

Punctuation Errors among Students of Secondary Schools in English: A Case Study of third year at Al.Mustafa Secondary School, South Darfur State (2015).

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ABSTRACT:

This study investigates the punctuation errors made by the students of Al.Mustafa secondary school. It aims to analyze the errors that students make in using punctuation marks. The researcher hypothesizes that students face difficulty in using punctuation marks in writing. To attain this goal the researcher used a written test includes different types of unpunctuated sentences to examine the students in the use of punctuation marks. The test is used as instrument for collecting data. It was administered to 80 students from the third year at Al.Mustafa secondary school–South Darfur State. 40 teachers were given a questionnaire to assess their students in the use of punctuation marks. There are many types of punctuation marks, but this study focuses on seven of them. The findings of this study revealed that most of the students confuse to use some punctuation marks such as comma, colon, quotation mark and exclamation mark due to the insufficient punctuation exercises provided by SPINE (6) textbook. In addition to lack of materials for teaching punctuation marks, lack of teaching methods and little understanding of punctuation marks.

Key words: Punctuation Marks, Errors Analysis, South Darfur State.

المستخلص:

تحاول هذه الدراسة معرفة أخطاء علامات التقييم التي يرتكبها طلاب مدرسة المصطفى الثانوية بنين. يرى الباحث أن هؤلاء الطلاب يواجهون مشكلة في استخدام علامات التقييم لذلك هدفت إلى تحليل الأخطاء التي يرتكبها الطلاب عند استخدامهم لها. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف استخدم الباحث إختبار مكون من جمل خالية من علامات التقييم ليقوم الطلاب بوضع علامات التقييم في أماكنها الصحيحة. إستفاد الباحث من الإختبار كأداة للدراسة حيث طُبقت على عينة مكونة من 80 طالباً من طلاب الصف الثالث بمدرسة المصطفى الثانوية بنين بولاية جنوب دارفور وذلك لمعرفة مواطن الضعف. كذلك وزعت 40 إستبانة لمعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بغرض تقييم الطلاب في الإستخدم الصحيح لها. هنالك عدة أنواع لعلامات التقييم لكن ركز الباحث على سبع أنواع فقط. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلاب بمدرسة المصطفى الثانوية بولاية جنوب دارفور يصعب عليهم استخدام بعض علامات التقييم مثل الفاصلة ، النقطتين، علامات التنصيص وعلامة التعجب وذلك نتيجة لعدم وجود تدريبات كافية بالكتاب المدرسي وكذلك إهمال في تدريسها علاوة على عدم فهم الطلاب لها نتيجة لعدم الإهتمام بها وقصور في طرائق تدريسها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علامات التقييم ، تحليل الأخطاء ، ولاية جنوب دارفور.

INTRODUCTION:

Punctuation is an element of text writing that plays an important role in determining the meaning of a text. Despite its important role in writing, it seems to be a rather neglected area of study in linguistics Garavelli (2003)¹. This negligence is widely observed in the examination of errors committed by the students of Al. Mustafa secondary school in South Darfur State. In punctuating sentences and texts, it was observed that there are various errors, omission, misapplying punctuation marks and unawareness of using punctuation mark correctly in writing. This however reflects a picture of students' weakness in punctuation marks. The result of this weakness might be lack of activities that students should use when they deal with punctuation.

Thus, the wrong uses of punctuation marks are often committed by students of Al. Mustafa in South Darfur State. Some of these students might regard that the presence of punctuation marks in writing would not influence their writing and it can be understood by readers. They just write and punctuate their writing automatically without having enough attention towards the important functions of punctuation marks.

Nunberg (1990)² claims that punctuation can be used to assist students of secondary schools to use English punctuation marks correctly in writing. The weakness of the students in Al. Mustafa secondary school in punctuation prompted the researcher to analyze punctuation errors made by the students.

Problem of the study:

There are many causes of misapplying punctuation marks in writing. For instance, in punctuating test,

complicating problems were found such as: committing errors, confusion and unawareness of using appropriate punctuation marks when composing them. Students of Al. Mustafa secondary schools might commit errors in their writing in regard to the use of punctuation marks. This problem has been noticed in students' writing; consequently, the researcher has conducted this study to analyze their errors and discuss the results in the light of the study questions and their stemmed hypotheses aroused below:

(1) Hypothesis One: Students of Al. Mustafa secondary school commit various errors on punctuation marks in their writing.

Supportive question: What are the common punctuation errors made by students of Al. Mustafa secondary school in the use of punctuation marks?

(2) Hypothesis Two: English SPINE textbook does not have sufficient exercises on punctuation marks for students of secondary schools.

Supportive question: To what extent does SPINE (6) textbook have insufficient exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts) on punctuation marks?

(3) Hypothesis Three: Students are weak due to lack of teaching punctuation marks.

Supportive question: To what extent does punctuation is ignored in teaching at schools?

