

Error Analysis on the Use of Punctuation Marks by the I Year UG English Literature Students of N.M.S.S.V.N. College Students

Dr. K. Madhavarajan

Assistant Professor of English
N.M.S.S. Vellaichamy Nadar College
Madurai , Tamilnadu

ABSTRACT

Learning is endless. A teacher never stops learning until she/he stops teaching. Classroom research is a handy tool that helps every teacher to teach better, learn better, research better and improve for betterment. This research article is one such classroom research, which targets about punctuation marks used by the students, freshers, who have joined N.M.S.S.V.N College for their under graduation in English literature. Punctuation is an important part of writing, which is usually given less importance. This research article proposes a testing methodology of punctuation marks, discusses the results of the test and gives suggestions based on the test.

Article Received: 18 October 2020, Revised: 3 November 2020, Accepted: 24 December 2020

INTRODUCTION

Learning a language could be done in many ways. Learning English language has many theories and varied practices. Error analysis is a common universal mode of understanding the learners, the users and beneficiaries of teaching. Error analysis is a part and parcel of teaching and classroom research. This research article would discuss the methodologies and outcomes of a classroom research done at N.M.S.S. Vellaichamy Nadar College, Nagamalai, Madurai, Tamilnadu. The language component taken for this research is punctuation, which are very essential in written communication as that of body language in oral communication.

Punctuation, when introduced and came into use, was related more to speaking than to reading. As readers of Aristotle and Plato everyone would know the popularity of public speaking during those years. It is believed that the ancient Greeks (8 to 4 B.C.) introduced the marks of punctuation. It is generally believed that full stop originated in the third century B.C., spacing between words was introduced in the ninth century A.D., hyphen around eleventh century A.D. and slash originated in 13th or 14th century. In the late 15th century, the slash evolved into a small curve and then became the comma. The style of indenting at the beginning of paragraphs was introduced in the 17th century.

Punctuation is the collection of marks that we use to make sentences flow smoothly and express meaning clearly. It tells us when to pause

or add a certain feeling to our words; it separates ideas so that sentences are clear, it points out titles, quotes, and other key parts of language-punctuation is important.

Capitalization, full stop, question mark, exclamatory mark, comma, apostrophe, quotations, colons, semi-colons, parentheses, dashes, hyphen, brackets and braces are a few commonly used punctuation marks.

Punctuation often seems to be of minor importance to us. However, if we try to imagine the text without any punctuation marks, we will soon realize how important it is for the correct understanding of our ideas.

PERFORMANCE ANALYSIS

To check the punctuation proficiency and knowledge of I B.A. English Literature students of NMSSVN College, the researcher conducted a Diagnostic test for 51 students. The test has three sections: Section-A, Section-B and Section-C. Each section carries 10 marks, so totally 30 marks. 50 minutes time was the time limit given to the test takers.

In Section-A, the researcher asked the test takers to 'Punctuate the following sentence'. The researcher chose random punctuation marks like double quotation, comma, question mark, apostrophe, slash and full stop. In Section-B, the researcher asked the test takers to 'