

# Chapter One

## Introduction

This chapter provides description of the theoretical framework of the study. It particularly presents the context of the study, statement of the problems, the research objectives, and the research significance. The chapter also presents research questions, the research hypotheses, the research methodology, and limits of the study.

### 1.1. Context of the Study

Punctuation is an element of text writing that plays an important role in determining the meaning of a text. Despite its textual needs in writing, it seems to be a rather neglected area of study in linguistics Garavelli (2003). This negligence is widely observed in the errors made by the students of Sudanese secondary schools in Nyala Locality in writing. In addition to that, they misapply punctuation marks in writing. In punctuating texts, it was observed that there were various problems such as, errors, omission and unawareness of using appropriate punctuation when composing them. This reflects a picture of students' weakness as they use punctuation.

According to McCuen & Winkler (2000) punctuation errors occur with the omission or misuse of one of the punctuation marks. It is necessary for students to avoid them and acquire their correct uses. Their omission, misuse or misunderstanding as students use punctuation marks in a sentence might change the meaning of that sentence.

Notice the following sentences.

**Example 1:** *A woman, without her man, is nothing.*

**Example 2:** *A woman, without her, man is nothing.*

The first example indicates that if a woman is not with her man, then she is nothing, or not worth anything. The second one is the reverse. It indicates that without a woman, a man is nothing. It may also be talking

about mankind. Since woman is the base of society and is the nurturing mother, without her, man could not exist. Nunberg (1990), states that, punctuation marks are systems of signs the functions of which are to assist students of English language to use them correctly in writing. Similarly, he emphasizes that punctuation marks are used in writing to imitate speech. When students speak they use voice inflections, stops, pauses, and even body language to indicate their meaning. For example, when they are asked a question their voice rises at the end of a sentence and this inflective rise is a vocal question mark. When students make a statement their voice drops at the end of the sentence and this inflective drop is a vocal full stop. When they verbally list items they pause after each item. This verbal pause is a vocal comma.

Thus, it is necessary for students to put the correct punctuation marks on the correct pauses as punctuating sentences. This will convey correctly their ideas, clarify and emphasize the meaning of the sentences in such a way that the readers understand each sentence quickly and easily on first reading. Oshima & Hogue (1991) who agrees with McCuen & Winkler (2000), states that it is important for students to choose the right punctuation marks to punctuate sentences. Since the wrong or misuse of punctuation could change the meaning.

See the examples below:

**Example 1:** *Eat children.*

**Example 2:** *Eat, children.*

The difference between the two sentences is only influenced by the punctuation marks that make a different meaning. Both sentences are commands, but the first sentence would be correct only in a society where people eat human flesh. It is clear that these sentences take the view that there are correct and incorrect ways of using punctuation. Each

exhortation suggests that punctuation marks can be used to make clear certain relationships in the text.

According to Bram (1995) who shares the views of above linguists sees that the correct uses of punctuation marks are indispensable to make accurate writing on one hand. Misused punctuation marks, using a question mark for instance, instead of a full stop at the end of a sentence may convey different message, namely a question, not a statement on the other hand.

In this regard, Rumki (2005) makes a point of view that, teachers need to teach students to value punctuation marks as much as letters and words for conveying meaning. The wrong use of punctuation can interrupt the flow of ideas and change the meaning. Doran (1998) who agreed with Bram (1995) has explored ways of including rules of punctuation marks for students to acquire in order to apply them correctly to avoid punctuation errors in writing. Their lack might cause many difficulties to the writer who needs his text to be understood.

Thus, the above mentioned review of punctuation marks indicates that they are less considered by some students. Some of them seem they ignore their uses and some might regard that the presence of these marks in writing would not influence their writing and would be understood by readers. They just write and punctuate their writing automatically without having enough attention towards the importance of punctuation marks. These possible causes of students' weakness in punctuation prompted the researcher to analyze punctuation errors made by the students of Sudanese secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

## **1.2. Statement of the Problem**

There are many causes of misapplying punctuation marks in writing. When punctuating a text, complicating problems as errors, confusions and unawareness of using punctuation marks appropriate may

be found. All these problems might influence readers' understanding towards students' writing. For instance, there are students who write “*Where are you from!*” readers might regard that the sentence is about exclamatory. Actually, students wanted to write interrogative sentence but they put incorrect punctuation mark on it.

As a result readers will confuse on how to understand that sentence; is it about asking or expressing anger. In addition to the difficulty of choosing the right punctuation mark and its appropriate place according to certain rules and sentence type construction. Richards, L & John, S. (2005) states a problem of using rules. They found that rules are seemingly arbitrary, boring and students do not know how to apply them. These views are expected to be the cause of the difficulties that students encounter in their writing tasks. These have been noticed during teaching; consequently, it exhorted the researcher to conduct this study.

Referring to the above problems, the present study aims to investigate the errors of punctuation marks made by the students through error analysis. Moreover, the study is an attempt to evaluate the current syllabus of English language being taught in secondary schools of which its punctuation might appear inadequate. Materials in SPINE (6) textbook are mostly literature-based. SPINE lacks the necessary punctuation activities which might develop students' competence.

Hence, it seems essential to investigate the different types of punctuation errors committed by students in writing. However, this might elevate students' understanding level and lessen punctuation errors. Moreover, the study seeks to find out the extent to which SPINE (6) textbook will provide sufficient punctuation teaching. It also seeks to find out whether or not SPINE (6) textbook contains fundamental punctuation exercises for students to practise.

Based on the explanation above, using the right punctuation is very important in students' writing. Students sometimes think that punctuation marks are little elements and never pay them consideration, but actually they have great effects to writing. If an error of punctuation is made in writing, it will confuse the readers. Readers could not perceive the goal of writers to understand what have been written.

Using correct punctuation marks need to be achieved when writing a text. Of course, text consists of many sentences and need a detailed correction. Punctuation is a part of teaching process and need to be considered by teachers. Sometimes, it is seen as a little thing, but actually it has a big effect which influences a written work quality.

The researcher attempts to write the research that has the purposes of finding some errors made by students as using punctuation in writing. It tries to analyze the errors made by third year students of Sudanese secondary schools in Nyala Locality. The researcher hoped the study results could give positive output for improving students' standard in punctuation writing.

### **1.3. Research Objectives**

Based on the problems of the study, the main objectives are as follows:

1. Errors in writing are inevitable among students of English. Hence, the study aims to analyze the errors commonly committed by students of secondary schools to determine the punctuation marks that need reinforcement.
2. The study aims to investigate the extent to which SPINE (6) lacks punctuation teaching.
3. The study aims to make an assessment to whether SPINE (6) contains sufficient exercises of punctuation marks for practice.

4. The study aims to investigate the different types of punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in writing in Nyala Locality. This might in turn, contribute to improving students' standard to use punctuation marks correctly.
5. Improving students' awareness of using punctuation marks if punctuation topics are introduced into the syllabus.

#### **1.4. Research Significance**

Referring to the research problems, the results of this study could give a useful contribution to the following:

1. The research findings are expected to support students having a good awareness of using punctuation appropriately in writing. They might be able to recognize their errors as using punctuation marks. They can learn from their errors and know how to correct them. It is expected that this study is capable to stimulate students to understand better to punctuate correctly. The study provides recommendations as remedies which might solve the problems students face in punctuation.
2. As for the teachers, this study can raise the awareness of punctuation to highlight some punctuation problems found in students' writing. The recommendations might support teachers to teach punctuation appropriately. At least, the teachers know the students' problem, in using punctuation marks in writing and how to manipulate them.
3. This study provides a feedback to the syllabus designers to improve SPINE textbooks by including punctuation as one of the writing teaching program. The findings are expected to serve as a guide to the syllabus designers to discover the teachers and students' needs.

4. The findings of the study are expected to help the writers of English in general to enrich their understanding of using punctuation marks correctly. Writers could utilize from the recommendations. They could be as reference to the writers in composing accurate writing.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

This study will try to provide answers for the following questions:

1. What are the punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in writing?
2. To what extent is there a lack of punctuation teaching at secondary schools provided by English teachers?
3. To what extent does English SPINE (6) provide sufficient exercises on punctuation marks?
4. To what extent is it possible to improve the standard of students through punctuation explanation in SPINE (6) textbook?

### **1.6. Research Hypotheses**

For the purpose of the study the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There are various types of punctuation errors committed by students of secondary schools in SPINE (6) textbook due to the wrong use of punctuation marks.
2. There is weakness in students of secondary schools' standard due to lack of punctuation teaching provided by teachers.
3. English SPINE (6) textbook does not provide sufficient exercises on punctuation marks for practice.
4. The students' performance in writing will significantly improve if punctuation specific topics are introduced into the syllabus.

## **1.7. Research Methodology**

The study will adopt descriptive analytical method for the analysis of punctuation errors in students' writing in secondary schools. For the study tools, forty teachers will be given a questionnaire to reflect their opinion regarding their students' punctuation errors. Eighty students will be selected from third year. They will be given pre-test and post-test contain sentences and a text in order to punctuate them.

For the validity and reliability of the questionnaire and the test, they will be measured by referring to English language experts' jury. Dr. Daleel Ahmed Eidam, Dr. Abdulbasit and Mrs. Safyia Ibrahim. SPSS statistical analysis will be used for reliability coefficient. The questionnaire will be distributed to the teachers of English to respond to its questions. The test will be administered to students to punctuate it. Test-retest will be used as pilot study.

## **1.8. Limits of the Study**

The study has two kinds of limits:

- 1. Limit of time:** The study will hopefully be carried out and applied in the scholastic year 2014 - 2015.
- 2. Limit of place:** The study will be applied and carried out in four Sudanese secondary schools in third year in Nyala Locality in South Darfur States.

## **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter reflects positive findings to punctuation errors that students encounter in writing. It is an introduction or background to the study in general. Therefore, the chapter contains the context of the study, the research problems, the objectives of the study, the research significance. It also contains the questions of the study, the hypotheses, research methodology and limits of the study.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Review of Literature**

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part reviews literature on theoretical framework of the study. It deals with general concepts of punctuation errors.

The second part surveys some previous studies pertinent to the research subject in order to see what the previous studies have affirmed at what this study is going to add.

#### **2.1. Part (1) Conceptual Framework**

Punctuation as a mainstream of writing mechanism causes difficulties to the students of Sudanese secondary schools. These difficulties somewhat let students commit punctuation errors. However, views of different linguists about punctuation errors will be reviewed.

##### **2.1.1. Punctuation Marks**

Ferreiro & Pontecorvo (1999), states that the knowledge of punctuation teaching is a part of sentences boundary of a text (pp. 544-545). Therefore, teachers need to teach students to end sentences of a text correctly. Similarly, Hansen, et al. (1998) sees that punctuation is a part of teaching writing mechanic. It has a big influence on the sentences of a written text. Moreover, it tells the readers when to pause or stop to emphasize the meaning of the sentences (p.109). Jones, (1997) however, argues that an English sentence is likely to contain three or four punctuation symbols. Students should learn to punctuate sentences with certain number of marks required (p. 86).

Elliott, (2006) agreed with Hansen, et al. (1998) that punctuation marks do the same things for sentences that road signs do. They tell the readers when to speed up, when to slow down and when to stop. These views are supported by Cappon, (2003) who sees punctuation as a remarkably subtle system of signals, signs, symbols and winks that keep

readers on road smoothly. Wilde, (1992) differs, to emphasize the difficulty of using punctuation marks to the low ability of understanding the correct uses of punctuation marks students have learned from their teachers.

The present study supports Gaines, (2002) who shows that sentences are standard textual units in punctuation marks applications. However, teachers should do their best to make them clear to remove ambiguity between the uses of the different types of punctuation marks.

On the other side, Messenger & Taylor (1989) state that, pauses of punctuation in spoken discourse perform various functions as regulating the rhythm of thought and articulation. Their lack in writing is partially compensated by punctuation marks. In this concern they emphasizes that in writing, punctuation takes the place of the sound features of pitch, volume, speed and physical gestures used in speech (p.162). The study of Bar-Aba, (2003) supports the view of Messenger & Taylor (1989) that punctuation marks are said to signify breathing, syntax and rhythm which include quotation marks and commas. These two are the most frequent ones that students commit errors on (p.1032). On the contrary, Parkes (1992) explains that punctuation marks are changed in several stages. Later, readers need texts to be punctuated by the writers because the marks affect sentences meaning. Teachers require teaching students to use the marks correctly. Of course, punctuation is the task of writers (students). They punctuate the text to convey their meaning and thought to be understood clearly by readers.

Teaching students to use punctuation through playing games in the classroom is a good practice that helps them using punctuation marks correctly. It depends on giving students punctuation marks to use them correctly in different types of unpunctuated sentences given by teachers. However, this type of practice might provide review in the classroom.

Also these games might provide if students are able to use correctly the marks with the sentences Seff Rubin (2006).

Daniel (2004) shows that, the uses of punctuation marks are different from one mark to another. Their wrong uses affect the meaning of the sentence and change it as:

**Example 1:** *Did you know the answer?*

**Example 2:** *Did you know the answer!*

The first example is a question and its answer is 'yes' or 'no' whereas the second one, there is doubt in knowing the answer.

Most opinions above confirm that punctuation errors occur with the incorrect uses of punctuation that affects sentence structure and meaning as well. Generally, the linguists dispute in views; but they do not fundamentally differ in significance and aims. According to the study purposes, wrong uses of punctuation marks on one hand, change the meaning of sentences. The correct uses of punctuation keep the writing clear and understood for the readers on the other hand.

### **2.1.2. Errors of Punctuation Marks**

Students might commit errors of punctuation marks during the writing. Therefore, teachers need to help them to avoid the errors they made while doing tasks. Making errors might assist teachers of English to provide their students with the necessary punctuation exercises for practice Gass and Selinker (2008:102).

On one hand, Richards and Sampson (1974) found that, punctuation errors let teachers to determine students' errors they might commit to remedy them. Punctuation errors being pinpointed could assist teachers to correct them during their writing. Therefore, it is important for students to acquire punctuation marks accurately and apply them in exercises. On the other hand, Jones (1994) claims that the correct insertion of punctuation marks requires different practices through

exercises exist in the syllabus. Levenson (1985) argues to see the correct uses of punctuation marks depends on knowing the different lengths of pauses. The following are types of errors students of secondary schools might commit in writing.

#### **2.1.2.1 Omission**

According to Quirk (1985) students should make use of punctuation marks to build connected sentences to make the text meaningful and understood. Nevertheless, they might commit errors when using punctuation marks in writing. Without a set of punctuation rules and practice controlled by teachers, student could omit punctuation marks in places where they are needed. This omission however, might increase the ambiguity at the level of sentences.

Moreover, Quirk (1985) states that any writing should present some important signals to help the readers to grasp the exact meaning or idea of it. Punctuation practice is very important to improve students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality in particular. The omission of punctuation marks seems to make the written represented texts hard to be read or understood. Furthermore, omission of punctuation may destroy the text output. Clifton (1995) and Adams (1992) supports Quirk (1985) that omission of punctuation marks usually has a strong effect on the text ambiguity and sentences might lose meaning. Similarly, Robinson (2002) has found out that omission of quotation marks in different sentences is mostly difficult. He mentioned the misuse of the full stop or question after the quotation marks is a common errors.

In this regard the omission of different marks and the wrong uses of punctuation marks are the most difficulty and common errors face secondary students in Nyala Locality in writing. Comma was inappropriately used to link two clauses, so it is omitted. It is the

common punctuation marks that confuse students to be used among word, phrases and sentences Al-Mutib (1989).

Truss, (2003) argues to see punctuation errors and many missing of commas, several wrongly inserted commas, missing hyphens, and a missing apostrophe, etc are related to grammatical bumbles.

Bayraklar (1996), Jones (1995) and Meyer (1986) emphasize on the correct uses of punctuation marks in text because it is an integral part of the writing. Thus, missed punctuation will make sentences run on.

#### **2.1.2.2 Erroneous Rules**

Angelillo (2002) states that, teachers often lament that many students do not know to put in the right punctuation marks when they write. Therefore, teachers need to find suitable ways of teaching punctuation which are necessary in conveying meaning. They might explain to students how to punctuate exercises, rather than giving them punctuation rules. They should show students the value of punctuation marks as much as letters and words for conveying meaning.

Robinson (2002) argues that teaching the uses of rules are very important, but rules themselves are insufficient. Unless students know their functions and explanation, they are too easily forgotten. Lewis Thomas, (1979) agrees with Robinson (2002) and argues the above views and states that there are no precise rules about punctuation. He points out that students possess the stops as the comma, the semicolon, the full stop and the colon. The question mark and the exclamation mark are speaking stop, they are indicators of tone.

Allen (2002) emphasizes on the role of step by step procedure via describing the basis of constructing sentences and how they are best expressed using the basic elements of punctuation as comma and full stop. Then he talked about the more complex issues of representing speech and using such punctuation marks as the colon and the

semicolon. He explained how to avoid the most common mistakes in punctuation such as using too many commas, or using the comma. According to Russell (1984) marks such as apostrophes, brackets, question mark and commas need explanation and practice to avoid errors secondary students commit. He argues that dealing with rules is much brief. Students might find them difficult. In this context, Menand (2004) added that such uses as nonrestrictive clauses should be preceded by a comma. He showed that it needs a rule to acquire to avoid making errors.

Lukeman (2006) supports Robinson (2002) that, students understand the uses of English punctuation when they learnt certain aspects rules of punctuation marks which direct the right use of punctuation in writing. Therefore, teachers need to teach students what grammatical sentence is, because students lack a clear understanding of how sentence boundaries when using punctuation marks. In this regard, the effective ways of teaching punctuation is necessary. It may provide insights as to how punctuation is learnt and perceived.

Therefore, the correct use of punctuation marks might require rules to govern students' writing. Correct punctuation is essential for clear and understood writing.

Look at the following sentences:

**Example 1:** *Zeinab has two pen-friends? [question, surprised]*

**Example 2:** *Zeinab has two pen-friends. [statement]*

The examples above have different meanings. The first example shows a question sentence by putting a question mark in the end of the sentence. It means that the sentence emphasizes a question. The second example is a statement. It reverses the first sentence; it ends with a full stop. It means that the sentence is a statement. This proves that a punctuation mark has a semantic meaning to the writing. From the opinions above, using the correct punctuation can determine the quality of students

writing. Correct punctuation marks make students written work more clearly, and express the real ideas by knowing when to slow down, stop, or emphasize. But in contrast, when they don't put the punctuation marks correctly, the reader will have difficulty to understand their writing.

### **2.1.2.3. Carelessness**

Students' carelessness and lack of concentration cause errors when they are writing Darus & Ching (2009). In most cases they do not care and are not even bother to ensure that, for example they end their sentences with a full stop. It is not something that they do not know, but it might be due to carelessness.

### **2.1.3. Causes of Punctuation Errors**

In 1970, Richards exposed four types of error causes:

1. Overgeneralization.
2. Ignorance of rule restrictions.
3. Incomplete application of rules.
4. Semantic errors.

According to the research purposes of punctuation errors, ignorance of rules, incomplete application of rules and semantic errors are seem to cause errors of punctuation marks among students of secondary schools. According to Norrish (1987) who differs with Richards (1970) except for ignorance of rules classified causes of error into four types. These types are often closely seemed to relate to:

1. Lack of motivation. Teachers need to encourage their students toward using and acquiring the necessary language because students might lose interest. They need to motivate students to the significance of correct writing.
2. The local Arabic language might affect on the target language.
3. Translation is one of the causes of errors.

