, writing, or speech in a concise, clear, simple, coherent, and natural language while preserving the spirit of the original. The importance and utility of the art of précis writing cannot be overemphasized. Life today has become very busy. Speed is now the essence of time. Everyone is in haste. Few have the time or patience to pause, think, and perform at leisure. Hence, the need for a short, lucid, and well-connected narrative, paragraph, or exercise has grown with the passage of time for everyone who has to deal with a plethora of all sorts of written exercises. Owing to the great importance and utility of this art, the academic institutions and universities all over the world make provision in their syllabi for graduation classes and require their alumni to acquire a good grasp of the essentials of this art and efficiency in the application of its essentials. Practically, in every competitive examination, a good percentage of marks is set apart for testing the ability of the competitors in writing the précis of a given passage. Teachers to help the students in acquiring, developing, and mastering this valuable art are therefore devoting more and more attention in the classroom. Knowledge of this unique technique is thus of great value and importance in the present-day world in every walk of life, wherein one has to use their pen. Though not very difficult, it requires hard labor and constant practice to become a good artist. The teaching of précis writing is considered by many teachers to be a mechanical and therefore an unsatisfactory part of their work. But the mental skill or ability that precise writing can develop is a most valuable one. The power of grasping the essence of a speech or piece of writing, to note what is important and what is unimportant, and to estimate the degree of relatedness to the central theme makes it a valuable activity. So, the development of this power should be a major concern of education. The problem with our students is that precise writing is taught to them only at the graduation level. So, it becomes very difficult for them to get proficiency in this skill. The students do not even have the basic knowledge of this difficult skill at the intermediate level. A question of 25 marks out of 100 marks is set on précis writing in the English paper "B" of Punjab University and other universities. Most of the students do not know the art of attempting the question on the paper. They simply reproduce the answers from the original paragraph and do not know that such an attempt is useless. It does not bring any credit to them. They are not awarded any mark by the examiner. Word-for-word copy is made from the original paragraph. They deserve credit only when they have proficiency in this skill.

There are some problems with teaching précis writing at the graduation level. A vast majority of our students come from homes or institutions where neither the parents nor the teachers know English. In the schools, all the teachers teach their respective subjects in their mother tongue and make no use of English. This changeover is responsible for depressing the standards in English considerably. The students are not taught tenses, parts of speech, and grammar rules at the intermediate level or even in the early stages. Now at the graduation level, the English teacher is left alone to fight his battle without anybody's help. He needs a good fund of energy and patience to stand the strain. The lack of knowledge of students who are not familiar with the rules of English grammar creates problems in teaching précis writing.

Untrained English teachers are the main cause of difficulty in teaching précis writing effectively at the graduation level. The use of the grammar translation method by untrained teachers has led to a generation of students who lack competence in English (Arif & Mustafa, 2025). Most of the English teachers use outdated Latin based grammar books, whereas they need to have a good grasp of English grammar. The teacher does not bother to classify the aims and objectives of teaching

English. He only teaches this subject since it is included in the syllabus. Pupils learn it just to pass the time. The aim of teaching English remains purposeless. Clear-cut objectives are not conveyed. The knowledge of teachers' teaching précis writing is inadequate, and they do not have full command of written and spoken English.

Most of the teachers use the structural approach rather than the functional approach. It is designed on linear instead of spiral lines of progression (Nadeem, Shafqat & Mustafa, 2025). At the graduation level, teachers mostly give more stress on teaching précis writing in a formal way, i. e., definitions and rules rather than on teaching precis writing in a functional way, that is, focusing on correct usage. The teaching of precise writing at the graduation level is, in most cases, theoretical in nature. Students are not given information about the application of rules in practical life. They are told about the articles (a, an, the), but they are unable to distinguish between definite and indefinite articles. Students make common mistakes by using definite articles where no article is required.

The textbooks which are prescribed for our students are not suitable and attractive. Students read these books only to pass in the examination. The topics which are in the syllabus do not give any practical knowledge to the students. Whatever the students learn from their books, they do not use it in their day-to-day affairs. Again, oral work is greatly neglected. These textbooks neither discuss rules of précis writing in detail, nor give emphasis on the application of these rules. A few solved exercises about précis writing are given in these text books, which have nothing to do with the teaching of précis writing. The application of different rules of précis writing must be taught and discussed in detail in all these books so that these books may prove helpful for students in learning précis writing. In a typical Pakistani class, the teacher delivers his lecture standing in front of the class, and students sit passively. This approach deprives the students of speaking and listening practice. Usually, students do not pay much attention to the lecture. Unless a teacher makes a definite attempt to arouse and sustain interest and designs easy and interesting activities for students to participate, will not get the outcome he wants even for the best planned lessons.

