

Online Collaborative Strategies of ESL Learners in Precis Writing

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Abstract:

It can be difficult to make the switch to online learning, and there are questions about how well students will be able to work together on group writing assignments. This study aims to identify the synchronous collaboration strategies employed by ESL students and how they affect their precis writing. Purposive sampling was employed in this study to select twenty-five (25) ESL students. Data was gathered using interviews, observation, and checklists as part of an explanatory mixed-method study design. According to the study's findings, students gain strategic thinking skills through online collaborative writing assignments; they also get better at summarizing, working in teams, and communicating important ideas in texts; and they stress the value of editing their work and utilizing both conventional and modern writing tools. Through the provision of resources, technology, and mentorship, educational institutions should establish settings that support collaborative writing.

Keywords: synchronous, collaborative strategies, precis

Introduction

Millions of students were impacted by the widespread shutdown of schools due to the worldwide pandemic. Online learning was swiftly embraced by schools, necessitating adjustments to lecture, activities, and assessment techniques. There were difficulties brought about by this change, particularly for learners collaborating in group writing projects. A new platform had to be adopted and alternate teaching methods had to be developed because the instructors were caught off guard by this sudden change. When using the new platform, some users ran into unforeseen technical issues such as disruptions in video conferencing and issues with internet access (Serhan, 2020). In today's knowledge-driven economy, cooperative connection is crucial, claim Krishnan et al. (2018).

According to MacDaniels, M., Pfund C. & Barnicle K. (2016), synchronous learning involves teachers and students interacting in real time, much as in a traditional classroom. Research, planning, idea development, writing, editing, and reviewing are just a few of the roles and tasks that collaborative writing entails during synchronous learning (Posner & Baeker, 1992). For collaborative writing to be successful, maintaining social relationships and finishing assignments are essential (Janssen et al., 2012). Enhancing students' writing skills occurred through collaborative writing, as it provided students with increased opportunities to exchange opinions with peers. This collaborative exchange fostered a collective pool of ideas, contributing to more precise and refined compositions.

However, in a face-to-face learning environment, learners participate actively by presenting options or substitutes, giving succinct lessons on particular topics, making and accepting suggestions, establishing,

reacting to cues, and asking for confirmation, giving other students advice, and providing definitions (Saeed & Ghazali, 2017). Summarization is a reading comprehension processes that students must use to extract meaning from their reading in order to write. This method improves knowledge and makes it easier to comprehend the main ideas contained in certain text messages (Huan et al., 2017). Stated differently, summarizing was one of the tasks that the strategies mentioned earlier may be utilized in the classroom. According to Panggalih (2020) and Oracion et al. (2015), a summary is a brief text that conveys the essential elements of the original event, document, or conversation while leaving out specific details. Refreshing memory and reducing the need for many article reads during research are two benefits of effective summaries. It must be concise, rationally arranged, and devoid of unnecessary details, just like when writing a precis.

The literal meaning of the French word *précis*, which is pronounced pray-see, is a statement that has been trimmed or reduced. Put another way, it is a summary or abstract. It is comparable to a restatement, a translation, or a paraphrase. Contrarily, a *précis* just summarizes the main ideas and points in a paragraph—whether it be a single, several, or even the entire essay (Thurber, 2016). Furthermore, producing a precis requires the synthesis of complicated material into a clear, succinct summary that reflects the collaborative learning process. This is a cognitively difficult activity (Storch, 2013).

A Rhetorical *Précis* summarizing template, according to Panggalih, W. B., Cahyono B.Y. (2020), could help students efficiently produce precise and accurate summaries of the source texts. In order to convey essential information that is rationally arranged, coherently integrated, and devoid of unnecessary details, a precis must be succinct. Besides, it's a streamlined synopsis that strips out everything superfluous (including explanations and decorations) to restate the original text's reasoning, arrangement, and main points (Oracion, 2018).

Other studies emphasize the conventional method of precis writing, which is generally completed asynchronously. In a collaborative online writing learning environment, however, the most challenging assignment a student completes is writing a precis. As such, it is necessary to comprehend the process of writing precis in a synchronous setting. Additionally, this study aims to determine the online collaboration strategies that students use when working on precis writing task.