Literature Review:

To know the students difficulties in punctuation writing, the researcher exposed the following review of some opinions written in the same area.

Khalil (2000)³ mention that the most common frequent errors made by students in their writing are commas and

full stop. The most common errors are categorized into comma splice and superfluous commas. The commas errors occurrence refers to over punctuating sentences by inserting commas in the wrong place.

Similarly, Russel (1984)⁴ revealed that comma receives a great deal of discussion about their errors students commit. This indicates that students face difficulty to use it correctly. Therefore, most studies focus either on it or a full stop. Beefeman & Berger (1998)⁵ agreed with above ideas that comma is the most frequent mark, but it is also the most problematic because it serves many different purposes and uses

According to Robinson (2002)⁶ the wrong use of punctuation marks is due to lack of practice and also is the reason of errors being made in writing. Therefore, the correct use of punctuation marks plays a great role in learners' writing, because accurate punctuation is essential in writing.

On the other hand, Mann (2003)⁷ states the functions of punctuation marks in writing as to separate sentences, group or enclose, connect or impart meaning.

Luke man, (2006)⁸ differs to point out that, for avoiding punctuation errors in writing, there are certain rules students should acquire in order to apply them correctly in writing. These rules might help to avoid the errors which might cause many difficulties to the readers who need to understand the text. According to this point of view, students might use punctuation marks correctly when they receive explanation of rules with practice.

Pausing is also a problematic area where learners fail to achieve punctuation correctly. For example, Daniel (2004)⁹ showed that pausing is different from

one punctuation mark to another if used incorrectly they will affect the meaning and changing it. Consider the following examples:

Did you know the answer?

Did you know the answer!

The first example is just a question and its answer is 'Yes' or 'No' whereas in the second example, there is doubt in knowing the answer.

Cappon (2003)¹⁰ differ to see that punctuation in a skill which is remarkably subtle system of signals, signs, symbols and winks keep students' writing correct. Ledeer (2005)¹¹ recommends that students should know the uses of punctuation marks and where they would pause when reading a text aloud. He adds that when students doubt about punctuating a sentence they should read it aloud.

Hall and Robinson (1996)¹² agreed with Luke man, (2006)⁸ that, students understand the correct uses of English punctuation when they learnt certain aspects rules of punctuation marks which direct the ways 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, grammar plays great role in punctuating texts correctly.

In spite of the above mentioned causes of weakness of A.Mustafa students of secondary schools in punctuation marks, the problem of committing mistakes occurred in their writing. Therefore, the present study is expected to find out the reasons of difficulties that face students Al.Mustafa in the using punctuation marks. The results might add valuable contributions to the manipulation of punctuation errors in regard to the

analysis of SPINE (6) taught in Al-Mustafa secondary schools in Nyala Locality.

Objectives of the study:

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

- (1) To know the types of errors made by the third students of Al.Mustafa secondary school in the use of punctuation marks.
- (2) To explicate to what extent the weakness of students of secondary school is due to the insufficient of punctuation exercises (unpunctuated sentences/passages) exist in the syllabus.
- (3) To show that there is lack of punctuation teaching.

Significance:

However, 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 also significance as feedback to the syllabus designers to improve students' standard by adding exercises to SPINE series.

Methodology:

The researcher used descriptive analytical method that includes frequency and percentages for the analysis of data.

The participants of this study 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.

The instrument used in this study was a written test. It was developed by the researcher. Using sentences without punctuation marks and asking the students to insert the correct punctuation marks was the method used for collecting data.

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)¹³.

The test in this study was administered to 25 students from Al.Mustafa school. 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 measure the reliability.

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)¹⁴, the reliability coefficient is always reported as a correlation (r) in several statistical measurements, therefore the reliability analysis in this study has been used to measure the test and retest sores.

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

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

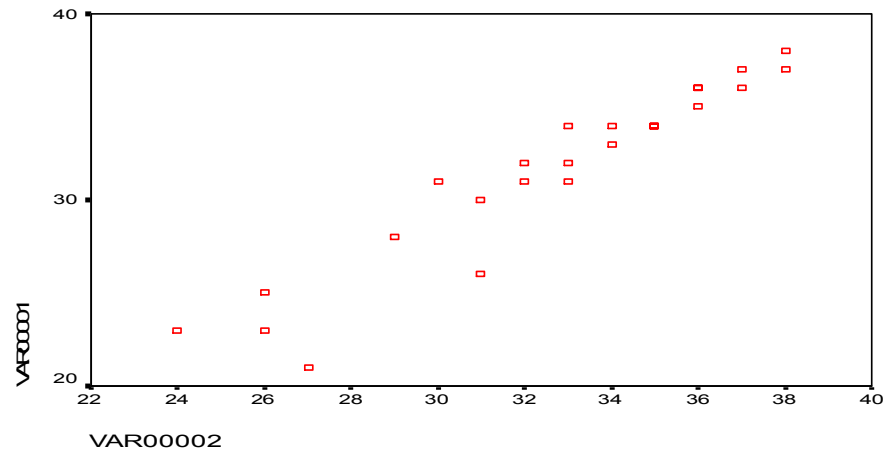
A.