Objectives

This research has the following objectives:

1. To examine how précis writing is taught in our institutions.
2. To identify the problems of the students learning to write précis at the graduation level.
3. To ascertain the level of proficiency in précis writing acquired by the students.
4. To explore the level of satisfaction of the teachers and students regarding teaching methods of précis writing.
5. To suggest an effective method for teaching précis writing based on the findings of this research.

Research Questions

- 1- Which are the techniques and methods used by the teachers to teach precis writing in educational institutions?
- 2- What are the problems faced by the students learning to write precis at graduation level?
- 3- What is the level of proficiency in precis writing acquired by the students?
- 4- What is the level of satisfaction of the teachers and students regarding teaching methods of precis writing?
- 5- Which is the effective method for teaching precis writing based on the findings of the research?

Literature Review

Todd and Hancock (1986) state that a *précis* is like a paraphrase in that it changes the form of a piece of language without altering its essential content. Unlike a paraphrase, a *précis* is always more condensed than the original and does not contain direct quotations from it. the length of a *précis* is usually predetermined at between one-third and one-fifth of the original. Similarly, Wren and Martin (2006) define *précis* as a summary and *précis* writing means summarizing. *Précis* writing is an exercise in compression. A *précis* is the gist or main theme of a passage expressed in as few words as possible. In all these definitions we can see that the common element is summarizing the main points of the body of the text while preserving the essence of the contents. Ahmed (2003) says that a *precis* is therefore, an abridgment of a given passage, briefly expressing its precise meaning. It is generally defined as a summary of given passage, but it is something more dignified, more definitely literary. It is never merely a summary. A summary may consist of disconnected facts but a *precis* should be a connected and a well-knit piece of narrative, possessing all the qualities of an independent original composition. It should be free from elegance of diction and style. It should be couched in a writer's own words. All these differences must be kept in mind by the teacher and conveyed to the students as well. A deeper analysis of these definitions indicates that *précis* writing is primarily language skill oriented. Sood (2006) opines that the word *précis* is a French word which may mean summary, substance, abridgement, abstract, condensed statement or epitome. All these words convey more or less the same meaning. Mitra (2006) states that language is an essential element of the *précis*. The *précis* cannot and should not be written in a pedantic or showy style. Through a short and expressive language, a far larger sense is conveyed than with ordinary words and the student *precis* should practice in this art of writing a good language. Azad (2006) states that *precis* is an exercise of trimming the superfluous words from a passage like an experienced and vigilant gardener who chops off the unnecessary things and foliage of the plants in order to give it a beautiful look. Thus, a *precis* is a brief piece of composition, continuous in narration and definite in meaning.

It is interesting to note that nearly all definitions indicate that *precis* writing is one of the major language writing skills that requires practice to master and thorough understanding of the language being handled. Aslam (2008) defines *precis* as a clear, effective and logical brief summary of essential thought of a detailed composition selection. By combining these comments, it can be said that although *précis* writing is summarizing, it still requires coherent ideas. A thorough knowledge and understanding of grammar rules is the basic requirement of *précis* writing skill. Shahid (2002) quotes Eckersley and writes that the rules of grammar are like the laws of nature. The laws were not made for nature to obey, but are simply a few facts which wise men have observed as to the way, nature acts. Hyland (2003) is of the opinion that writing in second language requires not only grammatical competence but also cognitive and communicative skills. As *precis* writing is a combination of reading comprehension and written production, so, it is considered a complex activity in ESL context. Shi (2014) says that most of the ESL learners copy sentences directly from the source text. It affects badly students' critical approach as well as the quality of their summaries. Choy and Lee (2012) examined the effects of teaching paraphrasing skills to ESL learners and reported that the students showed significant improvement in summary writing abilities. All these definitions show that *précis* writing teaches various sub skills such as assimilation, reading, summarizing and language skills which are very important for English language writing in general. Nunan (2004) also believes that task-based activities encourage learner participation and enhance writing performance in second language classrooms. Islam, Mustafa and Aroosha (2025) have a different view. They believe that there is no doubt that conventional methods focus on grammatical

accuracy and correctness of structure but ignore the writing process itself. Consequently, mechanical writing habits develop in students but not analytical and creative writing skills.