The study examines the efficacy of synchronous instruction and online collaborative writing tools in improving the performance of ESL students in higher education settings. It integrates Piaget's Constructivism Theory, emphasizing the active involvement of students in line with the 4Cs (Krishnan, 2018). It highlights learners' active roles, which are aligned with the 4Cs, and explores how synchronous instruction and online collaborative writing tools can help ESL learners excel in postsecondary situations (Krishnan, 2018). Harasim's Online Collaborative Learning Theory (OCL) extends constructivism by emphasizing discourse in intellectual convergence through idea generation, organization, and agreement stages (Bates, 2015).

Prior research suggests that OCL positively influences academic progress, fostering collaboration and engagement. Online Collaborative Learning (OLC) benefits academic progress by aiding teachers in enhancing precis writing skills for English teaching purposes. When performing research, as it saves reading the summaries of significant articles again, this might be very beneficial in terms of refreshing one's memory, Matsueda (2015). It also assists learners in co-authoring papers and acquiring the knowledge of writing precis, a crucial skill for academic writers to efficiently summarize research articles and avoid repetitive readings.

Furthermore, research has brought attention to the beneficial impact of interaction patterns in web-based collaborative writing on the overall quality of collaboratively written texts (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Valizadeh, 2022). This underscores the significance of language educators enhancing their proficiency in utilizing new digital tools for academic purposes. Developing such proficiency enables educators to provide diverse opportunities for language learners to refine their second language (L2) writing skills (Elola & Oskoz, 2010; Zheng & Warschauer, 2017; Valizadeh, 2022). Additionally, scholars have argued for L2 writing instructors to embrace multiple modes and consider a multimodal approach to aid learners in improving their writing proficiency (Valizadeh, 2022).

This study looks at the transition to online learning, with a particular emphasis on online collaborative writing for ESL students' precis writing. Students are divided into teams for the pre-writing, writing, and post-writing phases of the process. Online collaboration writing methodologies are investigated in this study. Tools for information visualization were utilized to examine student interaction while considering how technology affects participation. For productive cooperation, practical elements like communication technology, and handling technological problems are included.

The study's goal is to determine the collaborative strategies used by ESL learners in synchronous classrooms to create a precis and how these techniques affect the caliber of the precis the students generate. It intends to study the following questions in particular:

1. What are the collaborative synchronous strategies in Precis writing employed by ESL learners?
2. How can the use of synchronous collaborative techniques improve precise writing?

Methodology

A mixed-method explanatory research strategy was used for this investigation. Studies using mixed methods have found that this specific design is the easiest to understand (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). The explanatory mixed-method research design is a step-by-step procedure in which a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase are conducted first in the investigation. Finding online collaborative techniques for precis writing was the first phase's goal. The goal of phase 2, which is qualitative, is to determine how online collaborative tactics improved precis writing.

The participants of this study consist of ESL learners at a private, sectarian academic institution. The participants were chosen using the purposive sample technique based on the following criteria: active participation in online collaboration and précis writing, successful peer collaboration, a strong passion for the subject, a dependable internet connection, technological proficiency, and the capacity to clearly express ideas and experiences in précis writing. By getting parents' and students' informed consent and obtaining the principal's approval, the study adhered to ethical guidelines, prioritizing privacy and confidentiality, and providing comprehensive briefings to students, along with clear and easily understandable consent forms.

Under phase 1, numerical information was gathered using a checklist. This checklist seeks to identify the synchronous collaboration techniques that students use to complete particular projects. A frequency scale was used to score the respondents' use of these strategies: "always" (4), "often" (3), "sometimes" (2), and "never" (1). Phase 2 involved conducting interviews with the chosen ESL students. The purpose of these interviews was to learn more about the students' cooperation practices in-depth. Students were encouraged to openly share their experiences by using open-ended questions.

