

## Common Punctuation Errors Made by Secondary Schools Students in English: A Case Study at Secondary Schools, Nyala Locality.

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### ABSTRACT:

The aim of this paper is to investigate the common punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in writing. The researcher suggested that there are various errors made by students of secondary schools. Therefore, a sample of 80 students from secondary schools was given two tests (pre-test and post test) as tools for collecting data. The researcher used descriptive analytical method. Test and retest were used for reliability measurement. The results revealed that the common errors among the students are the use of comma in the place of the full stop, the incorrect uses of the comma, and the wrong uses of the quotation marks. Exclamation mark, comma and quotation marks are more difficult among the entire marks, besides the misuse of some punctuation marks. Moreover, the results revealed that there were significant differences in the number of punctuation errors among secondary students due to the insufficient of exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts), insufficient explanation to all types of punctuation marks, their uses and functions through examples for illustration, in addition to lack of practice.

**Key words:** *Common Punctuation Errors, Nyala Locality.*

### المستخلص :

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة الأخطاء الشائعة عند استخدام علامات الترقيم لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية في الكتابة. يرى الباحث أن هنالك أخطاء في علامات الترقيم يرتكبها طلاب المدارس الثانوية. ولتحقيق هدف هذه الدراسة قام الباحث بتطبيق إختبارين قبلي وبعدي على عينة عشوائية مكونة من 80 طالباً. كما تم استخدام المنهج الوصفي التحليلي في الدراسة. أجرى الباحث إختبار على عينة مكونة من 30 طالباً بغرض ثبات صحة الأداة. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة وجود أخطاء شائعة في استخدام علامات الترقيم لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية وهي الاستخدام الخاطئ لعلامة الإستقهام ، الاستخدام الخاطئ لعلامة النقطتين ، الاستخدام الخاطئ لعلامات التنصيص وكذلك أخطاء في استخدام الفاصلة.

كذلك أظهرت نتائج الدراسة وجود فوارق لدى طلاب المدارس الثانوية في عدد الأخطاء التي ارتكبوها. كذلك أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن مستوى أداء الطلاب متدني نتيجة لفقر الكتاب المدرسي تدريبات تطبيقية كافية. هذا علاوة على عدم شرح قواعد علامات الترقيم وتوضيحها من خلال إعطاء أمثلة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية :** *أخطاء علامات الترقيم الشائعة ، محلية نيالا.*

### INTRODUCTION:

Although teaching English writing in secondary schools deals with punctuation teaching, punctuation marks have always been challenging the students in writing. Students might learn

and practice punctuation from the exercises exist in the syllabus. In spite of these efforts and teachers experience, many difficulties of punctuation is by far the most noticed in students' writing.

According to McCuen & Winkler (2000)<sup>1</sup> punctuation errors occur with the omission or misuse of one of the punctuation marks. Accordingly, the researcher will limit the research into seven types of punctuation marks: full stop, comma, exclamation mark, question marks, apostrophe, colon and quotation marks. These punctuation marks are restricted because they are the most common ones used in writing. However, the study was conducted to show the different punctuation errors which might affect the meaning of sentences and texts they write.

In this regard, Rumki (2005)<sup>2</sup> makes a point of view that, teachers should teach students to value punctuation marks as much as letters and words for conveying meaning. However, the wrong use of punctuation can interrupt the flow of ideas and change the meaning.

#### **Literature Review:**

When learners speak, they can use hand gestures, eye movement, and voice intonation to convey ideas. When they write, they should rely on punctuation to tell the reader when to slow down, stop, or emphasize. So, learning the use of punctuation is very important because they bring a big impact to writing meaning.

Moy (1996)<sup>3</sup> stated that errors are committed due to lack of teaching materials provided by the English teachers and lack of teaching methods beside motivation. Therefore, motivation towards the use of punctuation marks might help students to deal with punctuation activities and pay them more attention in order to use them correctly in their writing.