Methodology

Research has been defined as a systematic approach to searching for answers to questions. It is the act of gathering new information. The questionnaire is not just a way of finding out about the students. It is also a way of letting them know the kind of goal setting and self-analysis expected of them. This research has been undertaken to know how précis is taught and learnt at the graduation level. The purpose of this research is to find out the problems or difficulties students face in précis writing. Are the students satisfied with the teaching methodologies? Do the teachers consider précis writing a best way to teach a language for writing purposes? Has this skill a great value in practical life? What are teachers' views about this skill? Are teachers satisfied with the methods and techniques they are using to teach the skill of précis writing? Do the teachers want to bring or use new or innovative ideas to make it more effective, beneficial and useful for students? If students use this skill in practical life, what kind of advantages they can take from it.

The researcher chose quantitative methodology to conduct research and to examine suitability and effectiveness of conventional and innovative teaching methods in teaching précis writing. The most appropriate research design is Experimental research because the researcher can easily compare the impact of different approaches on students' performance. so, the study has used a pre-test and post-test control group design where participants have been divided in two different groups that is control group and experimental group. The control group was given instruction through conventional teaching methods, on the other hand, the experimental group was taught using innovative teaching strategies like collaborative learning, peer discussion, and process-based writing activities. The results and performance of the groups were compared before and after the instructional treatment. In research paper the researcher also prepared a questionnaire to be circulated amongst students and teachers. Two types of questionnaires were prepared. One for the teachers who are teaching at the graduation level and other for the students who are studying at graduation level. Questionnaires have been made to know the response of the teachers and students about précis writing. In order to get a variety of sampling the questionnaire was distributed among twenty teachers and forty students from four different government colleges.

Students of graduation level were selected from different colleges. The students belonged to similar academic background and possessed English proficiency. The students were randomly divided into two equal groups. Random division is used to minimize bias and ensure equal learning opportunities for both groups. The students were between 18-21year old. All the students are studying in English medium colleges. These students have shown great interest in learning précis writing and filling the questionnaire. They also shared with the researcher their problems about studies frankly. They want to get the proper knowledge about précis writing. According to them, mostly teachers do not take much interest to motivate them about their studies.

Data Analysis

The collected data are analyzed quantitatively to determine the effectiveness of the two teaching methods.

Statistical Analysis

The researcher compares:

- Pre-test and post-test scores within each group

- Post-test scores between control and experimental groups

The following statistical techniques are used:

Mean Score Analysis

The mean scores of both groups are calculated to measure overall performance improvement.

Formula for Mean:

$$\bar{x} = \frac{\sum x}{n}$$

Where:

- $\bar{x}$ = mean score
- $\sum x$ = total scores
- n = number of participants

Percentage Analysis

Percentage improvement is calculated to examine the level of progress in students' précis writing skills.

$$\text{Percentage Improvement} = \frac{\text{Post-test Score} - \text{Pre-test Score}}{\text{Pre-test Score}} \times 100$$

Independent Sample t-test

An independent sample t-test is used to determine whether the difference between the two groups is statistically significant.

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\frac{s_1^2}{n_1} + \frac{s_2^2}{n_2}}}$$

Where:

- $\bar{x}_1$ = mean of control group
- $\bar{x}_2$ = mean of experimental group
- s_1^2 and s_2^2 = variances
- n_1 and n_2 = number of participants

The t-test helps determine whether innovative teaching methods significantly improve précis writing compared to conventional methods.

Table 1: Sample Data Analysis Table

Group	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Improvement
Control Group	10.2	13.4	+3.2
Experimental Group	10.5	17.8	+7.3

The table may indicate that the experimental group demonstrates greater improvement compared to the control group.

Interpretation of Results

If the post-test scores of the experimental group are significantly higher than those of the control group, the study will reject the null hypothesis and accept the alternative hypothesis. This would suggest that innovative teaching methods are more effective for teaching précis writing.

The findings may further indicate that collaborative and process-oriented activities improve students' coherence, summarization skills, vocabulary use, and critical thinking abilities more effectively than traditional lecture-based instruction.

Data Analysis of Questionnaires

This report presents a comprehensive comparative analysis of students' perceptions versus teacher expectations regarding Précis Writing Skills. The study utilizes a multi-dimensional approach, integrating three key datasets: a Gap Analysis between teachers and students, an independent survey on Teacher Perceptions, and a diagnostic survey on Student Difficulties. Statistical techniques including weighted mean scores, gap calculation, and graphical visualization were used to identify critical areas for pedagogical improvement.