The checklist data was analyzed using statistical methods as part of the phase 1 data analysis process. To ascertain the predominance of different cooperative tactics, this probably involved computing frequencies

and percentages. Thematic analysis or content analysis will be used during the qualitative phase to find recurrent themes and patterns in the interview material. To give an in-depth knowledge of the synchronous collaborative tactics students employed in précis writing, Phase 2 was matched with the quantitative results.

Results and discussion

Table 1: Collaborative Writing Strategies Frequently Used

Writing Precis	Synchronous Collaborative Strategies Used	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation
	Sharing ideas and brainstorming.	4.00	Always
	Analyzing the topic to be used in précis writing.	4.00	Always
	Participating in a video conference.	4.00	Always
	Presenting and processing of information.	4.00	Always
	General Weighted Mean	3.87	
During	Drafting/ writing the main message and theme of the passage.	3.96	Always
	Noting down the general idea of the passage	3.96	Always
	Conveying the main message and theme of the passage	4.00	Always
	General Weighted Mean	3.68	
After	Editing grammatical structures.	4.00	Always
	Proofreading is also done to check for punctual errors, typo mistakes, formatting issues, spelling errors, and grammatical mistakes.	4.00	Always
	General Weighted Mean	3.92	

Prior to writing the précis with a weighted mean of 4.00, a variety of strategies and techniques were used, including brainstorming and idea sharing, assessing the subject for the précis, conducting a video chat, and presenting and analyzing data. The weighted mean shows that in order to develop a written piece, the students brainstormed, interacted, discussed, consulted, and worked together. Through video chats, they came up with suggestions about how best to use that knowledge. Role assignment was found to be frequently employed, and this observation suggests that it is frequently used. With a weighted mean of 4.00, the highest while writing the précis showed a consistent interpretation of always. This underscored the effectiveness of role assignment in effectively expressing the passage's primary idea and meaning. This means that students generate and contribute in writing when they have conversations and advice about the main idea and subject of the paragraph. Modifying grammatical structures and checking for punctuation flaws, problems in grammar, spelling, formatting, and spelling was the highest-ranking method after writing a précis, with a weighted mean of 4.00 and an interpretation of always. This suggests that what "sounds good" on paper is the foundation for revision.

According to the study, students actively employed a variety of prewriting techniques, such as information processing, brainstorming, idea sharing, topic assessment, and video conferences. This demonstrated their

enthusiastic participation in group idea generating. Communicating the key idea and concept was always stressed during the precis writing process, underscoring the significance of having these discussions with others. With Zoom and chat boxes being preferred for text creation, students used writing programs and tools less frequently. But after writing, they regularly used editing and proofreading techniques, which demonstrated a strong commitment to generating excellent work. The frequent but inconsistent use of sentence structure and paper rewriting suggests that these strategies are widely employed but not always used rigorously.

Collaborative Strategies' Effect on Writing Precis

It is clear from the data collected—which concentrated on how synchronous collaborative strategies improve the precis writing process—that group collaboration is essential to completing this assignment successfully. The participants discussed their perspectives and experiences with synchronous activities in group settings. The results demonstrated that while students found precis writing difficult these kinds of exercises are participatory, significant, and helpful for everyone. Collaborating in the group environment promoted idea sharing, brainstorming, and the synthesis of diverse viewpoints and insights to create a cohesive and thorough Precis. This cooperative method not only made the process easier, but it also made sure that pertinent stuff was included and unnecessary content was left out. As a result of encouraging meaningful engagement and information sharing within a group setting, the findings ultimately revealed that synchronous collaborative strategies did, in fact, improve the Precis writing process.

Feedback from the respondents made it evident that they clearly preferred some collaborative techniques. Because they were so successful in raising the caliber of Precis, brainstorming, proofreading, and outlining were mentioned as especially preferred techniques. Through brainstorming sessions, the diverse group works together to integrate their ideas into a cohesive concept. It was acknowledged that cooperative efforts had a crucial role in streamlining and organizing the procedure. People were able to gain from one other's ideas and insights in addition to streamlining the process through teamwork. A student who participated in the interview stressed the importance of virtual or online connection in quickly generating ideas, including spoken communication led by the leader who starts and guides activities. Synchronous collaborative tactics clearly have an impact on Precis writing because they help with the idea generation, passage comprehension, and, in the end, producing well-researched and useful Precis.