Stevenson (2005)<sup>4</sup> agreed with Moy (1996)<sup>3</sup> that motivating students to use punctuation is very necessary in

learning. Moreover, he laments that many students do not know how to place the right mark in the appropriate place, in addition to negligence, lack of methods for teaching punctuation.

On the other hand, Mayo (2000)<sup>5</sup> differs to see punctuation rules are necessary to be taught and explained with examples. He added that, teachers should provide their students with short pieces of unpunctuated texts to help them apply punctuation marks correctly. However, students might find the rules are not hard and simply can use a full stop for example at the end of any sentence. But the rules alone are insufficient; they need explanation with examples and application through using exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts) for practice and reinforcement.

This view was supported by William Amelia (2008)<sup>6</sup> that without terminal punctuation marks, ideas and sentences would not run together and the writing might be very difficult to be understood. However, what teachers should do is to show the students when to end the sentences.

Robinson (2002)<sup>7</sup> agreed with Mayo (2000)<sup>5</sup> that, correct punctuation eases readers' understanding and the uses of rules are important, but rules alone are insufficient. Unless students know the functions and explanation of the rules, they are too easily forgotten. Students and teachers of secondary schools in Nyala Locality should have a strong foundation towards punctuation usage about both the process of rules' application and teaching punctuation marks solely.

The omission and the wrong uses of punctuation marks made by students of secondary schools are the most common problems face students in writing.

Moreover, comma was inappropriately used to link two clauses. It is the common mark that confuses students to be used among word and sentences Al-Mutib (1989)<sup>8</sup>.

According to Christensen et al. (2001)<sup>9</sup> punctuation marks include comma, colon exclamation mark, question mark, semicolon and quotation marks. However, most of these marks occur in error and are quite difficult to insert. Most of the English teachers do not focus on them which have higher frequencies.

Allen (2002)<sup>10</sup> emphasized the role of step by step procedure via describing the basics of constructing sentences and how they are best expressed using the basic elements of punctuation. 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 as substitute for the full stop.

However, Corder (1981)<sup>11</sup> divided errors into four types: omission of some required element, addition of some necessary or incorrect element, selection of an incorrect element, and miss-ordering of element.

In the light of the research problems of punctuation the following categories are explained.

- **Omission:** certain punctuation marks may be omitted by students because of their complexity in production. Omission of punctuation marks might occur, because students often leave out such marks due to their poor ability.

- **Addition:** students not only omit punctuation marks which they regard as

redundant but they also add redundant punctuation marks.

- **Selection:** students commit errors in punctuation due to the wrong selection of punctuation mark. For instance: “*Lock the door right now!*” Instead of “*Lock the door right now.*”

- **Ordering:** miss-ordering can occur in punctuation level. Miss-ordering of punctuation in English is perhaps less frequent. The most frequent ones are omission, addition and selection.

In the light of the above types of punctuation errors committed by students, they are distinguished as follows:

**A.** Punctuation error performance is not very serious, because the students themselves can correct them when their attention is drawn to them. These errors may be attributed to carelessness, lapse of memory, and they should not worry teachers or students.

**B.** Punctuation error competence is persistent in consequence serious, and their treatment calls for careful analysis to discover their cause.

Parkes, (1993)<sup>12</sup> states that, symbols such as question marks, apostrophe, quotation marks ... etc function as controlling the text. They are also used as one of the frequent punctuation features of the written texts in order to create illustration and affects upon the text.

Chicago Press (1984)<sup>13</sup> mentioned four functions for punctuation errors which are placed in text to make the meaning clear and easier, they are:

- **Separation:** a full stop might separate sentences from each other. Students of secondary schools particularly in Nyala Locality might not use this very important mark of full stop.

- Group or enclose: parentheses enclose extraneous information.
- Connect: a hyphen connects a unit modifier.
- Impart meaning: a question might make declarative sentence interrogative. If wrongly used it will change the meaning by raising or falling tone.