Objectives of the Analysis

The objectives of this analysis were:

- To quantify the disparity between teacher provision and student perception.
- To evaluate the severity of gaps in instructional support and difficulty perception.
- To identify specific grammatical, vocabulary, and motivational challenges faced by students.
- To assess the alignment of current teaching strategies with student needs.
- To provide data-driven recommendations for enhancing writing skills.

The researcher prepared two questionnaires to be circulated amongst students and teachers. One questionnaire was for the teachers who are teaching at the graduation level and other for the students who are studying at graduation level. In order to get a variety of sampling the questionnaire was distributed among twenty teachers and forty students from four different institutions. Comparative questionnaire and diagnostic survey methods were used for data collection. 5-point Likert Scale was used in questionnaire.

Statistical Techniques Used

- Weighted Mean Score Analysis
- Gap Analysis (Student Mean - Teacher Mean)
- Severity Classification
- Descriptive Statistics
- Data Visualization using R Programming
- Software Used: R Programming Language

Summary of Findings

The integrated analysis revealed significant discrepancies between how teachers perceive their instruction and how students experience it.

Major Findings

The most severe disconnect was found in "Teacher Encouragement." While teachers rated their encouragement highly (Mean: 4.60), students perceived significantly less support (Mean: 3.88), resulting in a critical negative gap of -0.72. Students perceive Précis writing as considerably more difficult (Mean: 4.28) than teachers anticipate (Mean: 3.95). This positive gap (+0.33) suggests teachers may be underestimating the cognitive load placed on students. A notable gap (-0.48) exists in "Dictionary Use," indicating that while teachers expect frequent usage, students are not utilizing

dictionaries as effectively or frequently as intended. Teachers believe the current instruction level is appropriate (Mean: 4.10), whereas students struggle at this "Intermediate Level" (Mean: 3.65), highlighting a pacing mismatch. Beyond the gaps, student diagnostics revealed that technical weaknesses in punctuation, tense checking, and unfamiliar vocabulary are primary sources of frustration, contributing to the perception that the skill is "boring and difficult."

Statistical Results

The statistical analysis focused on the seven key indicators visualized in the comparative chart.

Table 2: Comparative Gap Analysis Summary

Skill Area	Student Mean	Teacher Mean	Gap (St - T)	Status
Teacher Encourages	3.88	4.60	-0.72	Critical Gap
Dictionary Use	4.12	4.60	-0.48	High Gap
Intermediate Level	3.65	4.10	-0.45	High Gap
Précis Difficulty	4.28	3.95	+0.33	Moderate Gap
Problem Identification	3.88	4.00	-0.12	Aligned
One-word Substitutions	4.20	4.25	-0.05	Aligned
Grammar Skills	4.05	4.00	+0.05	Aligned

Note: Negative Gap indicates Teacher score is higher; Positive Gap indicates Student score is higher

Visual Representations

Figure 1: Diverging Bar Chart illustrating the magnitude of gaps across skill areas