4. Ignorance of the rules. SPINE six textbook seems it lacks the necessary exercises for students to apply the rules.

However, translation is less causing errors of punctuation compared with others. Motivation, carelessness and ignorance of rules according to the study problem presented in the first chapter are likely to be the reasonable causes of punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality in writing.

#### **2.1.4. Source of Punctuation Errors**

A number of scholars have done valuable works on sources of errors as a basis for teachers of English at schools. Richards, (1974) reported the following sources of errors that teachers might know as teaching students language skills.

1. Transfer knowledge. In present study, teachers should teach punctuation to students of secondary schools in the way they teach grammar and other skills.
2. Training. Un trained teachers should be trained how to teach punctuation which is very important in writing.
3. Overgeneralization.
4. Strategies of language communication which is needed in speaking as voice rise or fall. These cases indicate pauses or stops. They are necessary, because they represent signs (p. 37).

Similarly, Corder, (1974: 130) identified three sources of errors ignoring, training and strategies for avoiding punctuation errors. These three sources are:

1. Ignorance, knowledge transfer might cause students to learn and use the language incorrectly.
2. Overgeneralization.



3. Methods or supplementary materials if are taught by teachers they might improve students' writing.

Richards and Sampson (1974) who agreed with above scholars displayed seven sources of errors committed by students in writing. These are:

1. Knowledge transfer that teachers of English should master while teaching.
2. Intralingual interference.
3. Sociolinguistic situation of motivation.
4. Modality: in case of punctuation marks, they change during times.
5. Age: students' capacities for learning a skill vary with age. Adult seem to govern rules more sophisticated than children.
6. Successions of systems: the current English SPINE textbook contain appropriate uses of punctuation marks and exercises that students need in writing. Since learning acquisition vary from a person to another.
7. Universal hierarchy of difficulty: This cause has received little interest in language acquisition. Some skills might be inherently difficult to learn no matter what the background of students is.

Above sources of errors of course, seem to be reasonable for teachers of English to utilize from when dealing with teaching punctuation in order to avoid the errors their students might commit. Richards (1971) agreed with Richards and Sampson (1974) and add two more sources of error. He suggested six sources for errors in his article "*Error Analysis and Second language Strategies*". He classified them to interference, overgeneralization, and performance of students, competence of students, and strategies that can be used by the teachers. These sources could help avoid committing errors as well as the errors investigated by teachers.

Swan and Smith (1995) study the source of errors as a process of language transfer and overgeneralization need considerable attention by teachers (p. ix). Also needs detailed account to errors made by students due to lack of knowledge background. According to the investigation of study of upper-basic Japanese Swan and Smith (1995), agreed with Richards (1974) in above sources of errors. Farooq (1998) however, focus on both transfer and overgeneralization errors. He studies the common errors in the use of English written work of students. He found out that more errors were attributable to transfer of knowledge more than to other learning problems.

In fact, all individual views above mentioned do not offer satisfactory sources of punctuation errors individually due to the natural mistakes committed by students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality. They vary in some sources and agree on others. Teachers seem they ignore teaching punctuation marks. SPINE six lacks the necessary knowledge of punctuation exercises that students need to improve their ability. However, the opinions together could create reasonable source of errors that secondary students face in punctuation.

#### **2.1.5. The Importance of Punctuation in Writing**

According to Vahdatinejad (2008) punctuation marks can be used to determine sentences' boundaries. The analysis might provide students to use the correct punctuation which could increase their competence. Correct use of punctuation marks tells the students that words have to be together as a unit to clarify the meaning in a sentence. Before students write using punctuation marks purposefully, they need to see their function within their reading. Similarly, Eric Partridge, (1978) states that punctuation marks too often ranks as an adjunct. They are not something that students apply. They are a part of the sentence, so much a part that, without them, the sentence would be meaningless.

Nunberg (1990) illustrates that students tend to write ignoring the necessity of punctuation marks. They never stop, pause, or take breath. If students do not adjust their voices to read punctuation marks, they automatically might omit them from their writing. Less understanding of students in Nyala secondary schools using and applying punctuation marks correctly in exercise let them commit errors. Using punctuation marks is very important because they clarify the meaning and convey students' ideas. Therefore, the correct uses serve to guide students to punctuate texts correctly Nunberg (1990).

Robinson (2002) agreed with the opinions of above scholars that placing the correct punctuation marks is very important in writing processing. But he argues that unless students have an emotional function and examples, rules are too easily forgotten. Students and teachers in schools need exercises in the syllabus as punctuation foundation for practice.

Moreover, he stated that writing in schools using punctuation marks is insufficient. He also argued that punctuating could be possible through rules, but rules bore the students. Instead, they sought to teach students examples containing punctuation marks are useful.

Mayo, et al (2000) differs to describe a new intelligent tutoring system that teaches the mechanical rules of English punctuation. Students might interactively then punctuate short pieces of writing. The system represents the domain as a set of constraints. The intelligent tutoring system was evaluated during several lessons in a classroom of school students. The results showed that the students effectively mastered the rules represented in the system. Chicago Press (1982) agreed with Robinson (2002) that rules are important, for instance the full stop is used in writing to indicate an omission from quoted matter. It should be used before or after a quotation run in the text, before a block

quotation beginning with a complete sentence and after a block quotation ending with a complete sentence.

### **2.1.6. The Role of Punctuation in Writing**

As indicated by Robert (2006) punctuation marks play great role in writing. They cut the flow of words into meaningful groups and prevent confusion. Similarly, Stevenson (2005) shows that punctuation marks clarity sentences from each others. They emphasize the semantic function to show the meaning of the sentence based on the placement of punctuation marks. Different used punctuation marks will create different meaning. The role of using punctuation marks here is to make the sentence clear to the readers' understanding. Look at the following example.

**Example 1:** *As mentioned, first student can graduate perfectly.*

**Example 2:** *As mentioned first, student can graduate perfectly.*

Those two sentences have same typically words, but it has different meaning caused by the placing of comma. The first sentence emphasizes the first student who graduated perfectly, while the second sentence emphasizes the first mentioned that state the students can graduate perfectly.

Charles (1997) differs to claims that, punctuation is determined by grammatical conventions and the writer's intention. They show where the boundaries are meant to be between sentences, and how sentences of a text are meant to relate to each other. This means that punctuation marks have grammatical function, because it is a part of the sentence's construction. Grammar supports sentences based on punctuation's rules to avoid errors. Meyer (1987) emphasizes the uses of punctuation marks on the syntactic and semantic roles as boundaries of sentences.

### **2.1.7. Functions of Punctuation in Writing**

Chicago Press (1982) mentioned four functions for punctuation errors which are placed in text to make the meaning clear and easier, they are:

1. Separation: a full stop might separate sentences from each other. Students of secondary schools particularly in Nyala Locality might not use this very important full stop.
2. Group or enclose: parentheses enclose extraneous information.
3. Connect: a hyphen connects a unit modifier.
4. Impart meaning: a question might make declarative sentence interrogative. If wrongly used it will change the meaning by raising or falling tone.

Cappon (2003) differs from what is suggested by Chicago Press (1984) that punctuation is a skill which is remarkably subtle system of signals, signs, symbols and winks to keep students' writing correct.

Truss (2004) emphasizes the functional uses of punctuation marks as they clarify their written work. Similarly, Woods (2001) gave more emphasis that functions of punctuation are to clarify the meaning. Each mark in a sentence should have a reason for being there. The most important reason of course is to make the meaning clear.

According to Mann (2003) most scholars seem to agree together that punctuation overlaps functionally with written pauses rather than repeating them and the tone is controlled by commas, semicolon, full stop, apostrophe, etc. In that concern, Connely (2005) supports Cappon (2003) that, these marks are like traffic lights tell students when to slow down and when to stop. White (1995) emphasizes the incorporation of punctuation into the syllabus. This needs presentation by teachers as they have effect on sentences' meaning.

### **2.1.8. The Development of Punctuation in Teaching**

According to Parkes (1993) the development of punctuation took place in several stages paired with the development of the text. In each stage readers required different punctuation marks that students of secondary schools need in writing. The development of punctuation in schools is important because it is an aspect of writing that has to be done with text construction. After the revolution of printing, some punctuation marks are needed. They might be used in more than one specific place. However, punctuation is taught at school to suit the text development. Otherwise, without any punctuation marks the text will not be understood.

Edelsky (1983) and Goodman (1996) similarly agree with Parkes (1993) that the development of punctuation took place accordingly with the printing text. De Goes & Martlew, (1983) state that, punctuation marks do not constitute a homogeneous set from the point of view of the form or the function but Ferreiro, (1996) sees that in teaching some punctuation marks have a relationship with suprasegmental aspects, such as the question mark that signals the place for a rising interrogative intonation. Other punctuation marks serve to signal changes in the mode of enunciation, such as a colon, hyphen or quotation marks.

Catach (1980) differs to show convincingly when teaching punctuation that blank spaces at the beginning or the end of a line, as well as those that produce paragraphs, need to be considered and taught as punctuation marks. Pontecorvo, (1991) carries the same views that a blank space which is already a mark is the most primitive and most essential mark as a negative symbol. Therefore, it should be taught in secondary schools as the development of punctuation marks in the process of teaching.

Hall & Robinson (1996) mentioned that limited studies were concluded on the beginning of punctuation. But recent studies which focus upon the nature of the learning that takes place when students learn to punctuate. It is not conceded the problem of how punctuation could be taught in schools. However, the present researcher agrees with Hall & Robinson (1996) that additional studies concerning the relationships between classroom experiences and developing teaching of punctuation are needed. At secondary schools teachers neglect teaching rules for using punctuation marks as pointers to help students to punctuate texts.

In regard to the teaching of punctuation errors in secondary schools Moy (1996) conceded that, for teaching punctuation teachers should encourage students to explore adversity of written marks. Most common punctuation errors made by students of secondary school seem produced from teaching rules solely which is a boring teaching method. Mayo et al (2000) describes that teaching students the rules of English punctuation should interactively help them punctuate short pieces of unpunctuated text. In punctuation errors, he lament that many students do not remember to choose the right punctuation mark and place it in the right space. However, this might refer to lack of exercises and examples in SPINE six textbook. Therefore, teachers should teach students how to use punctuation marks by inserting signs in given exercises rather than giving them abstract punctuation rules. Moreover, correct writing is by developing and using punctuation in efficient application exercises could be possible, but not through rules which bore the students motivation. Instead students sought to be taught the rules of punctuation marks by showing examples of successful activities.

Rumki (2005) agrees with Mayo that punctuation acquisition is very important to be taught by teachers of Sudanese secondary schools in Nyala Locality in order to carry knowledge, techniques and practices. He

added that the rules are very important to be used by students. Thus, teachers lament that many students do not know how to place the right mark in the appropriate place in their written texts. It seems that this problem inferred from the lack of exercises and rules explained through examples. This problem also confirms the affect of rules' negligence in correct punctuation.

Therefore, teachers need to teach students the way the marks can be used correctly using exercise, rather than giving them the rules of punctuation marks solely. Teachers of English in regard to punctuation marks they should select external materials for teaching students punctuation in an interesting way. In this regard, Valentine (2004) said that, one of the best selling books in Britain at the moment was one on “correct” English punctuation called *Eat, Shoot and Leaves*” by Lynn Truss. He believed, however that many punctuation marks are becoming obsolete. He very rarely sees colons or semicolons used any more. For punctuation development, teachers of secondary schools in Nyala Locality where students are facing punctuation difficulties need to cover the necessary marks.

According to Stevenson (2005) punctuation can be learned by teaching it as entertainment. However, most teachers might teach students how to punctuate carefully to avoid errors. Lack of errors might result from the insufficient activities and lack of explanation. Frequently, punctuation seems taught by teachers who might not themselves teach how to punctuate correctly.

Instead, teachers might encourage students to learn all the rules of punctuation. In addition to that, they learn when to break, when to pause and when to stop. If punctuation is taught outside the context of concerns sentences, then students might see rules as guidelines for punctuation learning in order to avoid errors.



According to Woods (2001) loud reading is important for learning punctuation. Thus, commas are the sound of silence or short pauses that contract with the longer pauses at the end of each sentence. Moreover, Stevenson (2005) adds that, commas, semicolon, and colons are pauses used for breath. Teachers should focus on the purpose of punctuation which can make writing easier to be read and understood. Elliot (2006) agrees with Stevenson (2005) that teachers should think of commas as pauses for taking breath.

Ledeer (2005) recommends that students should use punctuation where they would pause when reading a text aloud. He adds that when students doubt about punctuating a sentence they should read it aloud.

Daume (2004) shows that there are different punctuation marks that can be used in texts, such as comma; period or full stop; exclamation mark, question mark, colon; semicolon and quotation marks. However, most of these marks are rarely occur and are quite difficult to automatically insert. Hence, most studies focus either on full stop or comma. A comma is the most frequent mark, but it is also the most problematic because it serves many different purposes and uses Beefeman & Berger (1998).

Having the development of text punctuation is to be available. Unlike text where punctuation is usually explicit, punctuating speech can be hard due to dissiliency, incomplete sentences, hesitations, etc. Makhoul, (2005) observed that removing commas affects students' performance.

#### **2.1.9. Punctuation Error Analysis**

According to Carl James (1998) and Ellis (1997) there are three reasons for pointing out errors. It is necessary for English language teachers to know what types of punctuation errors students make. This will show what they need to teach and what is required for students to

learn. Specific errors could allow English language teachers analyze them to know how students understand errors in order to punctuate texts accurately. Errors will also provide evidence of how students learn writing and what strategies they are applying. This can tell teachers what punctuation skills students have learned and what remains for them to learn.

Errors are important devices for students as well as teachers to analyze. They are part of a process in which students prove or disprove their hypotheses. Students can learn from errors particularly when they take part in correcting their own errors. As students perceive an error committed they might not make the same that errors again Corder (1967). Similarly, Stenson (1974) states three main reasons for errors, namely, incomplete acquisition of the target skill; exigencies of the learning or teaching situation, and errors due to the normal problems of punctuation performance.

In this concern, Wilkins (1972) suggests three reasons of analyzing errors of punctuation. They respectably address the researcher or linguist, the language teacher, and the target students' awareness of errors. However, the analysis of students' errors provides insights into the rules system provided in the process of punctuation teaching and learning. The existing methods of teaching punctuation allow teachers to use certain rules and seek explanations for the errors that are typically made by students. The analysis will tell teachers to focus on the process of teaching when to punctuate, when to slow down and when to stop, and sometimes warn them of the nature of inserting punctuation marks.

### **2.1.10 The Steps in Error Analysis**

#### **2.1.10.1 Identifying Errors**

Teachers of English in secondary schools in Nyala Locality need to identify punctuation errors committed by students in writing to find

suitable ways of correcting them. In this state, Brown et al (1994) suggested practical steps for identifying students' errors. The first step required for identification is the distinction of the punctuation marks being used in a text by students. Then the step is followed by identifying the errors within the rules background knowledge. Punctuation marks then should be classified according to the signs and their uses. The second step is the analysis of each mark being identified. The third step is students' role to correct the errors with the assist of teachers. These steps seem to be similar to the source of punctuation error made by students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

Gass & Selinker (2008) on the other hand mentioned six steps for error identification process. The first step is collecting data of a written passage or exercises given by teachers of English in lessons to insert in punctuation marks. The second step is to identify or select errors committed by the students. In the third step teachers classifies errors into the different punctuation marks. The fourth step is to calculate the numbers of errors made by the students in a written text. Step five is analysis of errors to see their source. Some errors refer to the students' competence; others refer to teachers' ignorance for teaching punctuation. Therefore, the errors seem to refer to lack of rules or sometimes to the syllabus design itself. SPINE six textbook seems to lack these factors of causing errors. It might not contain sufficient punctuation knowledge or exercises. The sixth step is the remediation of the errors being made(p.102).

These steps seem to be more inclusive than those being suggested by Brown et al (1994). They assist teachers of English in Nyala Locality to care about teaching punctuation during their lessons.

One of the ways of identifying punctuation errors refer to the following points: omission of punctuation or inappropriate use of

punctuation marks which might be the result of poor understanding of sentence structure. In reference to this concept; teachers think that punctuation is a layout feature demarcating text. Identification of students' errors is also recognized through the missing of a full stop and capital letters. However, these two cases do not help them identify where these marks would be placed in writing. Furthermore, teachers pointed out the successful identification of errors are a prerequisite to any successful analysis of errors. Moreover, the observation of error identification depends on a clear understanding of error uses. It also depends on the analysis of punctuation marks, because such errors can not be directly observed. They should be inferred by means of analyzing errors and through comprehension writing Hall (1997).

Oshima and Hague (1991) differ from the above scholars that identification of punctuation errors might be inferred by students themselves. They are likely occurring due to lack of punctuation knowledge, lack of rules, functional uses and application in exercises. He adds that, teachers seem to ignorance of error identification because they expect to use them as linkers. In this sense, proficiency in error identification and correction in teaching punctuation writing are inevitable.

#### **2.1.10.2. Classifying Errors**

After identifying the errors, then they were classified into their types. According to Dulay (1982), there are some types of errors based on omission, addition and the wrong use as explained below(p.146).

Omission is a type of error which is characterized by the absence of it that actually needed in the sentence. So in this type, a punctuation mark or more should appear in a sentence is absence or missed.

Addition errors are the errors that are described by the presence of the punctuation mark that must not appear in a sentence. In this type, the

students put a punctuation mark or more that should not be put in a sentence. Wrong use of errors is the errors that are characterized by the use of wrong use of punctuation marks. While in omission errors the item is not supplied at all, but in wrong use the students supply punctuation mark which is incorrect.

From the explanation above, we can summarize that the types of errors based on surface taxonomy strategy include omission (the absence of an item that must appear), addition (the presence of an item that must not appear) and wrong use (the use of the wrong punctuation mark).

### **2.1.10.3. Correcting Errors**

According to Hall (1997) error correction is an important aspect in language punctuation teaching. It is advantageous for both teachers and learners. It will reveal that teachers are able to know what the students have learned, and what they have failed to learn. For the students, error correction is beneficial to them because they will be able to recognize their own weaknesses in language use. English teachers need to correct the mistakes committed by students.

Teachers sometimes correct errors by referring to ask students to read a text a loud. This could raise their ability in punctuation skills to investigate the places of errors through pauses or stops. Moreover, students will investigate the places of errors in order to correct them.

However, unless students understand the meaning of the sentence they are likely to have difficulties when using punctuation.

The recent literature on error correction has witnessed a lively debate between Ferris (1999) and Truscott (1996, 1999) on whether teachers should correct errors in student writing. However, the debate is the indecisive results in error correction have been left to teachers. Students want to have their errors corrected and teachers think it is their responsibility to correct errors.

On the other hand, Adrian Doff (1980) explained three approaches for error correction. They might help teachers develop sensitivity in correcting errors. They encourage students to develop a positive attitude towards their students' errors. They suggest ways of correcting errors that will help rather than hinder the learning process. The approaches are:

1. Approach (1): Teachers never let students make mistakes. If they say anything wrong, they stop them and make them say it correctly.
2. Approach (2): Teachers sometimes correct students, but not all times. Students do not practise particular language skills. Teachers insist that students say it correctly in an encouraging way as students doing freer exercises.
3. Approach (3): Teachers might correct errors as little as possible. They want their students to express themselves in punctuation without worrying too much about making mistakes. Sometimes teachers notice errors committed by students, but they correct them later.