Cappon (2003)<sup>14</sup> similarly, support Chicago Press (1984)<sup>13</sup> that punctuation links or separate sentences and whose elements avoid ambiguity, clarify meanings and sometimes refine them. Elliot (2006)<sup>15</sup> on the other hand sees punctuation from the view point of teachers that punctuation marks do the same as road signs do for a highway. They tell the students when to speed, when to slow down, when to stop. Truss (2004)<sup>16</sup> emphasizes the functional uses of punctuation to assist students and clarify their written work. Woods (2001)<sup>17</sup> gives 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)<sup>18</sup> 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. According to Carl James (1998)<sup>19</sup> 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 marks students have learned and what are remained for them to learn. Errors are important device 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)<sup>20</sup>. However, Stenson (1974)<sup>21</sup> 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. Following previous studies are reviewed are done in the same area of the present study.

A problem of punctuation error analysis made by Sudanese EFL secondary students is conducted by Mohammed, El beshary Ahmmed El beshary (2006)<sup>22</sup> in his study. On the contrary, this paper investigates to analyze the errors of punctuation marks made by students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality in writing.

His 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. Similarly, the present paper aimed to analyze the errors made by secondary students in SPINE six.

To achieve the goal of this study, the researcher used two tools. He administered a written test to 60 students for collecting data. 30 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 present paper used a written test to assess the use of punctuation marks of 80 students.

The result of the study he has reach 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.

While the present paper found out that the students are poor in punctuation due to the lack and inadequate activities presented in SPINE 6. Besides, little emphasis was given to the teaching of punctuation marks.

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)<sup>23</sup> conducted his study. On the other hand, the present paper analyzed the punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

His study aimed to find the problem of the most common punctuation errors made by students of English at An-Najah National University in writing. While the present paper aimed to investigate the errors made by students of secondary schools as they use punctuation marks in writing in Nyala Locality.

He administered a written test to 100 male and female students, whereas the

present study administered a test to 80 students.

He did not explain the significant use of rules with example which could provide practical illustration to the problems of punctuation errors.

However, the findings of the study conclude that the courses being taught were not standardized, overuse of comma at the expense of the full stop, the wrong use of the quotation marks and the misuse of semicolon are the results of the study. The present paper found out that the students face problems in the use of punctuation marks and insufficient exercises.

The results of the previous studies reviewed above provided a brief account about marks of punctuation errors in writing. They explain how students use wrong marks when punctuating sentences and texts. 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 paper. Both the present paper 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, this paper attempted to find out the reasons behind punctuation errors as a result of necessary exercises in SPINE six textbook for practice.

However, the tools adopted by the bulk of the previous studies and the current paper 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 present paper adopted the descriptive analytical method of SPSS programme which is similar to Ahmed Awad (2012)<sup>23</sup>.

There are distinctions in the results of the previous studies as mentioned above, while the results of the present paper mentioned other findings of errors of punctuation marks.

However, the two studies 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 of subjects and type of punctuation errors.

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.

These studies; however, support the present study which focuses on the lack of exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts) and explanation. They might be the causes of students' errors and weakness particularly the students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

Problem of the study:

The problem of the paper is that students encounter difficulty to identify and examine the errors in the use of punctuation marks. Therefore, students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality use punctuation marks incorrectly in their writing. However, the researcher conducted this paper in regard to the problem faced by students in punctuation. For realizing the objectives of the paper the following questions and hypotheses were raised:

**Hypothesis one:** 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.

**Supportive question:** What are the punctuation errors made by students of secondary schools when they use punctuation marks in writing?

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

**Supportive question:** To what extent it is possible to improve the standard of the students through sufficient exercises explanation of punctuation in SPINE 6 textbook?

Objectives:

Based on the problems of the study, the objectives are as follow:

This study aims at investigating punctuation writing problems among the students of secondary schools - Nyala Locality in unpunctuated sentences. The study also aims to identify the errors frequently encountered by secondary students in writing and find out the suitable ways to improve their writing skills. It is necessary that they should use punctuation marks correctly when they deal with punctuation exercises (unpunctuated sentences/passages).

Significance:

The findings of the study are expected to support the students to learn from their errors and know how to correct them. The study is significance as feedback to the syllabus designers to add exercises to SPINE series to be taught by teachers to improve students' standard in punctuation.