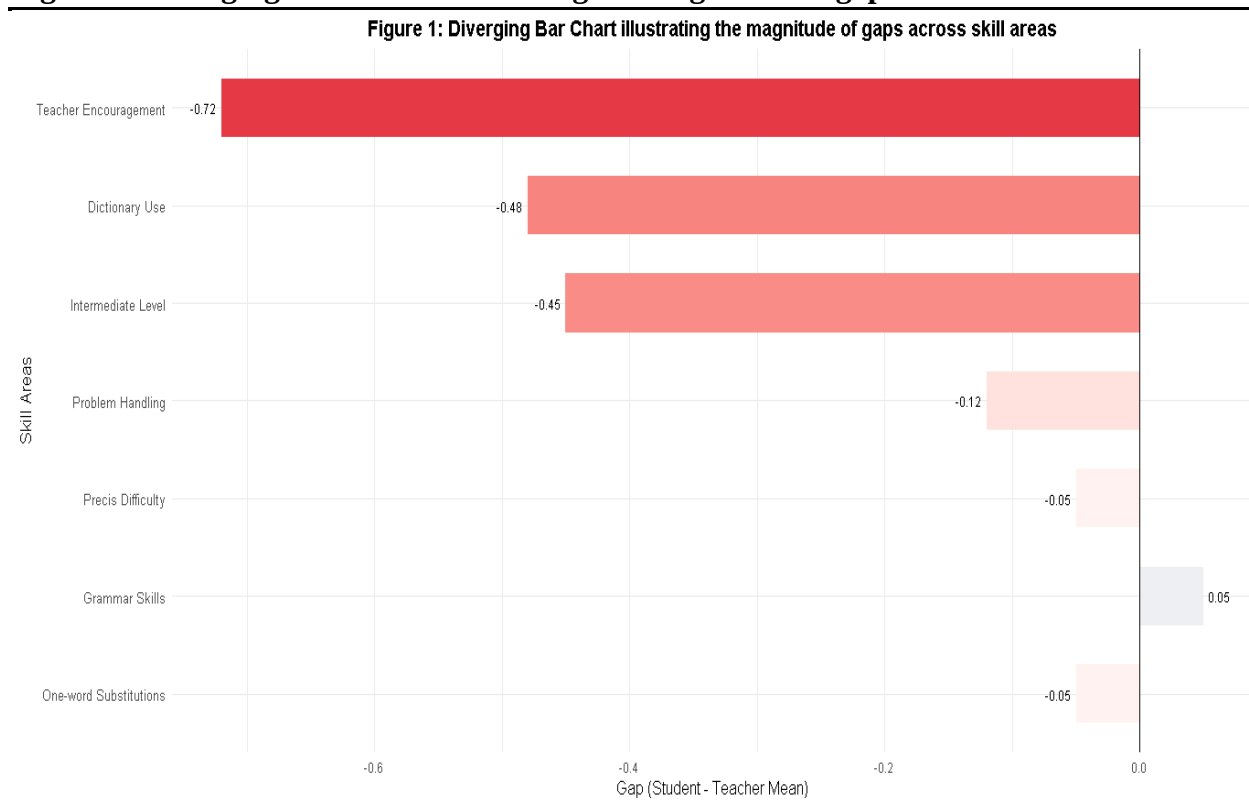
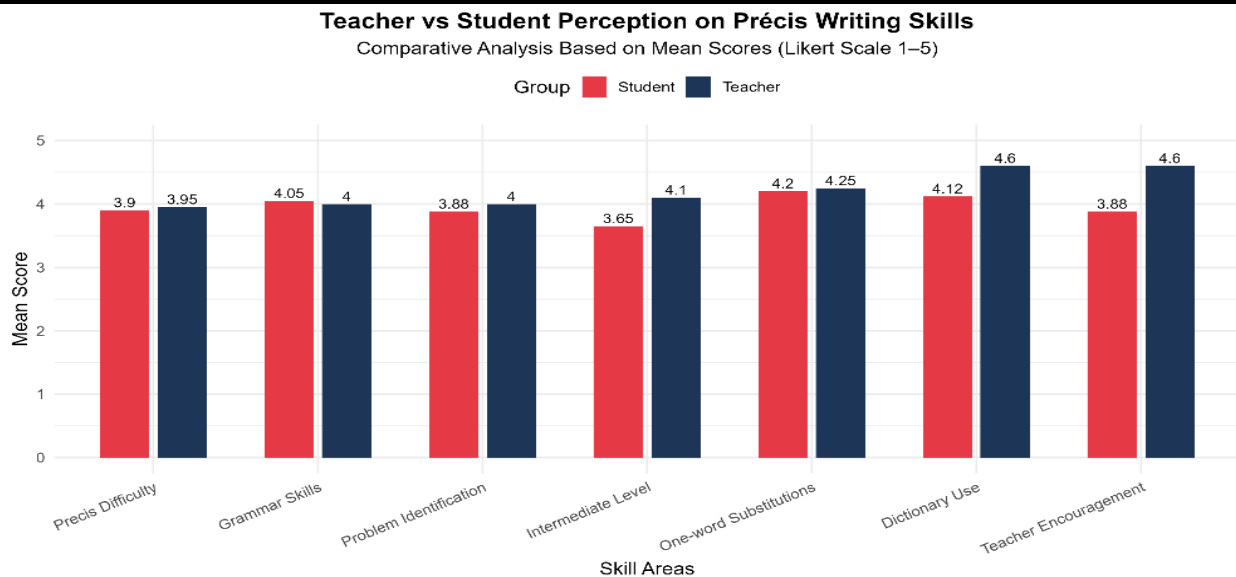


Figure 2: Comparative Bar Chart showing side-by-side mean scores

Interpretation

The results indicate a "Pedagogical Misalignment." While there is strong consensus on technical aspects like Grammar and One-word Substitutions (where gaps are negligible), the human element of teaching shows significant strain.