Variables	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Sig.
Test scores	31.6400	25	4.79479	.002
Retest scores	32.7200	25	3.93192	

B.

Variables	N	Correlation	Reliability coefficient	Sig.
Test scores	25		.966	
Retest scores	25	.954		.000

Graph (1) Test and Retest Correlation



As table 1(A&B) indicate, there is significant difference between the means of the test (mean = 31.64, Std. Deviation = 4.79) and retest (mean = 32.72, Std. Deviation = 3.93). The scatter plot in Graph (1) and Table 1(B) show that there is a high correlation (Correlation = .954, < .001) between the mean scores of the test and the retest. In other words, the Reliability coefficient (Alpha) = .966.

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)¹³ states that reliability of a test must have

at least a correlation of 0.9 which gives a consistency of about 0.90 or 81%. The different scores between the mean scores of the test and the retest is -1.08.

Test of the Hypotheses

Students' Test

The analysis of students' test covers the identification of errors, classification of errors, and tabulation of errors with illustration of examples. The researcher presented the error sentences showing their frequencies and percentages. Moreover, the discussion of errors refers to the numerous sums illustrated in the tables shown.

Table 2. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
Full stop Exclamation Question Omission	Oh, you wonderful creature!	20	25.00%
	Oh, you wonderful creature.	33	41.25%
	Oh! you wonderful creature!	15	18.75%
	Oh, you wonderful creature?	07	08.75%
Omission	Oh, you wonderful creature--	05	06.25%
Total		80	100%

In the sentence of *Oh, you wonderful creature!* the students responded negatively thinking about the full stop to end the sentence 25.00%. On the other hand, students who use full stop 41.25%, exclamation 18.75%, omission 06.25%

and question mark 08.75%. This finding implies that the exclamation mark and the full stop seem to be similar as manifested in the students' test. Therefore, students confuse between them.

Table 3. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	She likes tea and coffee.	35	43.75%
Question	She likes tea and coffee?	15	18.75%
Exclamation	She likes tea and coffee!	13	16.25%
Comma	She likes tea and coffee,	09	11.25%
Omission	She likes tea and coffee--	08	10.00%
Total		80	100%

In the sentence of *She likes tea and coffee.* Students responded positively using the full stop as the correct mark to end the sentence 43.75%. However, about 56.25% of students thought about

other different punctuation marks to end the sentence. This finding implies that more than 50.00% of students are unsure of applying the use of the full stop

Table 4. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	He is from the Sudan.	58	72.05%
Question	He is from the Sudan?	16	20.00%
Comma	He is from the Sudan,	06	07.50%
Total		80	100%

The sentence of *He is from the Sudan* revealed that students claimed to place the full stop at the end of the sentence 72.05%. This result shows that, students have great ability on using and applying

the rules of the full stop confidently. On the contrary, some students incorrectly use question mark 20.00%, similarly, the wrong use of the comma 07.50%.

Table 5. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	Where are you from?	55	68.75%
Full stop	Where are you from.	11	13.75%
Comma	Where are you from,	14	17.05%
Total		80	100%

In the sentence of *Where are you from?* Students positively responded correctly 68.75% and placed a question mark at the end of the sentence. On the other hand, 13.75% of students responded

incorrectly to end the sentence with a full stop and 17.05 use a comma. This indication implies that the Wh-question words play great role in identifying the sentence as a question.

Table 6. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Made	Type	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
		Have you got a pen? Yes, I have.	33	41.25%
Colon		Have you got a pen? Yes: I have.	18	22.05%
Quotation		Have you got a pen? Yes "I have"	16	20.00%
Full stop		Have you got a pen? Yes. I have,	13	16.25%
Total			80	100%

In the sentence of *Have you got a pen? Yes, I have.* The students responded positively using a comma before 'Yes' 41.25%. This percentage indicates that

students are familiar with the use of comma before 'Yes'. However, 58.75% of students responded incorrectly using other marks.

Table 7. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Made	Type	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
		Are you from Nyala?	56	70.00%
Full stop		Are you from Nyala.	13	16.25%
Comma		Are you from Nyala,	11	13.75%
Total			80	100%

In the sentence of *Are you from Nyala?* the students responded positively thinking about a question mark to end the sentence 70.00%. Due to this result students are very familiar to form questions using auxiliaries in forming

question and need more practice. On the other hand, there are 16.25% and 13.75% of students responded incorrectly so they need focus and training.