**Methodology and Procedures:**

The researcher used descriptive analytical method that includes the statistical SPSS program for data analysis. Using sentences without

punctuation marks and asking students to insert the correct punctuation marks was the method used for collecting the necessary data.

The participants of this paper were students of secondary school in Nyala Locality from the third year in the scholastic year 2014-2015. The study sample chosen randomly were 80 students from the total population.

The instrument used in this paper was a written pre-test and post test. The pre-test was developed by the researcher. The test consisted of unpunctuated sentences on the types of errors that commonly occur in writing including comma, colon, exclamation...etc, then asking students to fill them with the correct punctuation marks. The purpose of the test was to collect data. The test paper was developed to check students' probable writing errors.

The students were given 30 minutes to fill out the missing punctuation marks. It is consisted of fifteen sentences and a text to check for possible intended errors.

Test 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)<sup>24</sup>. According to De Vos (2000)<sup>25</sup>, 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)<sup>26</sup>. According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991)<sup>27</sup>, there are several ways to estimate reliability:

- (1) Correlation of parallel or comparable tests (for equivalence in form).
- (2) Interrater reliability check (for equivalence in judgments).
- (3) The method is based on giving the same test for the second time.
- (4) Correlation between test and retest (for consistency over time).

The test in this paper deals with number (4) and 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 statistically reliability coefficient of the test. Reliability is expressed as coefficient ranging from 0.00 to .001. The higher the coefficient, the more reliable the test is. According to Hatch and Lazaraton (1991)<sup>27</sup>, 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 paper reliability analysis has been used to measure the test and retest scores.

Table 1(A&B) shows the summary of the reliability analysis output of the test statistical analysis.

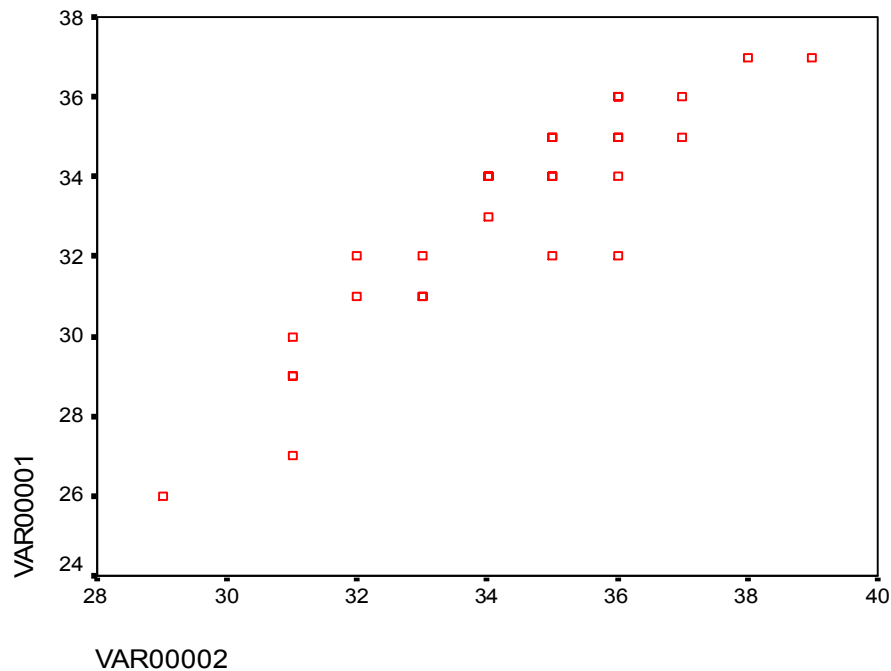
**Table (1) Reliability analysis for the test and retest scores:**

A.

Variables	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Test scores	33.0667	30	2.85190	.000
Retest scores	34.3333	30	2.35377	.000

B.