It is now widely agreed that language is not learnt in this way, rather it is a system of rules that the students have to acquire. Therefore, punctuation has rules to govern its usage. Teachers need to make their students become familiar with the use of these rules in activities which might not found in SPINE six textbook. Approach two seems to be the most accepted for error correction especially when teachers are correcting their students' errors in punctuation. Most teachers agree on approach two that they need to correct some errors to help students learn the correct forms of the language.

### **2.1.11. The Uses of Punctuation Marks**

Punctuation marks are little things, but they are essentials in writing as the nails to a carpenter. Their functional uses are to clarify the meaning of a sentence, Hansen (1998:109). This means that when students use correct punctuation, readers might understand their writing. In speaking, learners can use hand gestures, eye movement, and voice intonation to convey their ideas, but in writing, they should rely on punctuation to tell the reader when to slow down or stop. Accordingly Bram (1995:92), states that using correct punctuation is indispensable to accurate writing. It means that punctuation is necessary to make students' writing correct and clear.

However, Widjono Hs (2007:61) divided punctuation marks into two categories. End stops take their name from the fact that they indicate pauses or stops. Stops include full stop, question mark and exclamation mark. Other punctuation do not mark pause or stop. They include comma, semicolon, colon, parentheses and brackets, hyphen, apostrophe, and quotation mark. The researcher entirely will focus on these marks in the present study. According to Christensen et al. (2001), most of these marks occur in error and are quite difficult to insert which have higher frequencies.

#### **2.1.11.1. End Stops Punctuation Marks**

According to Wilkinson Clyde (1955) every complete sentence should have terminal punctuation which comes at the end of a sentence. There are three different terminal punctuation marks. Each of them serves a different purpose. They are used to end different types of complete sentences. He was supported by Williamson Amelia (2008) that without terminal punctuation, sentences would run together and make the writing very difficult to be understood. However, what they all have in common is that they show readers where the end of a sentence is.

## The Full Stop

**FULL STOP (.)**: Noting to end a declarative or imperative sentence.

The functional uses of the full stop are to signal the end of a declarative or imperative sentence. However, secondary students might find that these rules are not hard, and they might want simply to put a full stop at the end of any sentences Williamson (2008). However, Whistler Ken (2003) agrees with Williamson (2008) that a full stop is used to end declarative indicative and imperative sentences. This use of full stop to end sentences is very important for students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality. To learn them accurately will avoid linking multiple sentences together in a written text. Moreover, Bram (1995:93) showed the use of full stop is to end a positive or negative statement at the end of a complete thought, as in: Their little son is learning to walk. This sentence is given a full stop in the end of it, because it was complete thought. A full stop also can be used at the end of sentence that asks an indirect question, such as:

**Example 1:** *Helen wanted to know how we know what to do.*

The statement above is an indirect question, it does not need to put a question mark, but a full stop can be put to end the sentence. In a direct question, the statement will be “How did you know what to do?”

## The Question Mark

**QUESTION MARK (?)**: Signal direct question and ends interrogative sentences.

McCuen and Winkler, (2000) showed the important uses of a question mark to signal direct question, but not indirect question. For example: “*Have you had lunch?*” It is also used in parentheses to explain part of a sentence that cannot be verified. Whistler (2003) gives more explanation to the use of a question mark to end an interrogative sentence which might not be explained by SPINE series textbook.



According to Bram (1995:93) the functional uses is to signal a message or an utterance in a direct question form.

Look at the following example:

*What do you think about the term 'love at the first sight'?*

This example indicates direct statement. It requires a question mark (?) in the end of a sentence to emphasize that the statement above is direct question forms.

Another function of question mark, although rarely, it can also be used to be doubt, to show something we are unsure about, as in:

**Example 1:** *In December 1980 (?), John Lennon was dead.*

Here the writer seems unsure with the information contained. He is doubt with the time when John Lennon was dead, so he put a question mark in the bracket (?) to show his doubtful. This rule is rarely to be used, but it can be as additional information if the same issue is found like the example above.

### **The Exclamation Mark**

<b>EXCLAMATION MARK (!)</b> : End imperative sentence that gives a strong feeling.
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Willinson, Clyde (1955) in his study gives some uses of exclamation mark which is called an exclamation point in the USA instead of interjection or exclamation. It indicates strong feeling or high volume (shouting). It often marks the end of an imperative sentence that gives a strong feeling. For example: What an adorable baby! Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1982) agreed with Willinson (1955) and added astonishment and surprise. Therefore, teachers of English need to focus on exclamation point to avoid students' errors. By providing this sign students will be able and easily use it in writing which provide readers to understand the meaning of the text being punctuated.

### 2.1.11.2. Other Punctuation Marks

Seven punctuation marks are used to create pauses or interruption in the flow of words. Each interrupter has a special effect on the reader depending on its uses. The choice of which punctuation mark to use is left to students who might know the correct use according to the rules they learned. Whichever, some of these punctuation marks may be familiar; some might be new to students in use. Learning to use them correctly will make students' writing easier to be understood.

#### The Comma

COMMA (,): Marks a light break between different parts of a sentence. It makes the meaning of sentences clear by grouping and separating words, phrases or clauses.
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McCuen and Winkler (2000) show that students master several uses of commas. Its functional uses are to separate when stands alone and to enclose elements of a sentence. Nevertheless, students commit errors when using it, because it has certain and different places of use. Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1982) agree with McCuen and Winkler (2000) in its functional use as separator. However, he sees separating the comma is optional and adds a comma should be considered enclosure rather than separator. He emphasized that, when a comma is used to enclose; it requires a partner, which might be another comma or a colon, semicolon, period, question mark, or exclamation mark.

From the previous views above, a comma provides pauses in a sentence that mark the beginning and/or end of ideas within the sentence. Students often ignore using the comma to separate things in series, compound sentences, introductory elements and adding extra information. Learning the uses of commas will make it simpler and easier to be remembered by students to avoid errors. Hill and Murray, (1999) found out that, comma helps in disambiguating sentences, for

some instructions, they keep readers from re-reading sentences they have missed analyzed.

According to Olson (2000:50), comma is used to set off introductory words, phrases, and clauses from the main part of a sentence. It means that the keys for using the right comma started by understanding the place of comma in the words, phrases, and the clauses as the main parts of a sentence. A comma can be used to separate a series of items from the same category such as: *We are looking forward to buying shirts, shorts, and skirts.*

According to Hansen, et al. (1998:109), there are punctuation rules for joining in the clauses. Two independent clauses can be joined by a coordinating conjunction (or a connective) Hansen (1998:110). The other functions of comma explained by Bram (1995: 95) that a comma is used to introduce adverbs of frequency, place, and time at the beginning of a sentence. Look at the following: *Sometimes, the students just waste their time gossiping.* A comma also is normally required to separate a transitional expression in a sentence, as in: *By the way, what do you think about his girlfriend?*

The multiple uses of commas need syntactic context of occurrence to be used correctly Briscoe & Carroll, (1996).

Meyer, et al (1989).The comma might cause more anguish for apprentice writers than any other punctuation mark. There is no formula for accurate use of the comma. Most uses are conventional, but a few require judgment and writers can develop the necessary judgment only through lots of reading and writing. Forcing students to memorize these rules may not make them more accurate writers. Students need to learn how to take the generalizations conveyed by these rules and apply them to specific a situation; that means helping them understand the rules, not just getting them to memorize.

## **The Semicolon**

**SEMICOLON (;):** Connects independent sentences that are logically and closely related or worked together as part of a larger idea.

Teachers of secondary schools need to check the right use of a semicolon that students replace it with a period. Moreover, teachers should support students that semicolon makes a strong break or pause in a sentence. [The break is stronger than that created by a comma; weaker than a full stop]. The semicolon emphasizes the close relationship between two complete thoughts in a compound sentence Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1982). However, he mentioned that students prefer to use the semicolon when they are trying to establish a close relationship between the two clauses. Petit, A. (2003) argues that many students are hesitant to use the semicolon. They may be unfamiliar with the purposes of the mark and therefore reluctant to use it. When students take risks in using the semicolon, positive reinforcement and encourage from teachers will help them to add this useful punctuation mark.

## **The Colon (:)**

**COLON (:):** Introduces the parts of a sentence that exemplifies, restates, elaborates, or explained the preceding part.

Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1982) states that a colon which makes a stronger break in the flow of words, students used it to alert the reader that explanation is about to start. Skillin et al (1974) recommends teachers to teach its functional uses: separating, introducing lists, and quotations, in addition to several conventional uses. Bernstein (1981) shares Skillin et al (1974) in its strong separating function as an introductory mark should generally be used only after a complete sentence. Chicago Press (1982) argues that an introduction to a displayed list is not a complete sentence so no colon could be used.

According to Bram (1995:98) colon is used to introduce a long list or a series of things. The colon is often preceded by the phrase, shown

below. The example of this is as the following, or as follows. Here are the examples of using the colon.

**Example 1:** *The members of Metallica are as follows: Lars Ulrich (drums), Jason Newstead (bass), Kirk Hammet (lead guitar), and James Hetfield (vocal and rhythm).*

From the example above a colon is put to explain a series of things, they are the members of Metallica. The sign is the phrase as follows. A colon is put after the phrase as follow, and then explains a series of the member of Metallica. Although rarely, the colon may function to join closely related sentences. It can be substituted by a semicolon or a period.

### **The Parentheses**

<b>PARENTHESSES ( ( ) ): Are used inside parentheses or to set off the students' comments inside a quotation.</b>
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Parentheses are similar to commas that teachers have to familiarize students. The use of non-restrictive also affects them to set off the material more strongly Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1982). He neatly explained that a complete sentence in parentheses comes within a sentence needs neither a capital letter nor a full stop. This indicates that commas and other ending punctuation marks in the main sentence always placed in the parentheses. Question marks and quotation marks of the ideas within parentheses remain within parentheses. Punctuation of the main sentence remains outside, almost always after the closing parentheses rather than an opening parenthesis Skillin et al (1974). Teachers have to alert students to the variations of terms within which texts need brackets before describe the use of brackets Winter (1999). He added that, brackets can be used inside parentheses or to set off the students' comments inside a quotation. In Britain; students use the term brackets [square brackets], and [angle brackets]. But printers and some other professional groups (notably mathematicians and computer

specialists) use the term parentheses for square brackets or just brackets Webster (1998).

The above mentioned uses of brackets recommend the use of brackets in all cases by Chicago Press (1982) and Skillin et al (1974) to enhance materials within parentheses which assist students to use them correctly in writing.

### **The Hyphen**

<b>HYPHEN (-):</b> Used between words that functions together to modify a subsequent word in a sentence or connect some prefixes to words.
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Chicago Press (1982) states that, words are connected by a hyphen to avoid ambiguity in their compound meaning and errors. Ehrlich (1987) similarly agrees Chicago (1982) that hyphens break words between syllables in some compound words, numbers and fractions. It is also carried over from one line to the next. Most compounds formed by adding a prefix to a full word.

Chicago Press (1982) sees nowadays writers feel that separation of vowels is old fashioned and unnecessary. Regrettably, there are no reliable rules explained by teachers the use of words hyphenation between syllables. To avoid extremely ragged right margins in unjustified text to avoid large spaces between words in justified texts. The function of hyphen is to connect words in order to create or form new words or new phrases. On the contrary, Olson (2000:92) explained that there are some rules of using the hyphens, as to join two words working together as one such as:

*Peter is a **singer-dancer**.*

The words in the bold are connected by hyphens. Actually, they consist of two words. In the first sentence, singer and dancer are two words which can be connected by a hyphen. It shows that Peter is a singer, and also a dancer. It can be simplified to the single word by putting a

hyphen. A hyphen can be used to join more than two words into a single word, for instance: *Lulu's **nine-year-old** sister enjoys reading a comic.*

The bold word is namely a single word. Actually, it is from three words, but it can be a single by putting hyphen between them. It looks simpler.

**Example 1:** *My brother wears a **T-shirt**.*

The bold words above are begun by a capital letter. A hyphen can be put after the capital letter.

### The Apostrophe

<b>APOSTROPHE (')</b> : Shows possession, marks the omission of letters or numbers, and plural forms.
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According to McCuen (2000:663) apostrophe shows possession (John's book) rather than (the book of John). It is also used to form contraction (can't-don't) and certain plurals. Winter (1999) supports McCuen, (2000:663) that, apostrophe can be functionally used in place of letters left out of words when forming contractions. Chicago Press (1982) and Skillin et al (1974) add more functional uses of apostrophe in plural constructions, omission of letters or numbers when necessary to avoid confusion in writing. Teachers might test their students the possessive use by asking them whether or not they could differentiate their various uses. He maintains that students confuse between possession and contractions as: *its– it's*.

According to Hansen, et al. (1998:283) apostrophe can be used to form the possession. It is used to form singular nouns by adding an apostrophe. Such as: *Maurice's business is selling thousands of eggs each week.* According to Olson (2000:90) another function of apostrophe marks is used to show the omission. Look at the word in bold in the following example: *Backy **doesn't** work today.*

Hashimoto, Irvin (1988) argues to remind students with patterns of apostrophe errors and add them to their error log (or “fix-it list”) for

customized proofreading assistance. They should include examples of the types of apostrophe errors they make (do they often confuse *its* versus *it's*, for example?) from their own writing along with the necessary revisions.

### **The Quotation Marks**

<b>QUOTATION MARKS (“”):</b> Enclose words that are quoted from the original source or setoff dialog from narrative.
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McCuen (2000) sees quotation marks always come in pairs. Its common functional use is to indicate the exact written words of another person. Lexicographers and grammarians use single and double quotation marks Chicago Press (1982). Winter (1999) supports Chicago Press (1982) that, quotation marks are used at the beginning and at the end of a direct quotation. They tell the reader exactly what someone has said. He also mentioned that American writers use marks inside the quotation whereas, the British writers use them outside the quotation. According to Olson (2000:76) Quotation marks cause a problem for many writers, but a few simple rules can make them easy to use. It is used in direct quotations. Look at the rules: Example 1: *We thought he said, “Turn right at the corner.”*

The sentence above is a direct question. When we write a direct question, we can use a quotation mark to quote the statement to the writing. Misuse of quotations in different sentences is the most serious and it needs to be taken into consideration by teachers Bernard (1995).

#### **2.1.12. Grammar and Punctuation Marks**

Grammar is the integral part of punctuation that together play role in helping students understand to use punctuation correctly. Teaching grammar is usually helpful for students of secondary schools. Some guidance about punctuation practice may be provided or taught by



teachers to the students as they write. However, some instruction about grammar and punctuation can provide more expeditiously in class.

Theorists have argued that teaching grammar does not make students good writers. Some instructors might deemphasize grammar in writing instruction to encourage students to write, but writing as stated by Shaughnessy (1997) should include punctuation. The study of punctuation ought to be a study of sentence structure, not merely a definition of the marks. Dawkins (1995) argues to see that punctuation can be taught without much grammar, on the contrary, Mann (2003) sees teaching punctuation, to students needs a minimal degree of sentence sense. Students need to revise sentences for clarity and emphasis.

Then moving on to helping students distinguishes main clauses from subordinate “dependent” clauses, and to distinguish coordinating conjunctions from conjunctive adverbs. It might facilitate a discussion of sentence revising by being able to recommend placing important ideas in main rather than in subordinate clauses. This prepares students to understand more complex uses of punctuation. Some textbooks introduce unnecessary grammar in teaching punctuation. For example, when discussing of comma uses one writer discusses the need for a comma after a “vocative” (a name in direct address). Why bother to trouble students with the term “vocative”? Occasionally students need help with the knowledge of grammar in writing texts Dawkin (2003).

Teaching punctuation through the knowledge of sentence structure is rather than having students study the appropriate punctuation in the writing text. This can help students see that punctuation is a concern for clarity at the sentence level. It encourages students to see punctuation as part of the polishing of writing. In this regard, punctuation is like grammar, which students might be encouraged not to worry about in order to perform their purpose of having correct writing. Briscoe (1994)

emphasizes the needs of grammar in the multiple uses of punctuation marks to avoid the occurrence of errors.

### **2.1.13. The Uses of Capitalization**

Errors of capitalization occur when a letter is left out, such as initial words in sentences and proper names. Therefore, students of secondary schools might commit errors as a lack of rules and exercises explaining the uses of capitalization White (1995). Chicago Press (1092) agrees with White (1995) that students misuse capital letters and tend to use capital letters for everything they feel important to them. Similarly, Ebbitt and Ebbitt (1982) sees the nature of writing is to capitalize the beginning of sentences. Rules are hardly needed to learn capitalization .

## **2.2. Part (2) Previous Studies**

### **2.2.1. Review of Related Previous Studies**

This study will review some previous studies conducted in Sudan and some abroad. Besides, this part will critically discuss and comment on the problems and findings of these studies. They might shed light on the core of these studies. However, the researcher will focus on the findings provided by previous studies and their relevance to the current study to support and reinforcement the current study.

Punctuation problems are widely studied in many countries especially in the countries where English is spoken as a second language. Therefore, it is important to review the previous studies that deal with punctuation errors. Nine studies pertinent to the present study are presented. In writing this thesis, the researcher read many studies that relate to this research.

A problem of punctuation error analysis made by Sudanese EFL secondary students is conducted by Mohammed, El beshary Ahmmed El beshary (2006) in his study.

The study aimed to analyze punctuation errors made by the students of Abdel Muniem Hassona secondary school in Khartoum State. The objective is to find out the reasons behind the causes of errors made by those students. Besides, to find out that SPINE six does not cover the needs of students in punctuation. His study also tried to find out that how SPINE six reflects teaching objectives of punctuation marks. Moreover, he a strayed that if SPINE six contains sufficient activities and lack authentic materials in teaching punctuation marks.

To achieve the goal of this study, the researcher used two tools. He administered a written test which includes five different types of questions for collecting data. El beshary (2006) administered a test to sixty students in third year. Thirty English Language teachers from secondary schools at Khartoum locality participated in a questionnaire to evaluate teaching punctuation process required for data collection in his study. The result of the study reached is that SPINE six does not ease the difficulties in using punctuation marks effectively in their writing.

In addition, he found out that the majority of students confuse to use punctuation marks such as colon, semicolon and the comma. Moreover, poor proficiency in punctuation marks is due to the lack and inadequate activities presented in the SPINE textbook. Besides, little emphasis was given to the teaching of punctuation marks.

Based on the findings of the study, El beshary (2006) recommended that more attention should be paid to these very important elements of punctuation marks in writing. He also recommended that teachers should emphasize on teaching punctuation marks through examples and exercises. Additionally, to reinforcement the use of English punctuation marks.

According to the above study, it seems that based on the findings of the study, El beshary (2006) he concerned to develop students'

punctuation knowledge by giving more exercises that might give solutions to punctuation marks.

On the contrary, the present study will investigate the errors of punctuation marks made by students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality in writing.

Investigating the mastery and significance of punctuation marks in French language in the context of text achievement by Hazim Ali Galal Eldeen Mohamed (2012) is conducted in his study.

His study aimed at defining the importance of punctuation marks in French language as well as their role and function.