Table 8. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Made	Type	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
		This is Mohamed's watch.	43	53.75%
Comma		This is Mohamed,s watch.	23	28.75%
Colon		This is Mohamed:s watch.	14	17.50%
Total			80	100%

As can be noticed, 53.75% of students are very confident of using apostrophe correctly as in the sentence of *This is Mohamed's watch.* Therefore, they responded positively thinking about the use of apostrophe and a full stop to end

the sentence. This finding indicates that students have enough practice to use punctuation marks. On the other hand, less than 46.25% of students use colon and comma to punctuate the sentence.

Table 9. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Made	Type	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
		The book is under the table.	55	68.75%
Comma		The book is under the table,	12	15.00%
Exclamation		The book is under the table!	08	10.00%

Colon	The book is under the table:	05	06.25%
Total		50	100%

The majority of students responded the sentence of *The book is under the table.* positively 68.75% thinking about the full stop to end the sentence. This finding

indicates that students have enough practice on applying the rule of the full stop.

Table 10. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
Omission and Quotation Exclamation and Quotation	"Do you think I passed?" asked Ali.	40	50.00%
	-Do you think I passed?" asked Ali.	13	16.25%
	!Do you think I passed?" asked Ali.	12	15.00%
Quotation and Question	"Do you think I passed"" asked Ali.	15	18.75%
Total		80	100%

About 50.00% of students in the sentence of *Do you think I passed?' asked Ali.* Students responded positively

using marks incorrectly 50.00%, whereas other students used different incorrect punctuation marks

Table 11. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Error

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
Exclamation Question Comma	The flowers are beautiful in spring.	40	50.00%
	The flowers are beautiful in spring!	23	28.75%
	The flowers are beautiful in spring?	10	12.50%
	The flowers are beautiful in spring,	07	08.75%
Total		80	100%

The data revealed that 50.00% of students claimed to use the full stop correctly. Others responded incorrectly using other marks 50.00%. This finding

indicates that the exclamation and the full stop seem to be similar in use so they confuse between them

Table 12. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
Comma	She drank the following: milk, tea, coffee and water.	39	48.75%
	She drank the following, milk, tea, coffee and water.	26	32.05%
Comma and Omission Apostrophe	She drank the following, milk, tea, coffee and water--	08	10.00%
	She drank the following' milk, tea, coffee and water.	07	08.75%

Total		80	100%
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Less than 50% of students in the sentence of *She drank the following: milk, tea, coffee and water.* They responded positively the punctuation

marks. This finding indicates that students are aware of the use of colon after '*following*' and they use commas to express items in series

Table 13. Occurrence of Students' Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	Dalia, why were you late yesterday?	39	48.75%
Colon	Dalia: why were you late yesterday?	28	35.00%
Exclamation	Dalia! why were you late yesterday.	07	08.75%
Omission	Dalia, why were you late yesterday--	06	07.50%
Total		60	100%

In the sentence of *Dalia, why were you late yesterday?* students who use the correct punctuation mark 48.75%. Other students incorrectly use a colon instead

35.00%. Those who terminate the sentence using a full stop 08.75%. One student a missed the mark and end the sentence with a question mark 07.50%.

Table 14. Students' Occurrence on Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	How do you do this exercise?	61	76.25%
Full stop	How do you do this exercise.	10	12.50%
Exclamation	How do you do this exercise!	09	11.25%
Total		60	100%

In the sentence of *How do you do this exercise?* the students responded positively thinking about the question mark to end the sentence 76.25%. This finding indicates that students have

enough practice and aware to use the rule of question mark. On the contrary, there are students who incorrectly used a full stop 12.50%. Similarly the wrong use of the exclamation mark 11.25%.

Table 15. Students' Occurrence on Punctuation Errors

Error Type Made	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	Sit down, Sara.	29	36.25%
Colon	Sit down: Sara.	22	27.50%
Quotation	Sit down" Sara"	14	17.50%
Question	Sit down. Sara?	15	18.75%
Total		80	100%

One thing that students could not differentiate is the use of comma. They confuse it with the colon 36.25% as manifested in the sentence of *Sit down,*

Sara. On the contrary, some students responded incorrectly using colon 27.50%, the use of quotation 17.50% and a full stop and a question mark

18.75%. This finding indicates that students need more practice and rules'

explanation. Moreover, the students need more practice.