Variables	N	Correlation	Reliability coefficient	Sig.
Test scores	30	.916	.947	.000
Retest scores	30			

**Graph (1) Test and Retest Correlation**

As table 1(A) indicates, there is significant difference between the means of the test (mean = 33.06, Std. Deviation = 2.85) and retest (mean = 34.33, Std. Deviation = 2.35). The scatter plot in Graph (1) and Table 1(B) show that there is a high correlation (Correlation = .916,  $p < .001$ ) between the means scores of the test and the retest. In other words,

the Reliability coefficient (Alpha) = .947.

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)<sup>24</sup>, 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%.



**Results and Discussion:**

The students' test was analyzed using descriptive statistics followed by the presentation of data analysis and findings for each hypothesis. Statistics is the basic tool of measurement and evaluation. It helped the researcher to organize and manipulate the data to answer the research questions. Therefore, the researcher used Statistical (SPSS). Depending on the data collected from the students, the researcher made use of Pearson Correlation Coefficient Method for the study and (T-retest) is used to test the paired statistics (the difference between the pair of the same pre-test and the post test).

In this part, the researcher presents and discusses the findings of the study in the light of the research objectives. The common errors made by the students will be identified. The tables below show the different types of errors committed by the students of secondary school in form of means and standard deviation. As previously stated, the objectives of this research are to find the kinds of punctuation errors made by the third year students. Referring to the students' answers, the researcher will present the various kinds of errors as stated below.

**Table (2) Pre-test scores of the students before received the use of punctuation marks instruction.**

A.

## One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of Pre test	80	29.63	4.101	.459

B.

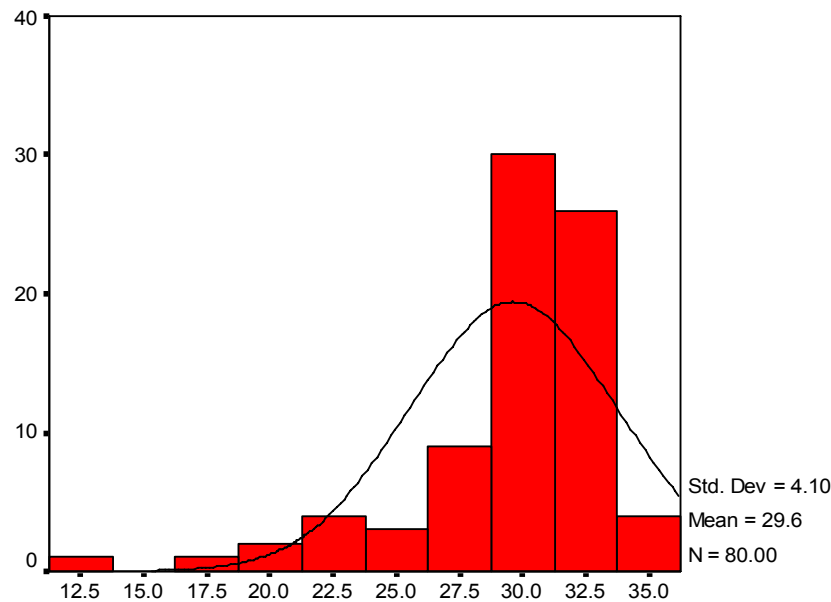
## One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of Pre test	64.609	79	.000	29.63	28.71	30.54

Both tables 2(A&B) show the T-test outputs of the pre-test scores of the sample group which does not receive punctuation uses instruction. As tables above indicate, the (mean = 29.63, and Std. Deviation = 4.101).

The number of students' errors they commit (Std. Error Mean = 459) indicated that these students made various errors as they use punctuation marks.

**Graph (2) Pre-test scores of the students before received the use of punctuation marks instruction.**



Results of pre test

Table 2(A) and Graph 2 show that, the mean scores of the pre-test is before receiving punctuation instruction (mean = 29.6) and the (Std. Deviation = 4.10). These results are shown before students receiving punctuation treatment.

**Table (3) Post-test scores of the students after received the use of punctuation marks instruction.**

A.

One-Sample Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Results of post test	80	34.69	2.331	.261

B.