He made use of analytical and descriptive approach to define punctuation marks and presented their role and function. In addition to that, he analyzed a written text and the way in which translator transfer significant punctuation marks from the original text to the translated text.

Investigating the problem of the most common punctuation errors made by English and TEFL majors at An-Najah National University in writing Ahmed Awad (2012) conducted his study.

The researcher aimed to find the problem of the most common punctuation errors made by English and TEFL students at An-Najah National University in writing. Also to find out how these courses could cover the necessary courses that students need to assist them to solve the problem of punctuation errors they made.

He asked whether there are common punctuation mistakes among English Majors and the TEFL majors at An-Najah University. Moreover, he asked if there were significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to gender and also due to department. In addition, he asked whether there were significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to the students' academic level.

Ahmed Awad (2012) administered a written test to (100) students from An-Najah National University and (45) males and (55) females from TEFL Department in the Faculty of Education and the English Department in the Faculty of Arts for collecting data from the students.

However, the findings of the study conclude that the courses being taught were not standardized achievement according to some reasons as overuse of comma at the expense of the period and the incorrect use of the capital letters.

In addition, he concluded that the wrong use of the quotation marks and the misuse of semicolon are the results of the study. Moreover, there were no significant differences in the number of punctuation errors due to gender. Also there were significant differences in the number of punctuation errors due to academic level.

Upon his study, it seems that it is importance to use punctuation marks in learning. Because they might shed light on the correct use of punctuation marks in order to remove the ambiguity for the readers. In addition, the findings being viewed assist teachers to adopt suitable strategies and develop effective practices in order to solve the problems of punctuation marks and to increase the students' competence in writing correctly.

Based on the findings Ahmed Awad (2012) recommended that teachers should overstress the importance of all punctuation marks in writing. Besides, he recommended exposing students to the basic systems of punctuation by including exercises in SPINE textbooks along with continual practice in the end of each period by asking students to punctuate a short text. Moreover, syllabus designers should consider the similarities and differences between Arabic and English punctuation system and its English counterpart. But he did not explain the significant

use of rules with example which could provide practical solutions to the problems of punctuation errors.

Khuliyatul Hidayah (2013) studied the analysis of Punctuation errors in the background of the Skripsi of English Education Department of Muria Kudus University.

His study aimed to identify the problems of punctuation errors found in the background of the students that might improve students' writing skills. He adopted descriptive qualitative research to collect, classify, and analyze the data for describing a certain situation.

Khuliyatul Hidayah (2013) came up with the conclusion that the study found number of errors in different kinds of punctuation errors such as comma, colon, full stop, hyphen, oblique line, quotation mark, bracket, and semi colon. In addition, he found out that lack of punctuation function and wrong uses of punctuation rules are among the results he has reached in his study. Based on the findings he has reached, he recommended that more awareness should be paid to the use of punctuation rules and functions.

Investigating the problem of error analysis of using Punctuation in English text made by the third students of the English Department of STAIN Salatiga in the academic year 2013 – 2014 is conducted by Lia Rahmawati (2014) in his study.

His study aimed to find out errors committed by students when writing texts. He did his study analyzing punctuation errors. The study used descriptive quantitative method for collecting data. The data that he wonders might contribute to the problem solutions.

According to the above study, he reached the results that different kinds of errors students commit are period, comma, question mark, quotation marks, exclamation mark as well as omission.

In addition to that, students made errors of quotation marks; to some extent they mastered punctuation. However, there are some students who have score under standard so they need more treatment or remedial. Furthermore, from the interview he had made he found out some factors of errors made by students as lack of accuracy in placing punctuation marks. Omissions of some punctuation marks are among the difficulties that face the students.

Besides, more attention should be paid to the ways of using a period as an aspect of most dominant error made by students. In addition, students have mastered punctuation, but some students did not understand how to use comma before quotation. Moreover, students lack accuracy, omission and have little understanding while using punctuation properly.

Analysis of punctuation errors in the free-writing of the sixth semester students of English is conducted by Budi Seliawan (2011).

His study aimed to find out the errors made by the students when writing. It also aimed to the use of punctuation marks correctly during writing. The problem of committing errors of punctuation by students in the free-writing is the focus of this research. To achieve the goal of this study, the researcher used a written free test. He selected regular and non regular students of the sixth semester as a population to the study.

Budi Seliawan (2011) in his study 20 students were randomly participated and he used randomly sampling techniques. The tool he used for collecting the necessary data for the study is a written test.

The results of the study that the researcher has found out that there are eleven punctuation marks were used in the free-writing. These marks are: comma, period, apostrophe, quotation mark, slash, colon, semicolon, question mark, parentheses, hyphen and ellipsis.

In his study Budi (2011) also found out that most punctuation errors occur when students wrote the test is the error of using comma. The wrong use of parentheses, hyphen, brackets and ellipsis were among the results the researcher has found. They occurred only once.

The researcher also mentioned that the students did not use all types of punctuation marks in their writing. Budi (2011) recommended that students should take more attention by reading more books and more literature related to punctuation marks. They reduce the difficulties and mistakes committed by students in writing. However, according to the above mentioned results Budi (2011) might not cover all the problems of punctuation marks. It seemed that the results might not develop students' writing using punctuation marks. He did not mention the factors of elevating students' ability by giving them exercises using rules.

A problem of punctuation errors made by students of second grade of English Department in Gunadarma University is conducted by Rahayu Megasari (2010).

The objectives of his study are: to find the errors of punctuation students made in writing and the different kinds of punctuation that is mostly mistakenly used by students. The study aimed to describe the errors that the students made when using punctuation. In his study Rahayu (2010) added more about describing the kinds of punctuation that mostly students commit error in writing. To perform the objectives of the study, the researcher used qualitative and quantitative methods. He also used the methods of percentage in analyzing the data.

The results of the study that Rahayu (2010) has reached are the punctuation marks of comma, apostrophe, semicolon and capitalization. These are among the most difficult errors mistaken by the students.

His study is similar to the present study; both studies are conducted to analyze punctuation in writing. But in his study, he did not



mention extra reasons of why students commit errors as lack of practice, lack of applying rules, ignorance of teaching punctuation and lack of books to punctuation which the current study focuses on them.

Investigating syntactic and punctuation errors, the study analyzed students' technical writing in Science College at Taif University is conducted by Alamin & Ahmed (2012). He aimed to analyze the errors using a reference which is about intralingual interference associated with the development sequence of learning English for technical writing.

Making use of data collection, Alamin & Ahmed (2012:4) conducted a homework assignment and a written composition for (100) students. Besides, they focus on the possible ways in which errors could be avoided on their gradual process of learning English for technical communication.

Based on the results of the study, Alamin & Ahmed (2012:4-7) see punctuation errors consist of starting new sentences with lower case letters and not using capital letters for proper nouns. However, capitalization problems of punctuation marks errors among secondary students were not included in the current study. In addition, he found out that the colon and the semicolon are used incorrectly and incorrectly in passages and after the words.

The exclamation mark is hardly used, forgetting to use the full stop at the end of a sentence and not using enough spaces between words. However, the present study does not focus on the use of space between words. Hardly using a question mark, and hardly using a hyphen Alamin & Ahmed (2012).

In this analysis, the researcher took sample from the third year students of Junior high school. There were some differences in students' errors as the researcher collect data from homework assignment and writing a composition.

The researcher used a theory about punctuation from Phyllis Dutwin "English Grammar Demystified". Moreover, students were asked to insert the correct punctuation marks in paragraphs and sentences.

According to the study above, it seems that Alamin & Ahmed (2012) are hopefully interested in developing students' syntactic and punctuation errors through homework assignment. In addition, they hoped to show the importance of punctuation in technical writing.

On the contrary, the present study investigates why punctuation marks have been neglected in secondary schools; the syllabus never contains punctuation marks and it lacks punctuation exercises.

An analysis of punctuation errors made by students of Junior High School of W.R. Supratman<sup>2</sup> Medan is conducted by Yosilolyta Siholtang (2014).

He aimed to know how the third year students of Junior high school use punctuation marks. After that he identified the errors and to classify them into the different kinds of errors based on the theory of Jack Richards (1970) based on the ignorance of rule restrictions and false concepts hypothesized. The study made use of a test contains two paragraphs and fourteen sentences. Students have to insert the correct punctuation marks. In addition, the study used references related to the research Yosilolyta Siholtang (2014).

Based on the findings of the study, Yosilolyta Siholtang (2014) recommended that the punctuation marks that are most dominant error made by the students is the use of punctuation marks of a comma (21.87%) and the kind of errors that are most dominant made by the students is false concepts hypothesized (99.87%).

According to the above study, it seems that Yosilolyta Siholtang (2014) was much interested in finding the most error of punctuation marks dominant and the kind of error mostly dominant. He indicated to

the importance of a test to highlight students' errors when using punctuation marks. But he did not explain the kind of errors made by these marks and which marks students have made errors on.

On the contrary, the present study seeks to investigate the same problem, the analysis of punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools. The present study focuses on the syllabus; exercises and lack of rules explanation that affect students making errors when using punctuation marks in writing.

### **2.2.2 Previous Studies and their Relevance to the Present Study**

The results of the previous studies reviewed above provided a brief account about improving punctuation errors in writing. They explain how students use wrong marks when punctuating. Sometimes omitting them in reference that they lack the necessary ways of learning how to punctuate. However, the previous studies could greatly contribute to the current study. Both the present study and the previous studies revolve around issues related to punctuation errors that students face in their writing.

Most of these clarifications in the previous studies have not been resulted in raising students' standard in punctuation in secondary schools. Therefore, the present study will attempt to find out the reasons behind punctuation mistakes, erroneous rules and lack of necessary exercises in SPINE six textbook.

However, the tools adopted by the bulk of the previous studies and the current study for data collection is nearly similar. Most studies use test and questionnaire. The researcher noticed that, there are distinctions in the number of sample selected to represent the population in the previous studies. For the data analysis, the current study adopted the descriptive analytical method, empirical, and statistical methods whereas Khuliyatul Hidayah (2013) adopted descriptive qualitative method. Lia

Rahmawati (2014) adopted descriptive quantitative. Rahayu Megasari Sinaga (2010) uses qualitative and quantitative methods. There are distinctions in the results of the previous studies as mentioned above, while the present study will manifest its results when reviewing the results' discussion and analysis in chapter four.

However, all researchers meet in the errors made by students in punctuation marks, lack of teaching materials and inadequate activities and incorrect use of punctuation marks. Moreover, they differ in the number and type of punctuation errors due to gender and academic level. All researchers recommended the importance of using punctuation marks in writing and emphasis on the use of activities.

To conclude this part, the previous studies conducted on punctuation errors for various purposes. Some of these studies conducted in and others outside Sudan. They emphasized the importance of developing students' punctuation errors in writing. They recommended teachers and students as well, but in some way they did not find out why punctuation errors were neglected or covered all the areas of punctuation marks. So, the present study attempted to investigate on the areas which are not being conducted by these studies in order to find out why students commit errors. It was obvious that some studies conducted in university education while the present study focuses in secondary schools. However an investigation into punctuation errors could not be divided in both levels.

Some of these studies were not empirical they reached into conclusion without collecting data from the field so they may not be relevant to the problem of the current study. On the contrary, the present study was empirical one, collecting data and analyzing it through test and questionnaire. Then the findings and recommendations might relatively be related to the problem of the study.

Consequently, teachers and syllabus designers could utilize from these results and adopt them in SPINE six in order to be used by teachers to assist students to improve their punctuation writing skills.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

The first part of this chapter has reviewed literature on some concepts concerning punctuation errors pertinent to the subject of the study. The chapter reviewed some punctuation errors, types of punctuation, the importance of punctuation in writing, the functions of punctuation marks, the development of punctuation in teaching and causes and source of punctuation error.

The second part has provided discussion and comment on previous studies related to the present study. The results of the previous studies revealed that there are errors of punctuation in students' writing as:

- Lack of punctuation activities.
- Misunderstanding punctuation rules.
- Lack of motivation.
- Little emphasis was given to the teaching of punctuation marks.
- Varieties of errors were wrong use of punctuation marks particularly the use of comma, semicolon, apostrophe and quotation marks.
- Lack of accuracy in punctuation.

In spite of the above mentioned causes of weakness of students in punctuation marks, the problem of committing mistakes is still exist among secondary schools students' writing. Therefore, the current study is expected to offer additional reasons to the difficulties of using punctuation marks beside those mentioned above. It might also add valuable contributions to the manipulation of punctuation errors in regard to the analysis of SPINE six in secondary schools in Nyala Locality. These will appear in the results of chapter four.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Research Methodology**

This chapter presented the methods adopted for the purpose of the study. The chapter described the participants of the study (students/teachers) and provided a thorough description of the instruments used for collecting data (test/questionnaire). It presented the techniques followed in identifying, classifying and analyzing the data. It also presented the validity and the reliability of the instruments used for measuring the tools.

#### **3.1. Research Design**

The research design guides logical arrangements for the collection and analysis of data so that conclusions might be drawn. The research method employ in this study is quantitative design. Richards et al. (1992) refer to quantitative research as “*research that uses procedures which gather data in numerical form*” (p.302). It advocates the use of statistics and controlled measurement. As a result of this, it is regarded as objective and reliable.

This study represents a descriptive method. According to Macmillan and Schumacher (1993), research using descriptive methods simply describes an existing phenomenon by using numbers to characterize individuals or a group (p.35). After rating and identifying the errors, the researcher statistically analyzed the collected data using SPSS program, frequencies and percentages. Additionally, a test was administered to the students and a questionnaire to teachers of English language to assess their students' as they use punctuation marks.

#### **3.2. The Subjects of the Study**

##### **3.2.1. Students**

The researcher conducted the study of punctuation error analysis on four classes of third year in secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

Each class of students represents a school. These students were studying English language as one of the required subjects and they speak Arabic as a mother tongue language. They study the syllabus of SPINE (6) textbook designed by Sudanese experts. The four schools are:

1. South Darfur Model Secondary Boys' School.
2. South Darfur Model Secondary Girls' School.
3. Al-Mustafa Model Secondary Boys' School.
4. Al-Zahra Secondary Girls' School.

These schools were selected to be the participants of the study. The three classes are as an experimental group (A) and one class as a control group (B) comprises 40 students. Both groups were given a pre-test. First only group (B) received punctuation instruction. Then, both groups were given a post test. This process was made to see whether or not there is progress between the two tests after the instruction. The total number of all groups is 80 students (boys/girls) and their ages ranged between 14 – 17 years. They were selected from governmental schools (three schools are model). The tests were given to the experimental group and controlled group selected randomly. The four schools were a mixed-sex with a total number of about 1035 populations.

### **3.2.2. Teachers**

The teachers of English language in secondary schools in Nyala Locality were chosen as the required subjects for the study. 40 teachers were selected randomly from the total number which is about 235 teachers. They were given a questionnaire to assess their students' writing skill in the use of punctuation marks by responding to its questions.

### **3.3. Research Methods**

With regard to the purpose of the study and the data that will be utilized to achieve it; two types of methods were selected. Descriptive

method was used for describing the literature review of the study. The researcher's main focus here is to describe the errors, the causes of errors and their sources, functional uses, the importance of punctuation marks and their role and their development in teaching. Analytical method was used to assess and analyze students' errors on the pre-test and the post test. The teachers' questionnaire was used to find the problems that face students as they use punctuation marks.

### **3.4. Research Instruments**

For collecting data, the researcher used two types of research instruments. They were test and questionnaire. The elaboration of the two research instruments were described below:

#### **3.4.1. Students' Test**

The test was another instrument used for collecting data. It was used to compare the errors committed by students with the teachers' experienced feedback on students' punctuation writing problems. This test contains a series of questions used to measure a skill, knowledge, intelligence, capability or talent of the students. Thus, the researcher used it as a tool to identify the errors made by students. The researcher selected this tool because it is suitable for the students and it might give a true picture for their standards. Seliger and Shohamy (1989) defined a test as: "*Procedure used to collect data on students' ability or knowledge of certain disciplines.*" In written researches, test is generally used to collect data about the students' ability or knowledge in any skill (p.176).

The researcher prepared the test paper for students to realize the objectives of the research. Thus, it consisted of two parts: part one is composed of fifteen sentences. Students have to punctuate each sentence by putting the correct punctuation marks. Part two is unpunctuated text. The text meant to test students' ability to identify and insert the correct



punctuation in the spaces provided. The total marks of the test are 48 marks.

#### **3.4.1.1. Pre-Test**

The students of experimental groups were given pre-test to test their knowledge of punctuation marks. It was done to find out the standards of students in punctuation before receiving punctuation instructions. The test consists of 23 items involve 40 spaces concerned with punctuation marks (**Appendix (A) p.111**).The students were required to put the correct marks in their correct places.

#### **3.4.1.2. Post Test**

The post-test was administered to determine students' performance in the use of punctuation marks. Therefore, two weeks later and after students of controlled group have been received punctuation instruction they were given the post test. Its purpose is to find out whether or not the students made progress as they use punctuation marks.

#### **3.4.2. Teachers' Questionnaire**

Questionnaire is a data collection instrument in scientific research. The researcher used it to gather information about students' performance to the use of punctuation marks based on teachers' points of view. The researcher also designed this questionnaire to find out the teachers' assessment of students' punctuation errors. This tool was used because it is suitable for collecting reliable and valid data from a high proportion of population within a reasonable period of time at a minimum cost.

The questionnaire consists of two sections. Section one assesses the English language syllabus for supporting teaching punctuation and it contains six statements. The options are designed as Likert-scales of the variables structured (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree). Section two tries to know how teachers deal with punctuation and it contains fourteen statements. The options are

designed as Likert-scales of the variables structured (always, sometimes, often, rarely and never). The whole questionnaire contains twenty questions revolving around the research hypotheses.

### **3.5. Validity and Reliability**

Validity and reliability are closely related to the evaluation of any test which is supposed to yield valid and reliable data. Thus, the validity and reliability of the test in the present study have been measured in the following sections.

#### **3.5.1 Validity**

Validity according to Polit and Hungler (1993) is the degree to which the research instruments and their results support what is intended to measure. Best (2000: 206) defined validity as: *“The quality of data gathering instruments or procedures that enable the study to measure what is supposed to measure.”* On the other hand, Macmillan and Schumacher (1993) differentiate between internal and external validity. Internal validity expresses the extent to which extraneous variables have been controlled or accounted for. External validity refers to the generality of the results extent to which the conclusions can be generalized to other students and settings. Internal validity was confirmed by the fact that the data were collected in a controlled natural classroom setting and strictly controlled test conditions.

This study has external validity in the sense that its results can be generalized to the population of third year students. After the questionnaire had been prepared it was given to referees of University experts as a panel of judges to evaluate its suitability to the research rubric.

The referees approved that the questionnaire and the test were appropriate to measure the aims they were designed for except for some modifications and advices which were taken into considerations in the

final version. After the amendments, the questionnaire was distributed to the teachers of English at secondary schools to evaluate their students' ability in using punctuation marks.

According to Abu Allam (1998) validity confirms the truth of the test and its relation to what it is intended to test. The test in this concern might be valid if it measured what it is supposed to measure. Experts confirm the feedback of validity to ensure:

1. The easiness of the test to the students' understanding.
2. The familiarity of the test materials to the students.
3. The comprehensiveness of the tools to measure students' ability in using punctuation marks.