Table 16. Students' Occurrence on Punctuation Errors

Error Type	Example	Frequency of Error	Percent
	What are you doing now?	69	86.25%
Full stop	What are you doing now.	11	13.75%
Total		80	100%

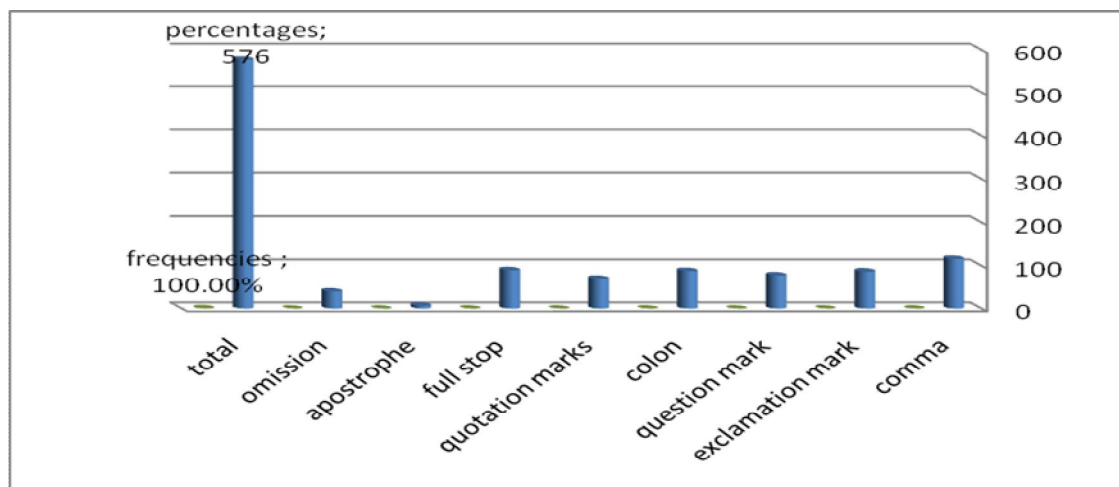
In the sentence of *What are you doing now?* students responded positively thinking about the question mark to end the sentence 86.25%. This finding indicates that students have enough

practice and aware of the rule of question mark. However, the Wh-question play great role in identifying the mark. On the other hand, 13.75% student missed to use the mark.

Table 17. The Classification of Errors

No	Kind of error	Total of error	Percentage	Accumulated percentage
1.	Comma	116	20.14%	20.14%
2.	Exclamation mark	87	15.10%	35.24%
3.	Question mark	78	13.54%	45.78%
4.	Colon	87	15.10%	60.88%
5.	Quotation mark	70	12.15%	73.03%
6.	Full stop	91	15.80%	88.83%
7.	Apostrophe	07	01.22%	90.05%
8.	Omission	40	06.94%	100.00
	Total	576	100.00%	

Graph (2) : The Classification Punctuation of Errors



Form the results of scores above, the researcher found that the average of the

students' scores they achieved is 7.2. This means that the majority of students

in the third class are unable to use the punctuation marks correctly. Hence, there are 576 various types of errors found by the researcher in students' test. However the most dominant error students made is the use comma 116(20.14%), whereas the apostrophe made the lowest percentage of errors 7(01.22%)

Teachers' Questionnaire:

The 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 10 statements. It was designed in accordance with Likert's 5-points scales strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree and strongly disagree. The validity of the tool was checked by a panel of experts. The researcher distributes the Table 18 Teaching punctuation without examples.

questionnaire to 40 English language teachers at secondary school in Nyala Locality based on convenience random sample. To quantify the scores, the researcher calculates the frequencies of teachers' responses 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 statements in tables number (18), (19), (20), (21), (22), (23), (24), (25), (26) and (27) phrased in comparison with the second hypothesis of the study. These statements were answered by the respondents to show their opinions illustrated in the way of frequencies and percentages.

I lack methods of teaching students of secondary schools punctuation marks only.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	18	45.00%
Agree	10	25.00%
Not sure	01	02.50%
Disagree	04	10.00%
Strongly disagree	07	17.50%
Total	40	100.00

Graph 3. Teaching from students' mistakes.

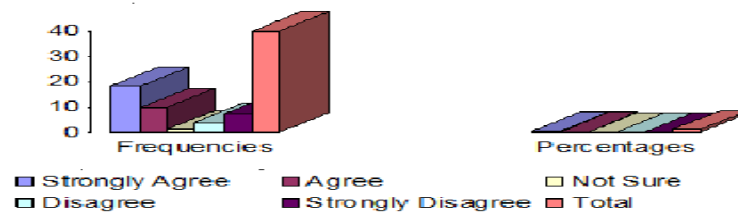


Table 18 indicates that 70% of the teachers say that students of secondary schools commit errors when they use punctuation marks in writing because teachers lack punctuation teaching methods for them to follow in teaching.

Only 27.5% of the teachers think that they use methods for teaching punctuation marks. 2.5% of them are unsure to decide their choice. It is expected that teachers of English language lack methods for teaching

punctuation. Of course, these methods are very necessary especially for

untrained teachers to use while teaching punctuation.

Table 19. Teaching from students' mistakes

I teach students punctuation marks based on their mistakes they commit in writing.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	17	42.50%
Agree	12	30.00%
Not sure	01	02.50%
Disagree	04	10.00%
Strongly disagree	06	15.00%
Total	40	100.00

Graph 4. Teaching from students' mistakes.