The massive gap in Teacher Encouragement (-0.72) suggests that current methods of motivation are not resonating with students. Furthermore, the Difficulty Miscalculation (+0.33) implies that teachers view the course material as accessible, while students are struggling to cope. This misalignment likely contributes to the low student engagement and the feeling that the subject is "boring," as identified in the supplementary student data.

Conclusion

After conducting the research, the researcher has come to the conclusion that if the existing situation of teaching précis writing remains the same, the fault lies not with the students but with the teachers. The existing and traditional methods of teaching précis writing are inappropriate, uninteresting and less yielding. In this age of technology, the teachers should not stick to the old and boring methods to harness the creativity of the students, rather they should try new ways to make their teaching inspiring and effective to fuel the productive skill of the students i.e. précis writing. It is essential for a successful teacher to be academically well trained in the subject he teaches. There is something wrong with the way the teachers are teaching précis writing.

The traditional methods of teaching précis writing are not sufficient to spark a light in the imagination of the students who often get bored at the thought of précis writing skill. The reason is that the teachers do not work with missionary spirit. They make no effort to cultivate the intellect of the students. It may be concluded that the main emphasis of teaching précis writing should be on application and practice of different rules and techniques of teaching précis writing. A précis is a structural unit and one must keep in mind all the rules and techniques while making précis of a paragraph. Once a student learns how to make a good précis, he will need to practice this skill. If the teacher's role is of a facilitator and the student is eager to learn, précis writing through functional methodology can be best taught and good results can be expected.

The study concludes that while the technical foundations of Précis Writing are being taught, there is a significant disconnect in support and difficulty perception. By addressing these gaps, specifically by increasing visible encouragement and acknowledging the high difficulty level faced by students—the department can significantly improve students' confidence, engagement, and interest in learning precis writing skill.

Recommendations

Teachers should adopt more tangible methods of encouragement, such as specific constructive feedback, to bridge the -0.72 perception gap. Given the high perceived difficulty, break down complex texts into smaller, manageable segments before expecting full précis execution. Integrate structured dictionary exercises into class time to close the utilization gap (-0.48) and build student independence. Conduct targeted sessions on punctuation and tenses to address the specific technical barriers causing student frustration. Re-evaluate the "Intermediate Level" texts to ensure they match the actual proficiency level of the student cohort.

Precis writing should be made interesting both for the teachers and students. It depends on teachers; a good teacher can facilitate learning very effectively. Undue emphasis on grammar does not develop the four basic skills of the language learner. So, such type of teaching should be abolished and teachers must try to enable the student to apply the rules of precis writing perfectly. Rules of grammar should be taught according to their application in practical speaking or writing. Theoretical learning is forgotten by students soon.

Arrangements should be made for professional training courses. New methods and techniques of teaching precis writing should be introduced and teachers should get proficiency in using those techniques for better understanding of students. Text books must also be changed. Text books for intensive study should present selected and graded techniques, methods and structures. Teachers should encourage and motivate every student equally. They should give students more and more writing assignments as home tasks and check them regularly. Before attempting precis writing, the students must be proficient in grammatical rules, tense and structure of a sentence. It is well said that constant practice makes man perfect. The students must be given plenty of practice in precis writing skills. They should be told how to condense lines, use one-word substitutions and make one third summary of paragraphs. The teachers must emphasize on clarity of ideas.

It is, therefore, strongly recommended that the teachers themselves must be proficient in precis writing skill. They should keep learning and improving their own knowledge about precis writing skill. The teachers should have a great command over the subject which they are teaching. It should be kept in mind that the teacher is model for the students. He is an authority in the class. So, he should adopt such a method of teaching as may be helpful to attract the students' attention. Lack of teachers' guidance is perhaps the most important problem of the students.

Precis writing should be introduced at the intermediate level or even in the early stages in order to cope with the challenges of English language. Students are ready and willing to accept the challenges. The teachers should have a discussion in class on certain topic before assigning them written work as home task. Arrangements should be made for students' workshop. They should be told how to write on special and critical topics. There should be competitions among students on writing different topics and the participants should be encouraged in different ways. Let the students guess the title of the written activity, so they may be confident about their own abilities and skills.

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