The test and the questionnaire in this study will be valid if they measure what they are supposed to measure. According to Davies (1990), validity is often discussed under face, content, predictive and concurrent. Face validity deals with the test and questionnaire lay out judgment. It is the logical sense that the test and questionnaire make. In this regard, the researcher asked some instructors of English language at University of Nyala to determine the face validity of the test and questionnaire, i.e. whether the test and questionnaire measure the correct use of punctuation marks or not. Their feedback has added more validity to the tools.

Content validity deals with the extent to which the test and the questionnaire provide a suitable sample of the contents of the syllabus. In other words, the items of the test and questionnaire should represent the things being measured. Content validity is not a statistical properly; it is rather a matter of expert judgment Vogt (1993). Accordingly, the researcher received feedback from the instructors of English language at the University of Nyala. They agreed that the test and questionnaire have content validity.

Predictive validity deals with the extent to which the results of the test and questionnaire predict some future outcome. In this concern, the test and questionnaire were based on filling format which require rule governing. Therefore, half of the test items are taken from the internet and the other half have been designed by the researcher with similar format. All the items revolved around filling answers. On the other hand, all the questionnaire items are developed by the researcher. The results of this investigation justify that the test and the questionnaire in this study were valid, because they measured what they supposed to measure.

### **3.5.2 Reliability**

Reliability of the test should yield the same scores if it is given to the same students in the same conditions in near future. In other words, reliability concerns the consistency of the test results Davies, (1990). Similarly, De Vos (2000:85) states that reliability is the degree of consistency between two independently derived sets of scores and the extent to which independent administrations of the same instrument yield similar results under comparable conditions. Similarly, reliability of the test is that the test should yield the same scores if it is given to the same group of students in the same conditions in the near future Polit and Hungler (1993). According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991), there are several ways to estimate the reliability:

1. Correlation of parallel tests.
2. Reliability check for equivalence judgments.
3. The principle of giving similar test for the second time.
4. Correlation between test and retest consistency.

The test in this study used No (4). It was administered to 30 students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality. Two weeks later, it was administered again for the same group in the same conditions. The aim of the test and the retest is to assess and identify the reliability.

Reliability analysis was conducted to measure statistical reliability coefficient of the test. Reliability is expressed as coefficient ranging from .000 to .001. The higher the coefficient, the more reliable the test is. According to Hazard and Lazaraton (1991), the reliability coefficient is always reported as a correlation (r) in several statistical measurements such as, T-test, Pearson Correlation, ANOVA, and Reliability Analysis. In this study Reliability Analysis has been used to measure the test and retest scores.

Table 3.1 (A&B) below shows the summary of the reliability analysis output of the test (**Appendix (C) p. 116**).

Table 3.1. Reliability Analysis for the Test and Retest Scores:

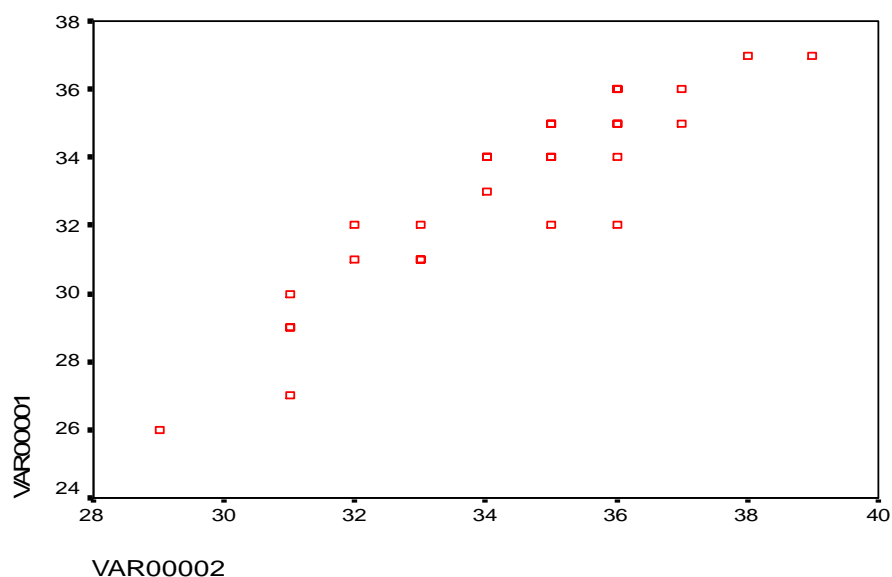
**A.**

Variables	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Test scores	33.6000	30	2.19089	.000
Retest scores	34.9000	30	2.05695	.000

**B.**

Variables	N	Correlation	Reliability coefficient	Sig.
Test scores	30			
Retest scores	30	.863	.925	.000

Graph 3.1. Test and Retest Correlation



As table 3.1(A) indicates, there is significant difference between the means of the test (mean = 33.60, Std. Deviation = 2.19) and retest (mean = 34.90, Std. Deviation = 2.05). The scatter plot in Graph (1) and Table 3.1(B) show that there is a high correlation (Correlation = .863 < .001) between the mean scores of the test and the retest. In other words, the Reliability coefficient (Alpha = .92.) The statistical analysis of the test and the retest implies that the test is reliable, thus; it involves the consistency of the test measurement. Davies (1990), states that reliability of a test must have at least a correlation of 0.9 which given a consistency of about 0.90 or 81%. This result indicates that the reliability of the test was within the acceptable range.

### **3.6. Pilot Study**

A pilot study is a preliminary study to tryout the tools and find out the problems before the main test was adopted. In this study, a pilot test was conducted to improve the test to be consistent research objectives and to enable the researcher to make all the necessary modifications before conducting the main study. It was applied to a group of 40 students from South Darfur Boys' Sudanese secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

They were chosen as sample for the pilot study. It forms 50% of the students' sample. They were given a test of unpunctuated sentences and a text to be filled by putting the correct punctuation marks. The total number of the test items was 23 sentences and the test was marked out of 48 marks. No misunderstanding and confusion about the sentences reported by the respondents and they were given the normal class time.

Depending on the data collected from the students, the researcher made use of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Method for the pilot study. T-retest is used to test the paired statistics (the difference between the pair of the same pre-test and the post test).

### 3.6.1. Discussion of the Results of the Pilot Study

To test the pilot study, Test–retest has been administered to a group of 40 students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality. Group (A) and Group (B) are the same 40 students. The data collected from the students was analyzed by a T-test method. However, the procedure of the pilot study was used for the following reasons:

1. The easiness of the test to the students' understanding.
2. To find out whether the test could cover all the area of the study problem.
3. To see whether the test could evaluate students' use of punctuation marks correctly without errors.
4. To discover the problems before the main study begins

**Table 3.2. Pre-test scores of the students who never receive punctuation Instruction in the pilot study.**

Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Results of Pilot study (1)	31.60	40	2.010	99.419	.000

Table 3.2. above shows the summary of the T-test output (Appendix (D) p. 117) of the pre-test scores of the sample group which does not receive punctuation instruction (group A).

**Table 3.3. Post-test scores of the students who receive punctuation Instruction in the pilot study.**

Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Results of Pilot study (2)	36.15	40	1.777	128.689	.000

Table 3.3. above shows the summary of the T-test output (Appendix (E) p. 118) of the pre-test scores of the sample group which receive punctuation instruction (group B).

**Table 3.4. Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students who use punctuation marks in the pilot study.**

Variable	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	t	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1 Results of pre test	-4.55	40	1.934	-14.878	.000
Results of post test					

Table 3.4. above indicates that, there is significant difference between the mean scores of group (A) which does not receive punctuation instruction and group (B) which receive punctuation instruction. ( $t = -14.878$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The mean scores of group (A) which does not receive punctuation instruction (mean = 31.60, and Std. = 2.010) is greater than the mean scores of group (B) which receive punctuation instruction (mean = 36.15, and Std. = 1.777). The results indicate that the punctuation instruction is more effective in improving students' standard on the use of punctuation marks.

Table 3.4 shows that, there is significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test (mean = 31.60, std. deviation = 2.010) and the post test (mean = 36.15, std. = 1.777)  $31.60 - 36.15 = -4.55$

### **3.7. Data Collection Procedures**

To collect the data, a questionnaire was given to teachers of English language. Its purpose was to collect data on teachers' perceptions about students' common writing errors based on their experience to investigate whether their perceptions matched with students' punctuation errors based on a written test. The teachers were asked to evaluate their students' use of punctuation marks and whether the syllabus provides punctuation marks as well. They were asked to submit it two weeks later.

A written test was administered to the students to know how far they were able to place punctuation marks correctly. They were told



about the purpose of the test which was to analyze their errors in an unpunctuated text and some sentences. The test was developed to check students' probable writing errors and also to compare these committed errors with teachers' experienced feedback on students' writing problems. Then, the researcher got in touch directly with the students to carry out the test. First, the researcher took permission from the headmasters and arranged the time for doing it. Then, the researcher told students about the test and explained how they insert punctuation marks in the text and the sentences. The researcher did the test in the classroom and gave students 60 minutes to complete it. After collecting the test papers, the researcher marked, analyzed and discussed it.

### **3.8. Methods of Data Analysis**

Data analysis in this study refers to the process of arranging the data sources and other materials that have been collected to enable the researcher to come up with findings. As for the questionnaire, the researcher tabulated the responses in tables of frequencies and percentages so as to be discussed.

As for the test, the researcher statistically analyzed it using SPSS program. Referring to the results of the above analysis of the questionnaire and the test, students should be remedied via a pedagogical intervention.

### **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter presented the methodology of the research. The researcher presented the participants of the research (students/teachers), the instruments employed for collecting data, and the techniques followed in analyzing and assessing students' writing performance. The chapter described the measures taken to maintain the validity and the reliability of the tools employed in the research.

## Chapter Four

### Data Analysis, Results and Discussion

This chapter aims to analyze and discuss the results of the students' test and the English language teachers' questionnaire. The chapter analyzes these two types of tools to obtain the results in order to show the significance of the research objectives. There were four questions which were asked at the beginning of the study in chapter one. Four hypotheses were derived from these questions. As for the reliability of the test, Alpha reliability Analysis of coefficient is 0.92. However, the analysis of the data in this chapter was implemented in accordance with the hypotheses stated in chapter one.

#### Teachers' Background Information

##### 1. Years of Teaching

Graph 4.1 The Frequency Distribution for the Study Respondents According to the Years of Teaching.

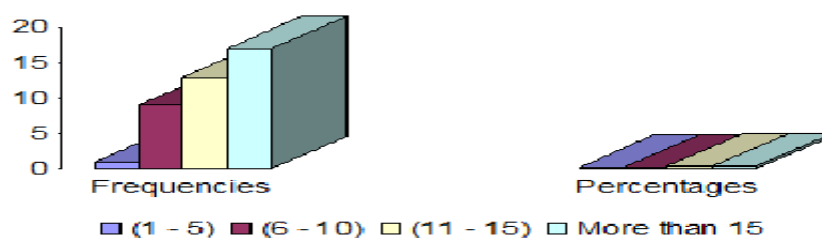


Table 4.1 The Frequency Distribution for the Study Respondents According to the Years of Teaching.

Number of years	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
(1 – 5)	01	02.5%	02.5%
(6 – 10)	09	22.5%	25%
(11 – 15)	13	32.5%	57.5%
More than 15	17	42.5%	100%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100%</b>	

Table 4.1 and Graph 4.1 indicate that majority of teachers have experience of teaching English 17(42%). This is to say that English language teachers have been long in teaching English in secondary schools. The other teachers their years of teaching is less than 15. They are 23(58%).

## 2. Gender

Graph 4.2 The Frequency Distribution for the Study According to Gender.

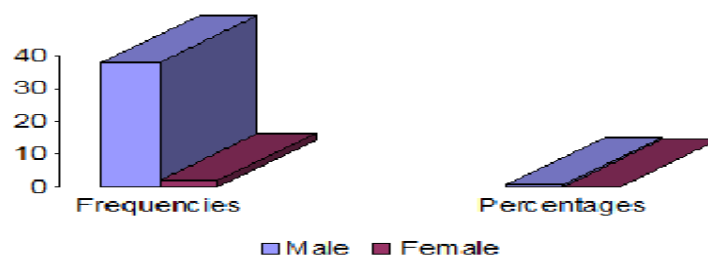


Table 4.2 The Frequency Distribution for the Study According to Gender.

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Male	38	95%	95%
Female	02	05%	100%
Total	40	100%	

Table 4.2 and graph 4.2 above, show that most of the respondents are male. Their number is 38 respondents with the percentage 95% compared with the female 2 with the percentage 5%.

### 4.1. Part (1) Students' Test

The students' test was analyzed using statistical method followed by the presentation of data analysis and findings for each hypothesis. Statistical analysis is the basic tool of measurement and evaluation that helped the researcher to organize and manipulate the data to answer the research questions. For calculating the data of the test, there were several methods. Therefore, the researcher used SPSS Inc, by Saad, Z. Bashir, (2003) V. 17. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient Method was used for the test analysis. The paired statistics (the difference between the pre-test and the post test) was used as measurements.

#### 4.1.1. Discussion of the Results of Students' Test

The data collected from the students was analyzed by a T-test. It is suitable statistical measurement to verify the study hypotheses. The data was collected from 80 students divided into two groups (group A/group B). Both groups were given pre-test then (group B) was given post test to compare it with (group B) in the pre-test. The analysis focused on the

variations of the (pre- and post tests) as means to justify the first and fourth hypotheses. In other words, students commit various errors due to wrong use of punctuation. In addition to that, the students' performance will significantly improve if punctuation specific topics are introduced into the syllabus. Hence, the test was used as a comparative variable.

Table 4.3 Pre-test Scores of the Students who never receive Punctuation Instruction (group B).

A.

**One-Sample Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of pre test (A)	40	28.90	2.658	.420

B.

**One-Sample Test**

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of pre test (A)	68.758	39	.000	28.90	28.05	29.75

Both tables 4.3 (A&B) show the out puts of the pre-test scores of the sample group which does not receive punctuation instruction. As tables above indicate, the (mean = 28.90, and std. deviation = 2.658). The number of students' errors they commit (mean = .420) indicated that these student s made various errors as they use punctuation marks.

Graph 4.3 Pre-test Scores of the Students who never receive Punctuation Instruction (group B).

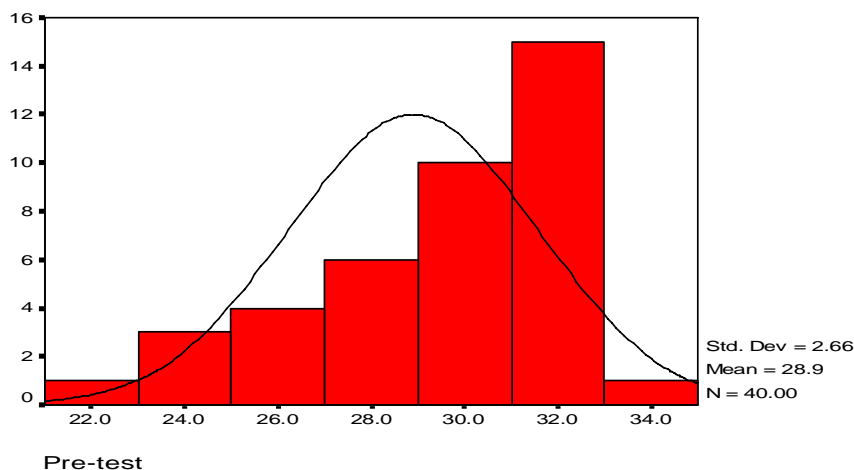


Table 4.3 and Graph 4.3 show that the mean scores of the pre-test before receiving punctuation instruction is (mean = 28.9) and the (std. deviation = 2.66).

Table 4.4 Pre-test Scores of the Students who never receive Punctuation Instruction (group A).

A.

**One-Sample Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of pre test (B)	40	29.35	2.992	.473

B.

**One-Sample Test**

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of pre test	62.043	39	.000	29.35	28.39	30.31

Both tables 4.4(A&B) show the T-test out puts of the pre-test scores of the sample group which does not receive instruction. As tables above indicate, the (mean = 29.35, and std. deviation = 2.992). The number of students' errors they commit (mean = .473) indicated that these student s made various errors as they use punctuation marks.

Graph 4.4 Pre-test Scores of the Students who never receive Punctuation Instruction (group A).

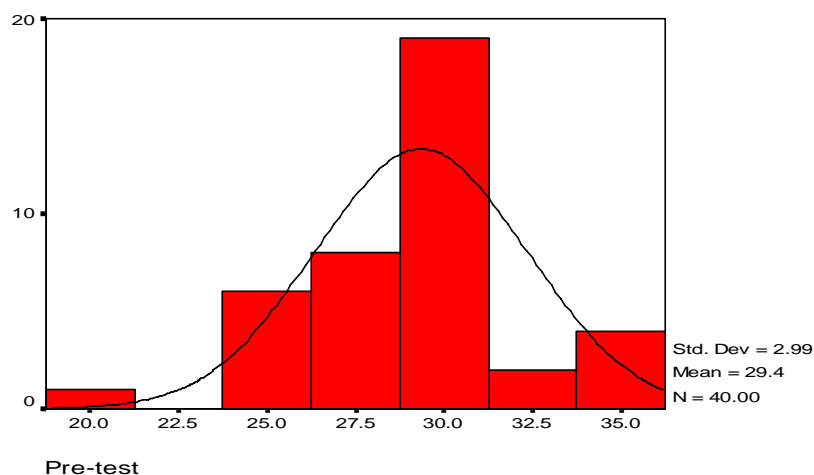


Table 4.4 and Graph 4.4 show that the mean scores of the pre-test before receiving punctuation instruction is (mean = 29.4) and the (std. deviation = 2.99).

Table 4.5 Post-test Scores of the Students who receive Punctuation Instruction (group B).

A.

**One-Sample Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of pre test	40	33.35	2.497	.395

B.

**One-Sample Test**

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of pre test	84.482	39	.000	33.35	32.55	34.15

Both tables 4.5(A&B) show the T-test out puts of the pre-test scores of the sample group which does not receive punctuation uses instruction. As tables above indicate, the (mean = 33.35, and std. deviation = 2.497). The number of students' errors they commit (mean = 395) indicated that these student s made various errors as they use punctuation marks.

Graph 4.5 Post test Scores of the Students who receive Punctuation Instruction (group B).

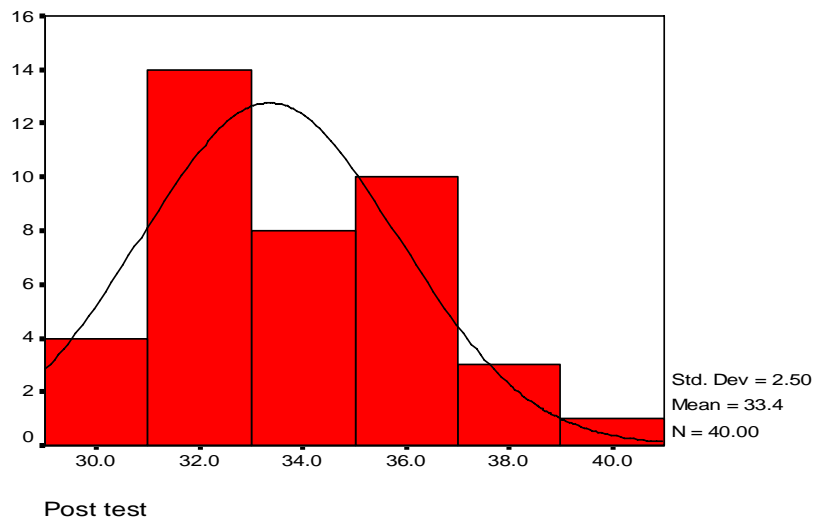


Table 4.5 and Graph 4.5 show that the mean scores of the pre-test before receiving punctuation instruction is (mean = 33.4) and the (std. deviation = 2.50). These results are shown before students received punctuation treatment.