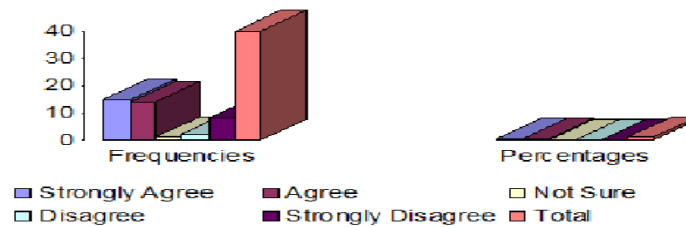


Table 19 and graph 4 show that 72.5% of teachers believe that they based their teaching punctuation marks on students' mistakes. This finding shows that teachers correct students' mistakes only when they commit errors. Of course, teaching from mistakes is effective method for error correction. 25% of teachers think that they do not depend on

their students' mistakes as a method for teaching punctuation. 2.5% of teachers are unsure to decide. However, teachers might not be able to transfer punctuation knowledge using the necessary methods for teaching punctuation marks. In addition, they need explanation and exercises for practice as well.

Table 20. Ignorance of punctuation teaching.

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

Graph 5. Ignorance of punctuation teaching



Table 20 indicates that 72.5% of teachers believed that they ignore teaching their students punctuation marks. This selection indicates that in spite of the necessity of punctuation in teaching, it is neglected. On the other side, 25% of teachers answered negatively thinking it is important to

teach their students punctuation. Only 2.5% of teachers are not sure to decide. It is not expected that teachers ignore teaching punctuation during teaching writing. Of course, teaching punctuation should be taken into consideration while teachers dealing with writing to improve students' writing.

Table 21. The syllabus has objectives for teaching punctuation.

The syllabus has clear objectives for teaching punctuation marks to be achieved by teachers.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	03	07.50%
Agree	08	20.00%
Not sure	01	02.50%
Disagree	16	40.00%
Strongly disagree	12	30.00%
Total	40	100.00

Graph 6. The syllabus has objectives for teaching punctuation

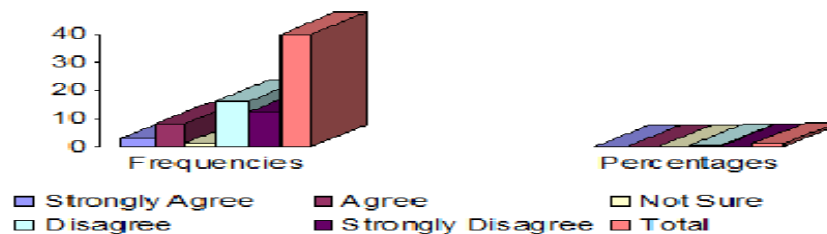


Table 21 implies that 70% of the teachers say that the English syllabus lacks teaching objectives to be achieved by the English teachers. This finding shows that teachers believe that the syllabus does not have objectives of punctuation that teachers of English

should realize. 27.5% of teachers think that the syllabus has objectives guide them to deal with punctuation. 2.5% of teachers are not sure to decide. Of course, objectives are very important as part of teaching planning.

Table 22. Teaching punctuation without examples.

I teach students the use of punctuation only without giving them examples for illustration.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	11	27.50%
Agree	13	32.50%
Not sure	02	05.00%
Disagree	09	22.50%
Strongly disagree	05	12.50%
Total	40	100.00

Graph 7. Teaching punctuation without examples.

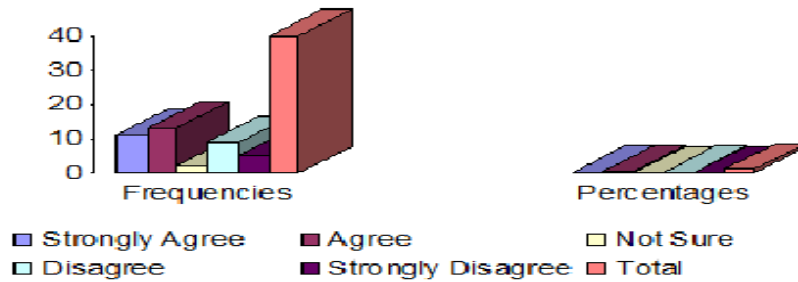
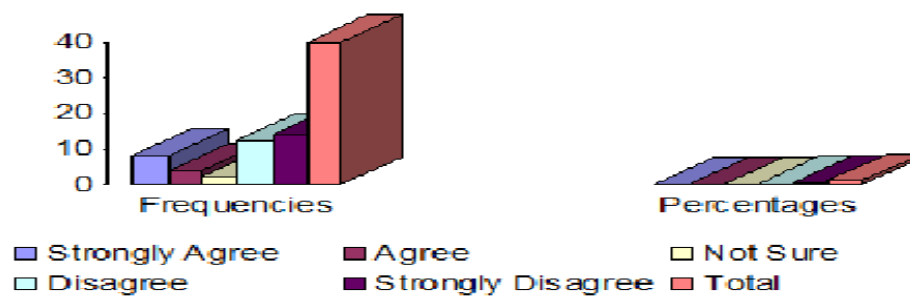