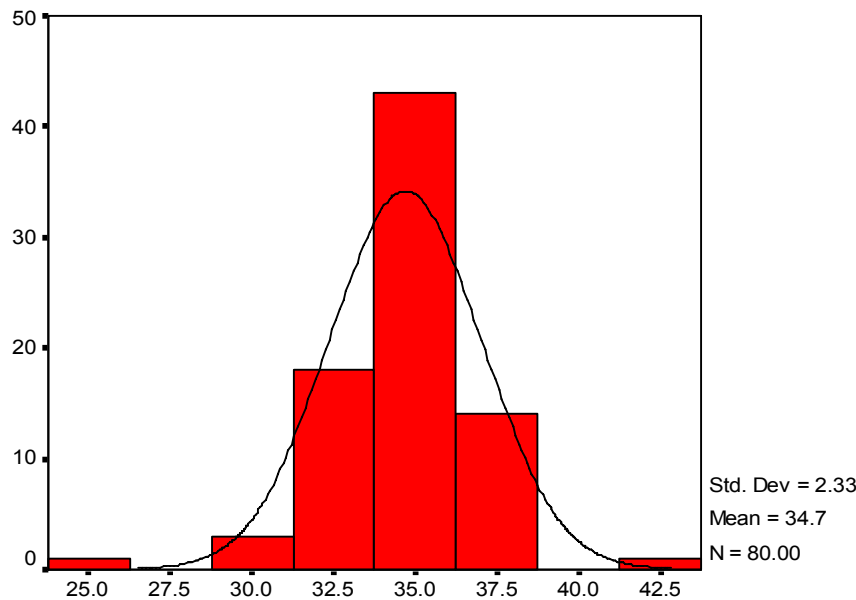
One-Sample Test

	Test Value = 0					
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Results of post test	133.109	79	.000	34.69	34.17	35.21

Both tables 3(A&B) show the T-test outputs of the post test scores of the sample group which does not receive punctuation uses instruction. As tables above indicate, the (mean = 34.69, and Std. Deviation = 2.331).

The number of students' errors they commit (Std. = 261) indicated that these students made various errors as they use punctuation marks.

**Graph (3) Post-test scores of the students after received the use of punctuation marks instruction.**



Results of post test

Table 3(A) and Graph 3 show that, the mean scores of the pre-test is before receiving punctuation instruction (mean = 34.7) and the (Std. Deviation = 2.33). These results are shown before students receiving punctuation treatment.

**Table (4) Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students on the use of punctuation marks.**

A.

Paired Samples Statistics

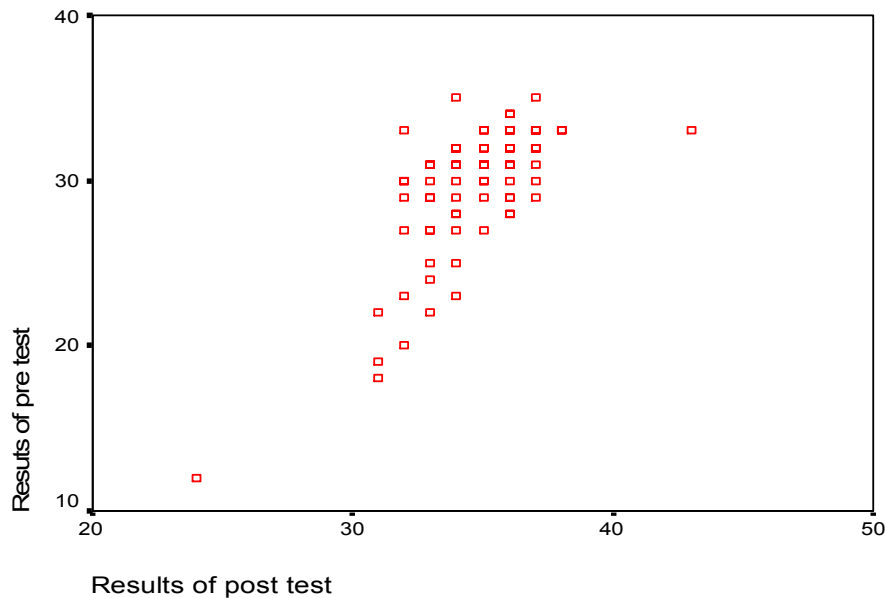
	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1 Results of pre test	29.63	80	4.101	.459
Results of post test	34.69	80	2.331	.261