Table 4.6 Pre-test (group A) and Post-test (group B) Variations of Students' Scores in the use of Punctuation Marks.

A.

**Paired Samples Statistics**

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Results of pre test (A)	29.35	40	2.992	.473
	Results of post test (B)	33.35	40	2.497	.395

B.

**Paired Sample Test**

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig.(2tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower				Upper
Pair 1	Results of pre test & Results of post test	-4.00	1.974	.312	-4.63	-3.37	-12.814	39	.000

Both tables 4.4 (A&B) and 4.5 (A&B) show the T-test outputs of pre-test scores before receiving punctuation instruction and post test scores after receiving punctuation instruction. As table 4.4 (B) show, the pre-test indicates the (mean = 29.35, and std. deviation = 2.992). The post test indicates the (mean = 33.35, std. deviation =2.497). The results show that there are great differences in using punctuation marks between both pre-test and post test. Table 4.6 indicates that there is significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-test and the mean scores of the post test. The mean scores of the post test which receive punctuation instruction (mean =33.35) is smaller than the mean score of the pre-test which does not receive punctuation instruction (mean = 29.35).

The pair difference between the mean scores of the post test and the pre-test is  $29.35 - 33.35 = -4.00$  and the std. deviation is 1.974. In table 4.6 (B) T-test = -12.814 with Sig (.000), and this value is less than statistical significant (0.05). This indicates that, there are differences of statistical significant between the Pre-test and the Post test.

C.

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Results of pre test & Results of post test	40	.756	.000

The Paired Samples Correlation of table 4.5. (C) presents the relationship between the marks of both (Pre-test and Post test) which is (.756). Sig is (.000). This number indicates that there is no significant correlation between the pair.

## 4.2. Part (2) Teachers' Questionnaire

### 4.2.1. Discussion of the Results of Teachers' Questionnaire.

This questionnaire was designed to elicit data from teachers of English about their opinions on punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in writing. The questionnaire was composed of 20 statements. It was designed in accordance with Likert's 5-points scales. (Appendix (B) p.113) The validity of the tool was checked by a panel of experts. The researcher distributes it to 40 English language teachers at secondary school in Nyala Locality based on convenience random sampling. The present study stated four hypotheses assimilate to the questions of the study. The researcher will analyze them in an attempt to solve the problem and answer its questions. To quantify the scores, the researcher calculates the frequencies using the formula below.

$$\text{Formula: } P = \frac{F}{N} \times 100\%$$

P = Percentage (students' mastery)

F = Frequency (students' score)

N = Total number of respondents (students).

### The First Hypothesis.

The first hypothesis which the study raised is:

There are various types of punctuation errors committed by students of secondary schools in SPINE 6 textbook due to the wrong uses of punctuation marks.



The first seven statements were phrased in comparison with the first hypothesis of the study to avoid complexity. These statements were answered by the respondents in the below tables to show teachers opinions illustrated in frequencies and percentages.

Graph 4.6 Lack of Punctuation Teaching Methods.

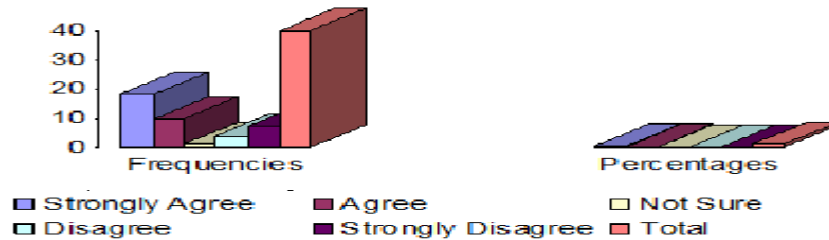


Table 4.7 Lack of Punctuation Teaching Methods.

1. I lack methods of teaching students of secondary schools punctuation marks.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	18	45.00%	45.00%
Agree	10	25.00%	70.00%
Not sure	01	02.50%	72.50%
Disagree	04	10.00%	82.50%
Strongly disagree	07	17.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.7 indicates that 70% of teachers say that students commit punctuation errors. They lack punctuation teaching methods to follow in teaching. Only 27.5% of them think that they use methods. 2.5% are unsure to decide their choice. It is expected that teachers of English lack methods for teaching. Of course, the methods are necessary especially for untrained teachers to use while teaching punctuation.

Graph 4.7 Teaching Punctuation from Students' Mistakes



Table 4.8 Teaching Punctuation from Students' Mistakes.

2. I teach students punctuation based on their mistakes they commit in writing.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	17	42.50%	42.50%
Agree	12	30.00%	72.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	75.00%

Disagree	04	10.00%	85.00%
Strongly disagree	06	15.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.8 and graph 4.7 show that 72.5% of teachers believe that they based their teaching punctuation on students' mistakes. This finding indicates that teachers correct students' mistakes only when they commit errors. 25% think that they do not depend on their students' mistakes as a method for teaching punctuation. 2.5% of teachers are unsure to decide. Of course, teaching from mistakes is effective method for error correction. In addition, they need explanation and exercises for practice.

Graph 4.8 Ignorance of Punctuation Teaching

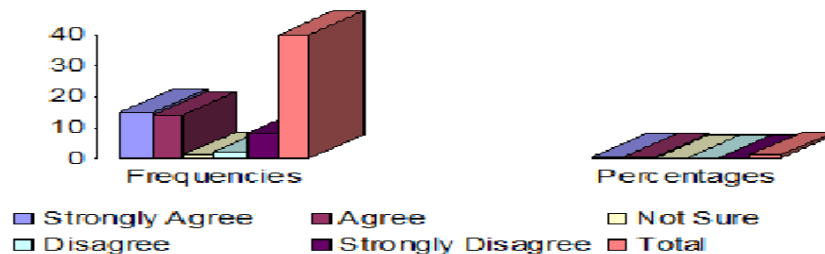


Table 4.9 Ignorance of Punctuation Teaching.

3. I ignore teaching students the use of punctuation marks.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	15	37.50%	37.50%
Agree	14	35.00%	72.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	75.00%
Disagree	02	05.00%	80.00%
Strongly disagree	08	20.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.9 indicates that 72.5% of teachers believed that they ignore teaching punctuation marks. This indicates that in spite of the necessity of punctuation in teaching, it is neglected. On the other side, 25% of teachers think that it is important to teach their students punctuation. 2.5% are unsure to decide. It is not expected that teachers ignore teaching punctuation. Of course, teaching punctuation should be taken into consideration while teachers dealing with writing.

Graph 4.9 Lack of Objectives for Teaching Punctuation

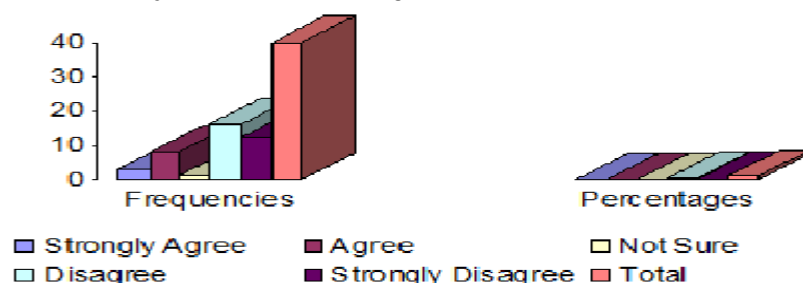


Table 4.10 Lack of Objectives for Teaching Punctuation.

<b>4. The syllabus provides clear objectives for teaching punctuation to be achieved by teachers.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	03	07.50%	07.50%
Agree	08	20.00%	27.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	30.00%
Disagree	16	40.00%	70.00%
Strongly disagree	12	30.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.10 implies that 70% of teachers say that the English syllabus lacks objectives to be achieved by teachers. This finding shows that the syllabus lacks objectives of punctuation that teachers should follow. 27.5% of teachers think that the syllabus provides objectives for punctuation teaching. 2.5% of teachers are not sure to decide. Of course, objectives are very impotent as part of teaching planning.

Graph 4.10 Teaching Punctuation without Examples.

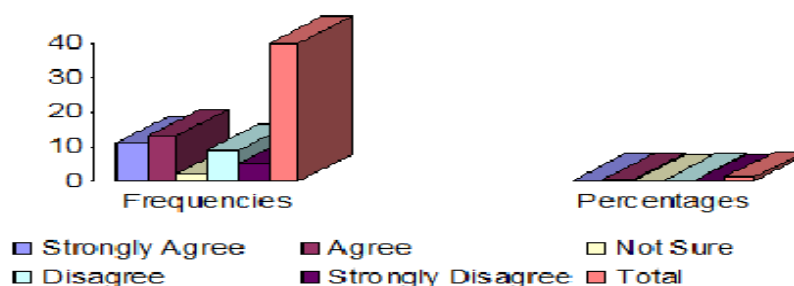


Table 4.11 Teaching Punctuation without Examples.

<b>5. I teach students the use of punctuation without giving examples for illustration.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	11	27.50%	27.50%
Agree	13	32.50%	60.00%
Not sure	02	05.00%	65.00%
Disagree	09	22.50%	87.50%
Strongly disagree	05	12.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.11 implies that 60% of teachers believe that students make punctuation errors because teachers do not use examples as explaining the use of punctuation marks. However, 35% think that when teaching punctuation they use examples to illustrate the uses of punctuation. Only

5% are unsure to decide. Of course, using examples is very necessary for clarification and facilitating students' understanding to use punctuation marks correctly in written exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts).

Graph 4.11 Teaching Students all types of Punctuation.

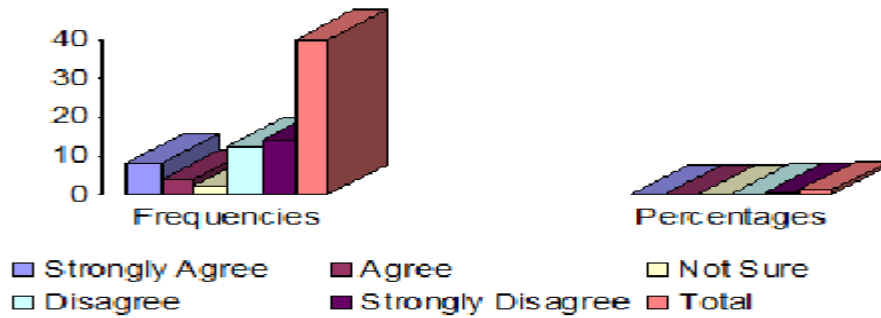


Table 4.12 Teaching Students all types of Punctuation.

6. I teach students all types of punctuation marks that help them write correctly.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	08	20.00%	20.00%
Agree	04	10.00%	30.00%
Not sure	02	05.00%	35.00%
Disagree	12	30.00%	65.00%
Strongly disagree	14	35.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

This statement investigates whether or not teachers of English language teach all types of punctuation marks. In replying this statement 20% of teachers strongly agreed and 10% agreed. These two make 30%. On the other hand, 30% disagreed and 35% strongly disagreed. These two percentages make 65%. This finding indicates that teachers think that they do not teach all types of punctuation marks. 5% of teachers are unsure to decide. Of course, teaching all types of punctuation marks is very important in writing. However, teachers should focus and pay them more consideration.

Graph 4.12 Punctuation Teaching Feedback.

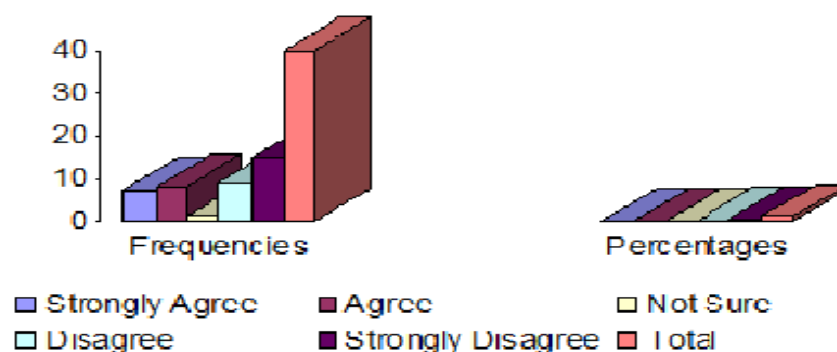


Table 4.13 Punctuation Teaching Feedback.

<b>7. The syllabus reflects the teaching process of punctuation marks.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	07	17.50%	17.50%
Agree	08	20.00%	37.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	40.00%
Disagree	09	22.50%	62.50%
Strongly disagree	15	37.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.13 indicates that 60% of teachers believe that students encounter a problem of committing punctuation errors because the syllabus does not provide punctuation teaching. 37.5% of the teachers think that the syllabus reflects punctuation teaching. Only 2.5% are unsure to decide. This indicates that punctuation materials are not manifested in students' textbook. Therefore, teachers should concentrate on punctuation exercises that assist them to punctuate correctly to improve their writing as well as explanation.

### **The hypothesis confirmation.**

In the light of the discussion of the statements concerned the first hypothesis, there are various punctuation errors made by students. Therefore, they are very weak due to the wrong use of punctuation marks. This weakness might refer to lack of methods, motivation, objectives and lack of using examples for illustration. The results of the first hypothesis are acceptable.

### **The Second Hypothesis.**

The second hypothesis which the study raised is as follow:

There is weakness in students of secondary schools' writing due to lack of punctuation teaching provided by teachers.

The following five statements were constructed in comparison with the second hypothesis to avoid complication of the analysis. These statements were answered by the respondents in the corresponding tables

to the statements to show the teachers' opinions illustrated in the way of frequencies and percentages.

Graph 4.13 Teaching the Common used Punctuation Marks.

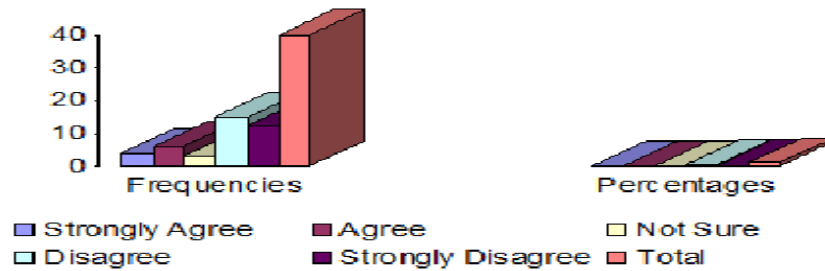


Table 4.14 Teaching the Common used Punctuation Marks.

<b>8. I teach students the use of punctuation marks that are commonly used in writing</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	04	10.00%	10.00%
Agree	06	15.00%	25.00%
Not sure	03	07.50%	32.50%
Disagree	15	37.50%	70.00%
Strongly disagree	12	30.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.14 indicates that 67.5% of the teachers make sure that students commit errors when they use punctuation marks due to the less explanation of the punctuation marks. 25% of the teachers think that the syllabus provides explanation of the uses of punctuation marks. 7.5% of them are unsure to decide. It is expected that teachers do not explain the use of punctuation marks. However, it is necessary for teachers to give a thorough explanation to facilitate the understanding of these marks.

Graph 4.14 Teaching the Functions of Punctuation.

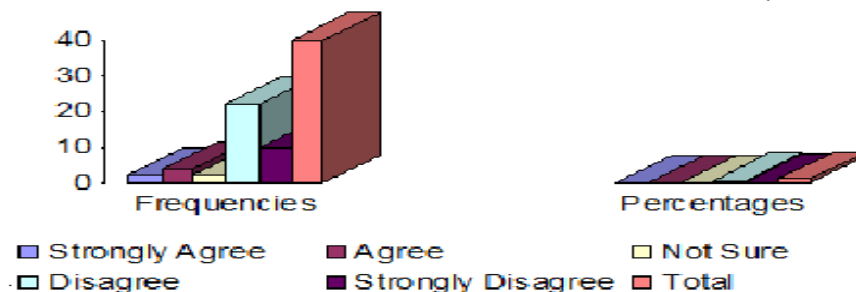


Table 4.15 Teaching the Functions of Punctuation.

<b>9. I teach students the functions of punctuation marks.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	02	05.00%	05.00%
Agree	04	10.00%	15.00%

Not sure	02	05.00%	20.00%
Disagree	22	55.00%	75.00%
Strongly disagree	10	25.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

According to table 4.15 above, 80% of the teachers believe that they do not teach the functions of punctuation marks. 15% think that they explain the use of punctuation marks. 5% are unsure to decide. This finding indicates that teachers do not explain the functions of punctuation marks. Of course, the functions such as pauses, stops or encloses are necessary and their negligence leads students to commit errors.

Graph 4.15 Providing Sufficient Punctuation Explanation.

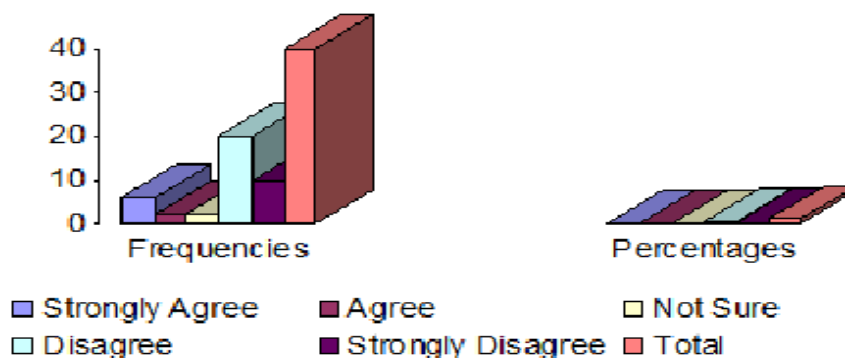


Table 4.16 Providing Sufficient Punctuation Explanation.

<b>10 . The syllabus provides sufficient explanation of punctuation teaching.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	06	15.00%	15.00%
Agree	02	05.00%	20.00%
Not sure	02	05.00%	25.00%
Disagree	20	50.00%	75.00%
Strongly disagree	10	25.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

This statement checks to what extent SPINE 6 provides sufficient explanation. For responding this statement, 15% of the teachers strongly agreed and 5% of teachers agreed. These two percentages make 20%. According to their opinions SPINE (6) provides explanation of punctuation. On the other hand, 50% disagreed and 25% strongly disagreed. These two make 75% while 5% of them are unsure to decide. This finding indicates that majority of teachers believe that the book

does not have punctuation explanation. Explanation is necessary; it facilitates students' understanding to punctuation.

Graph 4.16 Teaching the needed Punctuation Marks.