Table 22 implies that 60% of the teachers believe that students make punctuation errors because teachers do not use examples in explaining the use of punctuation marks. However, 35% of the English teachers responded negatively thinking that when teaching punctuation they use examples to Table 23. Teaching students all types of punctuation.

illustrate the uses of punctuation. Only 5% are unsure to decide. Of course, using examples is very necessary for illustration and facilitating students' understanding of punctuation marks in order to use them correctly in writing exercises (unpunctuated sentences/texts).

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

Graph 8. Teaching students all types of punctuation.



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 10% agreed. These two make 30%. This finding indicates that teachers believe that students do not

commit errors because teachers explain all types of punctuation marks. On the other hand, 30% disagreed and 35% strongly disagreed. These two percentages make 65%. However, teaching all types of punctuation marks is very important in writing than

depending on part of them. 5% of teachers are unsure to decide. Of course, Table 24. Reflection of punctuation feedback.

teachers should focus and pay them more attention.

The syllabus reflects the teaching process of punctuation.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	07	17.50%
Agree	08	20.00%
Not sure	01	02.50%
Disagree	09	22.50%
Strongly disagree	15	37.50%
Total	40	100.00

Graph 9. Reflection of punctuation feedback.

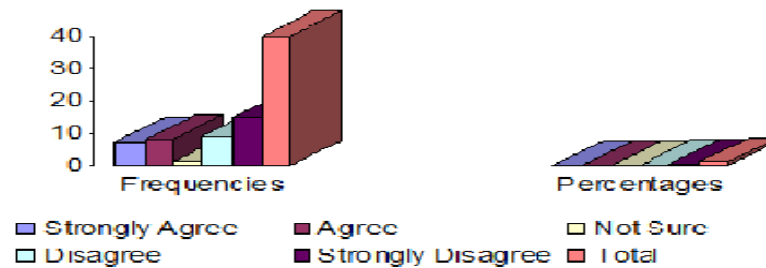


Table 24 implies that 60% of the teachers believe that students encounter a problem of making punctuation errors because the syllabus does not include punctuation marks. However, 37.5% of the teachers answer negatively thinking that the syllabus reflects punctuation marks teaching. Only 2.5% are unsure to decide. It seems that punctuation

exercises are not manifested in students' exercise books. Therefore, teachers should concentrate on punctuation exercises that assist them to punctuate correctly to improve their writing. This indication however, is due to the lack of the syllabus to punctuation exercises which is not reflected.

Table 25. Lack of punctuation topics.

I do not find punctuation topics in the syllabus for teaching them to students.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	12	30.00%
Agree	18	45.00%
Not sure	02	05.00%
Disagree	04	10.00%
Strongly disagree	04	10.00%
Total	40	100.00

Graph 10. Lack of punctuation topics.



Table 25 states that 75% of teachers believe that students commit errors because teachers do not find topics of punctuation marks for them to teach. On the contrary, 20% of teachers are doing their best and teach their students the

punctuation marks they need in writing. However, 5% of teachers are unsure to decide. This finding shows that punctuation topics do not exist in the syllabus although they are very important in punctuation writing skills.

Table 26 Motivating students to use punctuation.

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

Graph 11. Motivating students to use punctuation.

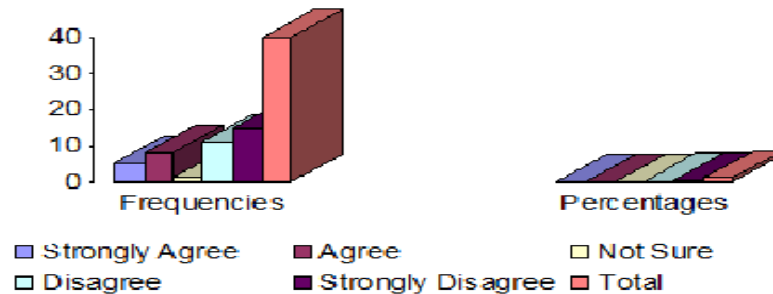


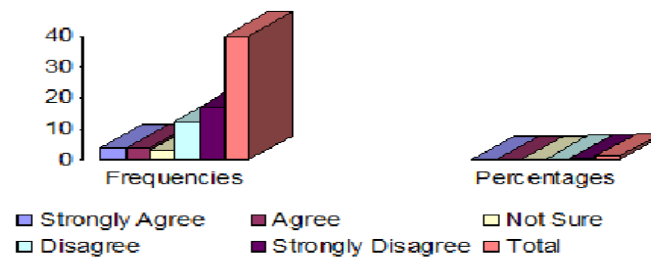
Table 26 implies that 65% of the teachers believe that students encounter a problem of using punctuation marks because their teachers do not motivate them to use punctuation. However, 32.5% of the teachers think that they

motivate their students - the use of punctuation. Only 2.5% of the teachers are unsure to decide. Of course, motivation is very important so that teachers should encourage their students to use punctuation correctly.