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	-5.06	2.948	.330	-5.72	-4.41	-15.358	79	

**Graph (4) Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students on the use of punctuation marks.**



Tables 4(A&B) and graph (4) imply the out puts of the pre-test and post test scores of the sample group which does not receive punctuation uses instruction as shown, the (mean = -506, and Std. Deviation = 2.948).

The number of students' errors they commit (Std. = 330) indicated that these students made various errors as they use punctuation marks. The tables 2(A & B) and 3(A & B) indicate that there is significant difference between the mean

scores of the pre-test which does not receive punctuation instruction and the post test which receive punctuation instruction (mean = 34.69, and Std. deviation = 2.331) is greater than the mean score of the pre-test which receive punctuation instruction (mean = 29.63, and std. deviation = 4.101). The difference between the means scores of the post test and the pre-test is (29.63 – 34.69 = -5.06).

C.

## Paired Samples Correlations

	N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1 Results of pre test & Results of post test	80	.709	.000

The sample correlation presents the relationship between the marks of both (Pre-test and Post test) which is (.709). Sig is (.000). This number indicates that there is no significant between correlations of the pair.

**Results and Discussion:**

The statistical exploration indicates that students commit various errors in the use of punctuation marks. However, the various errors students made are the wrong use of exclamation, comma and quotation marks. The researcher thought that students made many errors as appeared in the Pre-test table (*2and3 p.9/10*). The researcher attributes the main reasons behind these specific errors to the insufficient of exercises and insufficient of punctuation explanation. 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 also support the findings of several researchers who investigated punctuation errors made by students e.g. Ahmed Awad (2012)<sup>23</sup>, Lia Rahmawati (2014)<sup>28</sup> and Meta Kartika Wati (2014)<sup>29</sup>. The findings of the above mentioned studies emphasized that there are various errors made by students in using punctuation marks.

The results of the pre-test and the post test also indicate that there are 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 second hypothesis of the study.

Furthermore, the results deduced from the study justify that punctuation treatment is more effective to improve students' standard. The result inferred from the T-test output in table (1) and graph (1) in which the mean scores of the pre-test (mean = (29.63) is considered very low compared to the post test mean scores (mean = 34.69). It is inferred that the post test provides the solution for these errors made by the students, because the variation between the two tests indicate that there is a great progress in students' performance see table 4(A&B). These results confirm the second hypothesis of the study which is stated above. i.e. the standard of the students will significantly improve if they receive explanation and additional practice provided by the English teachers.

Generally, these results reflect the weakness of students in the use of punctuation marks among students of secondary schools particularly class three due to lack of punctuation marks knowledge.

**Conclusion:**

The paper has given an account of the errors made by students of secondary

schools in Nyala Locality. It has been shown that most of these errors occur due to lack of practice which hindered their ability to punctuate correctly.

The statistical results indicate that there are many variations between the (T-test on one hand). On the other, the mean scores of the pre-test which does not receive punctuation instruction (mean = 29.63) and the mean scores of the post-test which receive punctuation instruction (mean = 34.69) justify that there is progress and therefore, more exercises are considered to be effective in acquiring the correct use of punctuation marks.

Generally the third year students of secondary schools have mastered punctuation, but some of them need more treatment or remedial work.

In the light of the results of the study, the researcher presents the following recommendations:

- Syllabus designers should take punctuation exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts) into account by introducing them into the syllabus.

- Teachers should encourage their students to look at punctuation as necessary elements in writing. Their wrong uses will change the meaning of the sentences.

- Teachers are advised to explain the uses and functions of punctuation marks using examples and rules for clarification.

- Giving explicit explanation of punctuation marks and their purpose in writing.

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