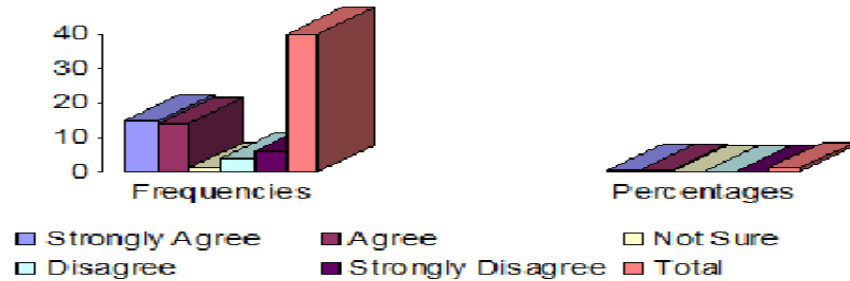


Table 4.17 Teaching the needed Punctuation Marks.

11. I teach students punctuation marks that they need in writing.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	15	37.50%	37.50%
Agree	14	35.00%	72.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	75.00%
Disagree	04	10.00%	85.00%
Strongly disagree	06	15.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

This statement checks to what extent teachers explain to students the punctuation marks they needed in writing. In responding 37.5% of teachers strongly agreed and 35% agreed. These two make 72.5%. However, 10% disagreed and 15% strongly disagreed. These two make 25%. Only 2.5% of teachers are unsure. This finding confirms that teachers focus on punctuation marks needed in writing. Therefore, teachers need to focus and emphasize on all types of punctuation marks.

Graph 4.17 Explaining Punctuation through Reading Passages.

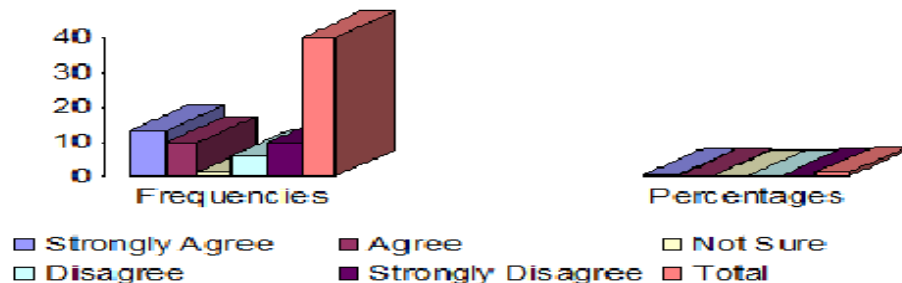


Table 4.18 Explaining Punctuation through Reading Passages.

12. I explain punctuation while teaching reading comprehension passages only.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	13	32.50%	32.50%
Agree	10	25.00%	45.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	60.00%



Disagree	06	15.00%	75.00%
Strongly disagree	10	25.00%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.18 indicates that 57.5% of teachers think that they explain punctuation as teaching reading passages. 40% of the teachers teach punctuation through reading passages. 2.5% of them are unsure to decide. It is expected that teachers might use other means of explaining the use of punctuation.

### The hypothesis confirmation.

As discussing the second hypothesis, students encounter punctuation problems. According to the analysis above, the students are weak due to lack of punctuation teaching. The results of the second hypothesis are accepted.

### The Third Hypothesis.

The third hypothesis which the study raised is as follow:

English SPINE (6) textbook does not provide sufficient exercises on punctuation marks for practice.

The statements number 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 were formed in comparison with hypothesis No (3) to eschew analysis sophistication. These statements were illustrated in the tables below to show teachers' opinions.

Graph 4.18 Using Exercises exist in SPINE for Practice.

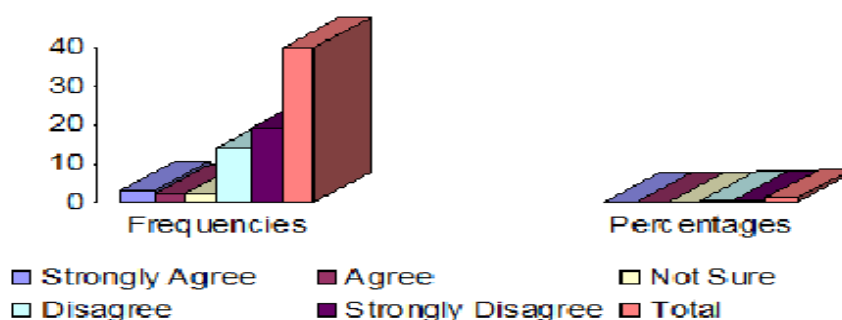


Table 4.19 Using Exercises exist in SPINE for Practice.

13. I teach students punctuation marks through exercises exist in the syllabus.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	03	07.50%	07.50%
Agree	02	05.00%	12.50%
Not sure	02	05.00%	17.50%

Disagree	14	35.00%	52.50%
Strongly disagree	19	47.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.19 indicates that 47.5% of the teachers strongly agreed and 35% agreed. These two percentages make 82.5%. These finding states that students commit errors when they use punctuation marks as a result of insufficient exercises exist provided by the syllabus. Only 12.5% of the teachers think that the syllabus provides enough exercises. 5% of teachers are unsure to decide. It is expected that students commit errors due to lack of punctuation exercises for them to use. Of course, punctuation exercises provide chances for students to apply the marks. They also play role in improving students' performance writing.

Graph 4.19 Providing Sufficient Exercises

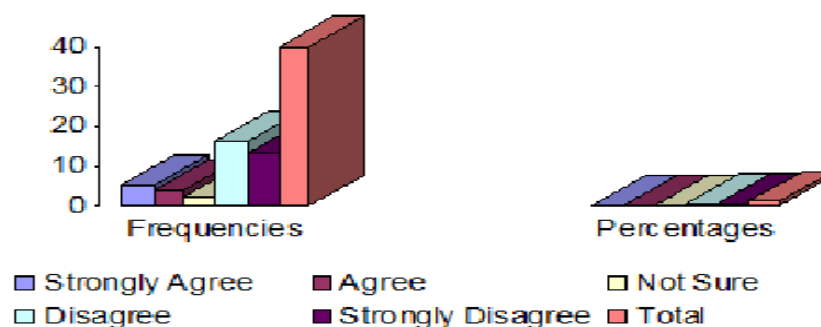


Table 4.20 Providing Sufficient Exercises

14. The syllabus provides sufficient punctuation exercises for students to practice.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	05	12.50%	12.50%
Agree	04	10.00%	22.50%
Not sure	02	05.00%	27.50%
Disagree	16	40.00%	67.50%
Strongly disagree	13	32.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

This statement investigates whether or not the syllabus provides sufficient punctuation exercises. In responding this statement 12.5% of the teachers strongly agreed and 10% of them agreed. These two percentages make 22.5%. This finding indicates that SPINE (6) provides enough exercises. Only 72.5% of teachers think that the syllabus lacks sufficient exercises for students to practise. 5% of them are unsure to

decide. It is expected that students commit errors because of the insufficient punctuation exercises. Of course, practice is very necessary to reinforce the skill and improve students' performance.

Graph 4.20 Providing Opportunities for Practice.

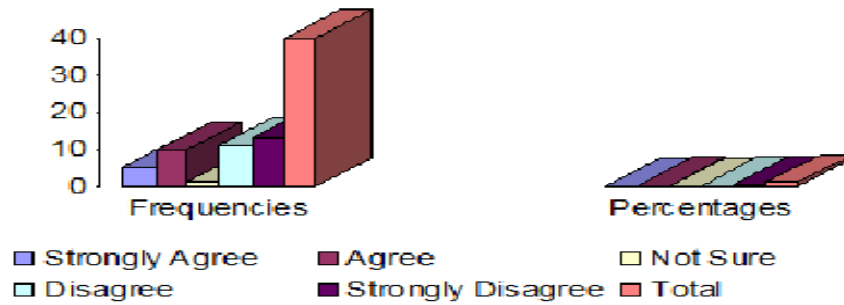


Table 4.21 Providing Opportunities for Practice.

15. I give students opportunities to use punctuation marks through applying them in exercises.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	05	12.50%	12.50%
Agree	10	25.00%	37.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	40.00%
Disagree	11	27.50%	67.50%
Strongly disagree	13	32.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.21 and graph 4.20 check to what extent teachers of English language provide opportunities for students to practice punctuation. 12.5% of teachers strongly agreed and 25% agreed. These two make 37.5%. However, 2.5% of teachers are not sure. On the other side, 27.5% disagreed and 32.5% strongly disagreed. These two makes 60%. This finding indicates that the syllabus does not provide students with opportunities to use punctuation marks which can be reflected in their exercises. According to this finding, teachers believe that their students should have chances to perform some tasks on punctuation.

Graph 4.21 Teaching Punctuation without Exercises.

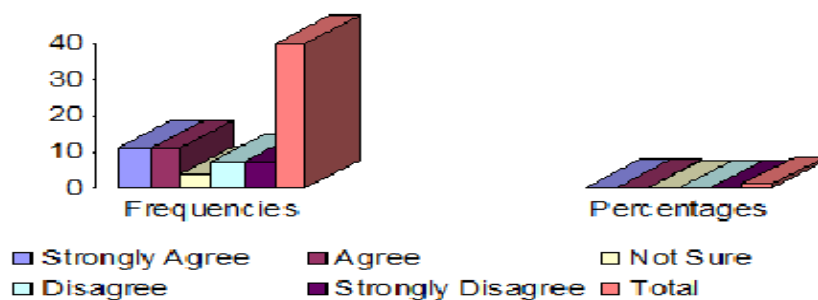


Table 4.22 Teaching Punctuation without Exercises.

<b>16. I teach students the use of punctuation marks only without exercises for practice.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	11	27.50%	27.50%
Agree	11	27.50%	55.00%
Not sure	04	10.00%	65.00%
Disagree	07	17.50%	82.50%
Strongly disagree	07	17.50%	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

Table 4.22 states that 55% of teachers used to teach punctuation without exercises. 35% of teachers think that their students apply the use of punctuation in exercises. 10% are not sure to decide. This indicates that students do not practice the use of punctuation marks in exercises. Therefore, their standard might be weak in punctuation and unable to use punctuation marks correctly. Of course, teachers need to provide students with exercises to reinforce punctuation skill.

Graph 4.22 Encouraging Students to Practise Punctuation.

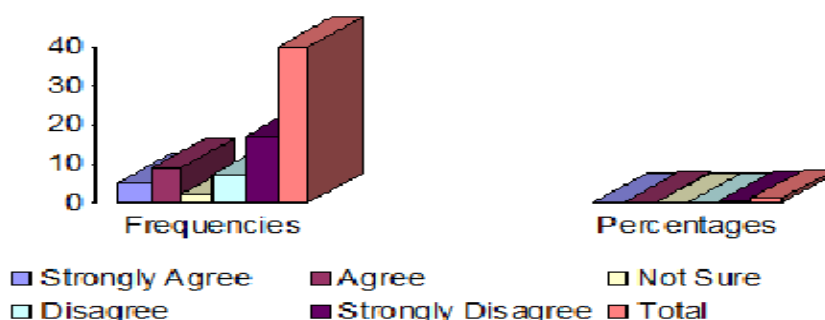


Table 4.23 Encouraging Students to Practise Punctuation.

<b>17. The syllabus encourages students to do some works on different types of punctuation marks.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	05	12.50%	12.50%
Agree	09	22.50%	35.00%
Not sure	02	05.00%	40.00%
Disagree	07	17.50%	57.50%
Strongly disagree	17	42.50%	100.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>100.00</b>	

Referring to statement in table 4.23 and graph 4.22 above, 12.5% of teachers strongly agreed and 22.5% of teachers agreed. These two percentages make 35%. This finding revealed that, the syllabus does not encourage students to use punctuation. On the other hand, 42.5% of

teachers strongly disagreed and 17.5% disagreed. These two make 60% while 5% of teachers are not sure to decide. Therefore, teachers of English should focus on punctuation exercises and encourage their students to have more practice. Teachers also should emphasize on the importance of punctuation marks. Their wrong uses will change the meaning of sentences.

**The hypothesis confirmation.**

As discussing the third hypothesis, students of secondary schools encounter a problem in punctuation. According to the analysis above, the students are weak and commit errors due to lack of punctuation exercises provided by the syllabus. The third hypothesis is accepted.

**The Fourth Hypothesis.**

The fourth hypothesis which the study raised is as follow:

The students' performance in writing will significantly improve if punctuation specific topics are introduced into the syllabus.

The last three statements number were formed in comparison with hypothesis No (4) to obviate entanglement in the course of the analysis. These statements were illustrated in the three tables below to show teachers' views in frequencies and percentages.

Graph 4.23 Lack of Punctuation Topics.

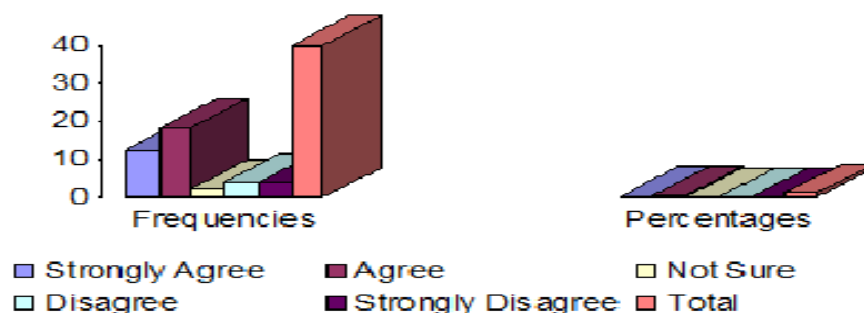


Table 4.24 Lack of Punctuation Topics.

<b>18. I do not find punctuation topics in the syllabus for teaching them to students.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	12	30.00%	30.00%
Agree	18	45.00%	75.00%
Not sure	02	05.00%	80.00%
Disagree	04	10.00%	90.00%
Strongly disagree	04	10.00%	100.00%

Total	40	100.00	
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Table 4.24 and graph 4.23 state that 75% of teachers believe that SPINE textbook does not contain topics of punctuation marks. On the other hand, 20% of teachers think that the book of SPINE comprises punctuation topics they need in writing. However, 5% of teachers are unsure to decide. This finding shows that punctuation topics are not exist in the syllabus although they are very important in writing. Therefore, teachers should do their best to deal with them.

Graph 4.24 Motivating Students to use Punctuation.

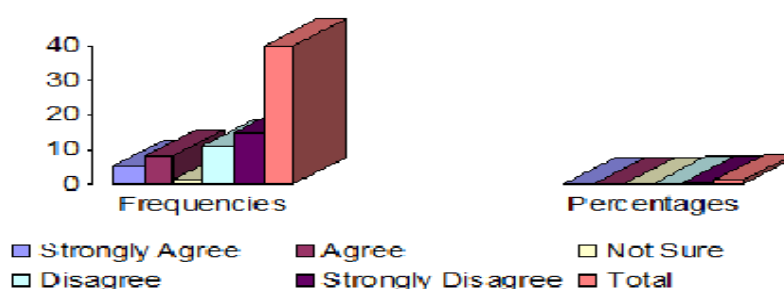


Table 4.25 Motivating Students to use Punctuation.

19. I motivate students to do some works on punctuation marks.	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative percent
Strongly agree	05	12.50%	12.50%
Agree	08	20.00%	32.50%
Not sure	01	02.50%	35.00%
Disagree	11	27.50%	62.50%
Strongly disagree	15	37.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.00	

Table 4.25 shows that 65% of the teachers do not motivate their students to use punctuation marks. 32.5% of the teachers think that they motivate their students towards the use of punctuation marks. Only 2.5% of the teachers are unsure to decide. Of course, motivation is very important in teaching stimulation. Therefore, teachers should encourage their students to use punctuation correctly.

Graph 4.25 Providing Additional Exercises

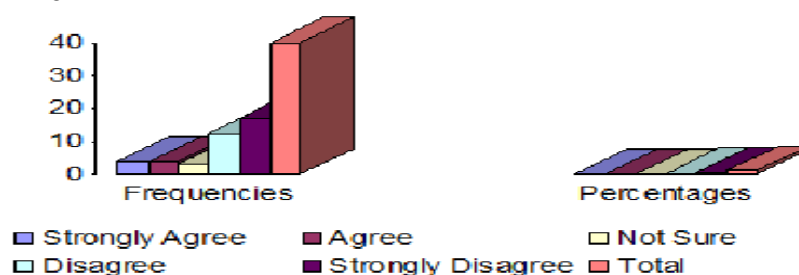


Table 4.26 Providing Additional Exercises

<b>20. The syllabus provides teachers of English with additional exercises to support their students with more practice.</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative percent</b>
Strongly agree	04	10.00%	10.00%
Agree	04	10.00%	20.00%
Not sure	03	07.50%	27.50%
Disagree	12	30.00%	57.50%
Strongly disagree	17	42.50%	100.00
Total	40	100.0	

This statement checks whether or not SPINE 6 provides additional exercises. For responding this statement, 20% of teachers think that SPINE provides exercises. Supplementary exercises are very important in teaching punctuation to improve students' performance. 7.5% are not sure to decide. On the other hand, 72.5% of teachers think that SPINE textbook does not provide additional exercises. This shows that teachers do not give students more exercises of punctuation for more practice. This lack might be the causes of students' weakness in punctuation.

#### **The hypothesis confirmation.**

As discussing the fourth hypothesis, students of secondary schools encounter a problem in punctuation. According to the analysis above, the students are weak due to lack of punctuation exercises provided by the syllabus and teaching. The third hypothesis is confirmed.

### **4.3. Verification of the Research Hypotheses**

In the present study there were four hypotheses which correspond to the study questions. The researcher discusses them to see to what extent they have been confirmed or rejected in the light of the results obtained. The hypotheses are as follows:

#### **4.3.1. Hypothesis No (1)**

1. The first hypothesis which the study raised is:

There are various types of punctuation errors committed by students of secondary schools in SPINE (6) textbook due to the wrong uses of punctuation marks.

This hypothesis can be validated by the exploration in tables (4.7), (4.8), (4.9), (4.10), (4.11), (4.12) and (4.13) which displayed high percentages given by the respondents in the teachers' questionnaire which correspond to the following percentages (70%), (72.5%), (72.5%), (70%), (60%), (65%) and (60%) respectively. The above percentages were derived from adding the first and second option values of Strongly agree and Agree except the tables (4.10), (4.12) and (4.13) which were formed by adding Disagree and Strongly disagree.

The analysis exploration in (section: 4.1.1) indicates that students commit various errors in the use of punctuation marks. However, this was proved by many respondents in teachers' questionnaire, in addition to the pre-test in table 4.3(A&B) & 4.4(A&B) see (**Appendix (F) p. 119**). The researcher attributes the reasons of making errors to lack of teaching methods, ignorance of teaching punctuation marks, lack of punctuation explanation through rules and examples and concentration on specific punctuation marks. These results confirm the first hypothesis of the study. i.e. students of secondary schools commit errors when they use punctuation marks in writing. These results support the findings of several researchers who investigated punctuation errors made by students e.g. (Ahmed Awad, 2012, Lia Rahmawati 2014, Hacker, 1995, and Meta Kartika Wati 2014). The findings of the above mentioned studies emphasized the results found by the present study.

#### 4.3.2. Hypothesis No (2)

2. The second hypothesis raised by the study is:

There is weakness in students of secondary schools' standard due to lack of punctuation teaching provided by teachers.