Table 27 Providing additional exercises

The syllabus provides teachers of English with additional exercises to support their students with more practice.	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly agree	04	10.00%
Agree	04	10.00%
Not sure	03	07.50%
Disagree	12	30.00%
Strongly disagree	17	42.50%
Total	40	100.0

Graph 12. Providing additional exercises



This statement checks whether or not SPINE 6 provides additional exercises. For responding this statement, 10% of teachers strongly agreed. 10% agreed. Those two ratios make 20%. According to this selection the syllabus seems it provide additional exercises for practice. However, supplementary exercises are very important in teaching punctuation to improve students' use of punctuation marks correctly. 7.5% of teachers are not sure to decide. On the other hand, 30% of teachers disagreed and 42.5% of them strongly disagreed. These two percentages make 72.5%. This shows that teachers do not give their students more exercises of punctuation for more practice.

Results and Discussion:

Generally, from the punctuation marks that were given by the researcher to be used by students several errors were found.

The findings of students' test indicate that students confuse to place different types of punctuation marks incorrectly. In the case is of comma, the frequency used error is 20.14%. The errors percentage of the question mark is 13.54%. The errors percentage of the colon is 15.10%. The error is presented in this sentence is *She drank the following, milk, tea, coffee and water.* The error percentage of exclamation mark is 15.10%, The correct sentence is

Oh, you wonderful creature! Moreover, students made few errors in full stop 15.80%. The error percentage of the apostrophe is 01.22%. The error percentage of quotation mark is 12.15% and the omission is 06.94%. On the other hand, the teachers' opinion in the questionnaire supports the answers of the students' test.

The findings state that, there were 576 cases of errors found covering seven kinds of punctuation marks in the students' test. They are comma, full stop, colon, exclamation mark, question mark, quotation marks, and apostrophe. They respectively occurred in sequence 116, 91, 88, 87, 78, 70, and 07 times. It could be noticed from the frequencies that, students were unable to use 5 type of punctuation marks. They are comma, full stop, colon, exclamation mark, quotation marks and question mark.

From the presentation of frequencies and percentages of the numerical sums of punctuation errors in the tables above; majority of students confuse to use some punctuation marks such as colon, comma, question mark and exclamation mark.

Generally, the findings imply that the occurrence of errors in placing punctuation marks in students' test might refer to less interest, low motivation, less accuracy and ignorance on the use of punctuation marks, little explanation

paid by the teachers, lack of the syllabus to exercises, low understanding on using punctuation marks, lack of punctuation teaching methods and ignorance of rules application.

Verification of the study hypotheses:

The first hypothesis can be verified by the different types of punctuation errors made by students in their test. The second hypothesis can be validated by the exploration in tables (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10) which displayed high percentage given by the respondents in the English teachers' questionnaire which correspond to the following percentages (70%), (72.5%), (72.5%), (70%), (60%), (65%), (60%), (75%), (65%) and (72.5%) respectively. These results confirm the second hypotheses of the study. The findings of the above mentioned studies emphasized that there are various errors made by students in using punctuation marks. These results support the findings of several researchers who investigated punctuation errors made by students e.g. Ahmed Awad, (2012)¹⁵.

Conclusion:

Through the analysis of the data, the researcher found that the students' failure to understand and use punctuation marks correctly could be ascribed to lack of teaching punctuation, lack of teaching methods, and the syllabus of SPINE lack the necessary materials, lack to the insufficient of exercises and lack of explanation and lack of practice.

The students of secondary schools in Nyala Locality seem they face difficulty as they use punctuation. They are also unable to identify punctuation marks as using them appropriately in sentences and texts.

As a result of the study it is clear that students are prone to commit

punctuation errors which can be traced to the drawback of students' ability. Even though the number of such errors isn't so high and such errors can diminish as the standard improve. According to the discussion of the results, the hypotheses were confirmed.

Due to the positive effect of using correct punctuation marks in writing, the researcher recommends the following:

- Teaching students that punctuation marks are necessary elements of writing. They can teach them to students through punctuation instruction.
- Incorporating punctuation into the syllabus that focus on teaching writing skills. When designing texts, punctuation should be an integral part of those texts. They help the students to use them correctly and readers to understand the texts.
- Encouraging students to punctuate a lot of texts and providing opportunities to discuss the punctuation marks used and the errors committed by students.
- Providing meaningful writing exercises which motivate students to notice punctuation rules.
- Explaining that punctuation is used to separate words, phrases and sentences.

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