The respondents to the study indicate a high preference for collaborative methods, with the particular preference given to brainstorming, proofreading, and outlining as beneficial strategies for raising the quality of Precis writing. The emphasis on diverse group collaboration, both in physical and virtual settings, indicates a significant contribution to streamlining the Precis writing process. This aligns with Krishnan et al.'s (2019) assertion that synchronous collaborative writing is a real-time, social, and technical process involving planning, drafting, and revising a text with others.

This collaborative approach encourages structured methodologies and allows individuals to benefit from a variety of insights. The synchronous collaborative strategies highlighted in the interview play a crucial role in facilitating the idea gathering, comprehension of passages, and the creation of precise and well-informed summaries. Students have the opportunity to improve their precis skills while working in groups and creating clear and concise passages. While reading and analyzing the passage, it assessed the breadth of the student's knowledge, and the challenge presented was the necessity for improvement in understanding the content. These techniques, which the participants all agreed were beneficial, helped to

make the otherwise difficult work more doable and enjoyable. The data, taken as a whole, highlights how synchronous collaborative tactics can improve Precis writing, making it more effective and instructive. Collective prewriting exercises and synchronous collaborative writing were successful in raising students' proficiency in precis writing, encouraging group projects, and strengthening their comprehension of the central idea and subject of a chapter. Students also underlined the value of editing and the application of both conventional and contemporary writing instruments.

Group activities enhance clear and understandable passages, improving precis-writing skills. Student assessments highlight the need for better content understanding. Collaborative strategies are perceived as helpful, making precis writing more manageable and rewarding. Lingard (2021) suggests that for effective collaborative writing, it is essential to dissect the various components of "writing" and establish agreed-upon strategies for coordinating these activities.

Synchronous collaborative methods positively impact the efficiency and educational value of the process, improving students' skills in conveying main messages. This effectiveness extends to collaborative prewriting and writing, emphasizing the significance of revision and use of both contemporary and conventional instruments based on student feedback.

Conclusions and Recommendations

In spite of the fact that students find this task difficult, this study examined synchronous collaboration tactics in precis writing and found that they produced favorable impressions and enjoyable experiences. A significant dedication to the writing process was clearly shown by students participating in collaborative writing sessions, as seen by the quantitative and qualitative data. They enhanced the quality of their work by effectively applying prewriting tactics, concentrating on communicating the core idea and theme during precis writing, and giving editing and proofreading a lot of attention. There was, however, room for development in a few areas, including the need for a stronger topic outline, the accurate source citation to avoid inadvertent plagiarism, and more frequent idea and phrase restructuring. Teachers should give advice and assign exercises to assist students become more skilled at outlining topics. The organization and coherence of group writing assignments can be greatly improved by using precis and well-structured outlines. It is recommended that educators integrate instruction on appropriate crediting and citation methods into group writing assignments in order to tackle the problem of source citation. By doing this, academic integrity will be upheld and pupils will be able to avoid clear of accidental plagiarism.

Students showed a dedication to editing and proofreading, but more focus should be placed on rewriting concepts and sentence patterns for writing that is more sophisticated and polished. As a crucial component of the group writing process, promote peer review and editing. Education professionals should provide training sessions or materials that acquaint students with practical writing software and technologies, considering the decreased usage of writing applications and tools. As a result, writing sessions might be more productive and collaborative.

Instructors might encourage the use of role assignment in groups even though it was acknowledged. Having clearly defined roles helps facilitate collaboration and guarantee that each member of the team participates in an efficient manner. Teachers and students can learn a lot from ongoing video analysis of collaborative writing sessions. Finding more areas of strength and improvement should be incorporated into the learning process.

Through the provision of resources, technology, and mentorship, educational institutions should establish settings that support collaborative writing. Students will benefit from this as they continue to hone their

collaborative writing abilities. These suggestions can be put into practice by educators and organizations to help students in their collaborative writing projects more effectively, which will improve their writing abilities and academic performance in the end.

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