The statements associated to the second hypothesis were verified by the following tables (4.14), (4.15), (4.16), (4.17) and (4.18) which displayed high percentage given by the respondents in the teachers' questionnaire. They correspond to the following percentages (67.5%),



(80%), (75%), (72.5%) and (57.5%) successively. The first three percentages were generated from adding the option rates of Disagree and Strongly agree whereas (72.5%) and (57.5%) were formed by adding the first and second options Strongly agree and Agree.

However, the results of this study indicate that majority of students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality lack the correct uses of punctuation marks. This is mostly due to the reasons that the syllabus provides insufficient explanation of punctuation. Teachers of secondary schools stage never teach the functions of punctuation marks. Teachers think that teaching punctuation marks is necessary only when they teach comprehension passages. They need them there for asking comprehension questions. Therefore, there is no need to be taught.

#### 4.3.3. Hypothesis No (3)

3. The third hypothesis which the study raised is:

English SPINE (6) textbook does not provide sufficient exercises on punctuation marks for practice.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the findings of the study in tables (4.19), (4.20), (4.21), (4.22) and (4.23) which displayed high percentage given by the respondents in the teachers' questionnaire which correspond to the following percentages (82.5%), (72.5%), (60%), (55%) and (60%) alternatively. The above percentages were generated by adding the fourth and fifth option values of Disagree and Strongly disagree, except for the table (4.22) which is formed from Strongly agree and Agree. These results imply that the percentages shown by the respondents were high. The results obtained from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire reflected that the statements supported the hypothesis.

The fact stemmed from the results stated that there is weakness in students' performance in the use of punctuation marks. In other words, most students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality commit errors due to the lack exercises provided by the syllabus. These results support the

findings of El beshary (2006) who investigated the same results of errors made by students. The errors are due to the inadequate punctuation activities presented in the SPINE (6) textbook. In addition to that, the researcher perused SPNE (6) textbooks particularly but there were nothing of exercises about punctuation. Therefore, this survey and the results of the respondents confirmed the validation of the third hypothesis.

#### 4.3.4. Hypothesis No (4)

4. The fourth hypothesis which the study raised is:

The students' performance in writing will significantly improve if punctuation specific topics are introduced into the syllabus.

This hypothesis is confirmed by the findings of the study in tables (4.24), (4.25), and (4.26) which displayed high percentage given by the respondents in the teachers' questionnaire which correspond to the following percentages (75%), (65%) and (72.5%) alternatively. The above percentages were generated by adding the fourth and fifth option values of Disagree and Strongly disagree. Except for the first table (4.24) which is added from Strongly agree and Agree. These results state that the percentages obtained from the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire supported the hypothesis.

On the contrary, the results of the pre-test and the post test indicate that there were variations between the two tests. The variations in the frequencies of errors show the great difference and improvement of students after the treatment. Therefore, this progress confirms the fourth hypothesis of the study (**Appendix (F) p.119**).

Furthermore, the results deduced from the pilot study section (3.6) justify that punctuation treatment is more effective to improve students' standard. This result has been inferred from the T-test output in table (3.2) in which the mean score of the pre-test (mean = 31.60, std.

deviation = 2.010) is considered very low compared with the mean score of the post test (mean = 36.15, std. deviation = 1.777) in table (3.3). It is inferred that the post test provide the solution for these errors made by students, because the variation between the two tests indicated that there is great progress in students' performance Table 4.6 matched with the total marks of the test which is 48. These results confirmed the fourth hypothesis of the study which is stated above. i.e. the standard of the students will significantly improve if they receive teaching and additional practice provided by the syllabus. Therefore, the responses confirmed the validation of the fourth hypothesis.

Generally, these results reflect the lack of knowledge of punctuation marks among students of secondary schools particularly in the use of punctuation marks. However, these results of error analysis being reached can be generalized to other areas.

#### **4.4. The Findings of the Study**

Data analysis, interpretation yielded and the results of the study showed the following findings:

1. Lack of punctuation exercises provided by SPINE (6) textbook that students of secondary schools should practise to improve their writing.
2. There is weakness in students' punctuation writing due to the lack of punctuation teaching provided by the English teachers.
3. Punctuation specific topics will significantly improve students' performance in writing if are introduced into the English syllabus.

There are other additional findings illustrated in the end of each table of teachers' questionnaire and students' test discussed in chapter four.

#### **Summary of the Chapter**

This chapter aims to analyze and discuss the results of students' test and teachers' questionnaire. The questionnaire was given to teachers to assess their students' difficulties as they use punctuation marks and test administered to students.

T-retest was used to determine students' performance in punctuation. Pre-test and post test were compared to determine the variations between them. Tables of the test results have been discussed using SPSS program. The results of each table was analyzed, discussed and interpreted.

The teachers' questionnaire was divided into four groups. Tables of percentages and frequencies have been formed and under each table there is discussion. The responses of the respondents of each statement were discussed. They were used as methods to identify and calculate the frequencies of errors in the tables.

As revealed in the results of the test and the questionnaire in chapter four, the hypotheses stated were confirmed.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Summary, Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies**

This chapter will present a summary of the whole study. It will also present conclusions for its results and findings. Recommendations stemmed from the findings will be made. The chapter finally offers some suggestions for further studies.

#### **5.1. Summary:**

The purpose of the study is to analyze punctuation errors students of secondary schools encounter in using punctuation marks. It attempts to investigate the difficulties pertaining to punctuation. The study also aimed at investigating the effect of negligence of punctuation exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts). The study also aims to investigate the insufficient explanation of punctuation which affects students' understanding and causes errors among the uses of punctuation marks.

The present study provided a general description of punctuation and characteristics. Research on punctuation as presented in the literature review revealed that they are difficult to be used. Researches that deal with punctuation errors revealed that students lack the conventional uses of punctuation marks which were seen as a result of their negligence in the syllabus.

The researcher adopted both descriptive and analytical methods in the study. The objectives of the study were to investigate the difficulties of understanding and using punctuation marks. To collect the required data, the researcher designed a pre-test and a post test on punctuation for students, in addition to a questionnaire given to some English teachers at secondary schools. The tests were administered to students in some

secondary schools. It was developed by the researcher to measure the students' abilities in understanding and using punctuation marks correctly. The teachers' questionnaire was meant for teachers of English in secondary schools. It aimed to assess teachers' views on the effect of using punctuation marks on students' understanding. It also tried to see their opinions about the learning and teaching punctuation and how they should be treated in the syllabus. The validity of the research instruments was verified by a group of English language experts. As for the reliability of the test, the researcher used test-retest method to verify the reliability. Alpha Correlation Coefficient was used to measure the reliability.

To investigate and discuss the research problem, four questions were particularly raised.

1. What are the punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in writing
2. To what extent is there a lack of punctuation teaching at secondary schools provided by teachers?
3. To what extent does English SPINE (6) provide sufficient exercises on punctuation marks?
4. To what extent is it possible to improve the standard of the students through punctuation explanation in SPINE (6) textbook?

Based on the questions above, four hypotheses were generated.

The first hypothesis stated that there are various types of errors made by students of secondary due to the wrong use of punctuation. It was supported and confirmed by the results of the various errors made by students' in the test.

The second hypothesis stated the weakness of students' standard due to the lack of punctuation teaching provided by teachers. This

hypothesis was strongly supported by the English teachers as seen in their responses to the questionnaire's questions.

The third hypothesis indicated that there are insufficient exercises of punctuation in the syllabus. This hypothesis was also confirmed by the teachers' responses to the questionnaire's questions and the researcher's peruse to SPINE (6) textbook.

The fourth hypothesis stated that students' performance in writing will significantly improve if punctuation specific topics are introduced into the syllabus. This hypothesis was strongly confirmed in the light of the progress students made in the post test after the treatment.

It could be concluded that, the present study assessed the students that face the difficulties of punctuation. On the other side, it assessed the way teachers viewed these difficulties and how they considered the significance of punctuation to English language syllabus.

## **5.2. Conclusions:**

In the light of the performance of the students in punctuation test and the responses of the English language teachers to the questions of the questionnaire, the following conclusions were revealed:

The general performance of the students in punctuation test revealed students' low abilities in identifying the punctuation marks and their correct uses. It is clear that they lack the adequate knowledge about the correct uses of punctuation marks that enable them solve the difficulties they encounter as they punctuate sentences and texts. More findings also revealed that students are unable to deal with unfamiliar punctuation marks. They perform better only when they deal with punctuation marks they commonly used in writing.

Results also indicate that the performance of students in nongovernmental schools was far better than those in governmental schools. This could be attributed to the fact that students in

nongovernmental schools receive better teaching, motivation and innovation teaching methods which provide valuable ways of teaching in contrast to those in governmental schools.

The results of English language teachers' questionnaire show that respondents generally agreed that the errors related to punctuation marks referred to the insufficient exercises in the syllabus, negligence of teaching punctuation and also referred to the insufficient explanation of punctuation provided by teachers.

Results as could be seen from the students' performance in punctuation test revealed that students lack rules of punctuation mark explained by examples. As noticed in the responses of the teachers' questionnaire, this lack of punctuation explanation was due to negligence of punctuation teaching in students' textbooks.

It was found out that the negligence of punctuation in the textbooks led to their negligence in the context of teaching. Teachers, however, agreed that teaching based on providing additional exercises with enough explanation might facilitate the students' understanding of punctuation marks. Results from the post test revealed that if students received additional explanation and practice, they will improve their performance in writing.

### **5.3. Recommendations:**

In the light of the results of the present study and the reviewed literature in chapter two, several recommendations can be provided, practically in the area of punctuation error analysis. The main purpose of the recommendations is to draw the attention of teachers, students and syllabus designers to some important points in using punctuation marks. Therefore, the recommendations mentioned below are seen as useful in the area of punctuation error analysis.



1. SPINE textbooks that are meant to introduce punctuation at secondary level should include introduction of punctuation. Focus should be made on their functions and uses. Syllabus should provide an overall view of exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts) for application of the different types of punctuation marks. This could prepare the students for mastering the use of punctuation marks.
2. Incorporating punctuation into the syllabus that focus on language writing skills. When designing comprehension texts, punctuation marks should be an integral part of those texts. Such punctuation marks should of course reflect the correct meaning of the sentences of the target texts. Since punctuation marks change the meaning, then comprehensions will help the students to be familiarized with the correct uses of punctuation. The punctuation marks provided in these comprehensions texts will also help the readers to understand the texts.
3. Students of secondary schools should be involved in error correction process which is considered as useful method for attaining punctuation uses accurately. This can be applied by self-correction or peer-correction method under teachers' control.
4. Motivating and boosting students to apply punctuation marks correctly. Therefore, students should practice punctuation marks using unpunctuated sentences and passages. This will let them to be acquainted with their errors immediately after use. However, this will improve students' writing punctuation.
5. Training is one of the basic pillars of the teaching process, punctuation in particular. Therefore, teachers of secondary schools in South Darfur State should be trained on the ways of teaching punctuation marks at the level of secondary schools.

6. English language teachers at secondary schools should help their students to look at punctuation as necessary elements in writing that incorporate all types of punctuation marks. However, their wrong uses will change the meaning of the sentences and therefore, disambiguate the texts for readers.
7. English language teachers at secondary schools are advised to explain the uses of punctuation marks as teaching the various types of punctuation. They should include commas, exclamation marks, question marks, quotation marks, ... etc as well as rules' application with examples. This however will lead to the accuracy of punctuation teaching which should be achieved by students when using punctuation marks in unpunctuated sentences and texts accurately.
8. Punctuation should be taken into account when designing English language syllabus of SPINE textbooks of secondary schools. The study of punctuation should generally be paid attention to show their functions and uses in changing the meaning and avoid texts' disambiguation.
9. The students' performance in writing will significantly improve when punctuation specific topics are included into the syllabus. Syllabus designers should include additional exercises for practice and explanation. However, this will facilitate the understanding of students to use punctuation marks correctly in writing.

#### **5.4 Suggestions for Further Studies:**

This study is confined to the analysis of punctuation errors in secondary students' writing. Therefore, the following are suggestions for further researches relating to punctuation error analysis. They might be useful for other researchers.

- (1) Further research on using punctuation marks especially in the area of punctuation analysis as part of error analysis, can be conducted.
- (2) Further research can be conducted on comparative studies between English punctuation marks and Arabic punctuation marks regarding similarities and dissimilarities, difficulties, problems and solutions.
- (3) Researches could be conducted to find out problems that might hinder students' use of punctuation marks in Sudanese secondary schools.

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Appendix A  
**Students' Test**  
**Sudan University of Science and Technology**  
College of Graduate Studies  
College of Languages

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Dear student,

This study aims at analyzing punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in writing. It attempts to investigate the difficulties of punctuation marks which affect students' performance. Your answers will be used confidentially for scientific purposes only.

***Thank you for your cooperation***

**The researcher,**  
El.sadig A.M. Samhon

**Ph.D. Candidate**  
**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**Tick the box (✓)**

■ **Gender:**

**Male**

**Female**

■ **School:** \_\_\_\_\_

■ **Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Question (1)

Read the following sentences then insert the correct punctuation marks wherever they are needed.

1. Oh ( ) you wonderful creature ( )
2. She likes tea ( ) milk and coffee ( )
3. He is from the Sudan ( )
4. Where are you from ( )
5. Have you got a pen? Yes ( ) I have ( )
6. Are you from Nyala ( )
7. This is Mohamed ( )s watch ( )
8. The book is under the table ( )
9. She drank the following ( ) milk, tea, coffee and water ( )
10. ( ) Do you think I passed ( ) ( ) asked Ali ( )
11. The flowers are beautiful in spring ( )
12. Dalia ( ) why were you late yesterday ( )
13. How do you do this exercise ( )
14. Sit down ( ) Sara ( )
15. What are you doing next weekend ( )

### Question (2)

Read the following passage, insert the correct punctuation marks wherever they are needed.

keeping the body well is the foundation of good health ( )  
proper care of the body begins with a good diet ( ) what kind of  
food does the body need ( ) different foods contain different  
substances needed by the body ( ) meat ( ) milk ( ) fish ( )  
cheese ( ) and eggs supply some of the fuel that the body turns  
into energy ( ) however ( ) the body ( )s main sources of energy  
are carbohydrates and fats ( ) although a proper diet is necessary  
exercise is an important part of good health ( ) to determine  
what is best for your health ( ) consult your doctor ( )



Appendix B  
**Teachers Questionnaire**  
**Sudan University of Science and Technology**  
College of Graduate Studies  
College of Languages

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Dear teacher,

This questionnaire is a part of PhD thesis entitled “***Analysis of Using Punctuation Errors in Sudanese Secondary Schools Students’ Writing: A Case Study in Four Secondary Schools, Nyala Locality, Darfur.***” The purpose of this study is to analyze punctuation errors committed by students in their writing. Its goal is to elicit some important information about teaching punctuation feedback. The information you provide will be used only for research purposes and will remain highly confidential. Your genuine responses to all statements across the sections of the questionnaire will contribute a lot to the successful completion of this study. You are therefore kindly requested to provide genuine information.

***Thank you for your cooperation***

**The researcher,**  
El.sadig A.M. Samhon  
**Ph.D. Candidate**  
**Sudan University of Science and Technology**

**Background Information**

**Tick the box (✓)**

■ **Gender**

- Male  
 Female

■ **Years of teaching English**

- ( 1 – 5 ) years  
 ( 6 – 10 ) years  
 (11 – 15) years  
 More than (10) years

Please show your response by putting a tick (✓) in the appropriate box which represents your choice.  
The assessment of the English SPINE (6) for supporting teaching punctuation.

Scales						
No	Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Not Sure	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	The syllabus has objectives for teaching punctuation marks to be achieved by teachers.					
2	The syllabus reflects the teaching process of punctuation marks.					
3	The syllabus provides sufficient explanation of punctuation teaching.					
4	The syllabus provides sufficient punctuation exercises for students to practice.					
5	The syllabus provides teachers of English with additional exercises to support their students with more practice.					
6	The syllabus encourages students to do some works on different types of punctuation marks.					

Teaching punctuation marks of SPINE (6) syllabus in English lessons.

Scales						
No	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Often	Rarely	Never
1	I lack methods of teaching students of secondary schools punctuation marks.					
2	I teach students punctuation marks based on their mistakes they commit in writing.					
3	I ignore teaching students the use of punctuation marks.					
4	I do not find punctuation topics in the syllabus for teaching them to students.					
5	I teach students the use of punctuation marks only without giving them examples for illustration.					
6	I motivate students to do some works on punctuation marks.					
7	I teach students all types of					

	punctuation marks that help them write correctly.					
8	I teach the students the use of punctuation marks that are commonly used in writing.					
9	I teach the students the functions of punctuation marks.					
10	I teach the students punctuation marks that they need in writing.					
11	I explain punctuation marks while teaching reading comprehension texts.					
12	I teach students punctuation marks through exercises exist in the syllabus.					
13	I give students opportunities to use punctuation marks through applying them in exercises.					
14	I teach students the use of punctuation only without giving them exercises for practice.					

## Appendix C Test Reliability

\*\*\* Method 2 (covariance matrix) will be used for this analysis \*\*\*

R E L I A B I L I T Y    A N A L Y S I S - S C A L E    ( A L P H A )

		Mean	Std Dev	Cases
1.	VAR00001	33.6000	2.1909	30.0
2.	VAR00002	34.9000	2.0569	30.0

### Covariance Matrix

	VAR00001	VAR00002
VAR00001	4.8000	
VAR00002	3.8897	4.2310

### Correlation Matrix

	VAR00001	VAR00002
VAR00001	1.0000	
VAR00002	.8631	1.0000

N of Cases =            30.0

Statistics for	Mean	Variance	Std Dev	N of
Scale	68.5000	16.8103	4.1000	Variables 2

### Inter-item

Correlations	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
	.8631	.8631	.8631	.0000	1.0000	.0000

### Item-total Statistics

	Scale	Scale	Corrected	Squared	Alpha
	Mean	Variance	Item-	Multiple	if Item
	if Item	if Item	Total	Correlation	Deleted
	Deleted	Deleted	Correlation		
VAR00001	34.9000	4.2310	.8631	.7450	.
VAR00002	33.6000	4.8000	.8631	.7450	.

R E L I A B I L I T Y    A N A L Y S I S - S C A L E    ( A L P H A )

Reliability Coefficients            2 items

Alpha =    .9255                    Standardized item alpha =    .9265

**Appendix D**  
 Pre-test Scores of the Students who never  
 receive Punctuation Marks Instruction in the Pilot Study (1)

**One-Sample Statistics**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of Pilot Study (1)	40	31.60	2.010	.318

**One-Sample Test**

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of Pilot Study (1)	99.419	39	.000	31.60	30.96	32.24

## Appendix E

Post test Scores of the Students who receive Punctuation  
Marks Instruction in the Pilot Study (2)

### One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of Pilot Study (2)	40	36.15	1.777	.281

### One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of Pilot Study (2)	128.689	39	.000	36.15	35.58	36.72

## Appendix F

Table 4.6 Pre-test (group A) and Post-test (group B)  
Variations of Students' Scores in the use of Punctuation Marks.

### Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Results of pre test (B)	29.35	40	2.992	.473
	Results of post test (B)	33.35	40	2.497	.395

### Paired Samples Correlations

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	Results of pre test & Results of post test	40	.756	.000

### Paired Sample Test

		Paired Differences					t	df	Sig.(2tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Results of pre test & Results of post test	-4.00	1.974	.312	-4.63	-3.37	-12.814	39	.000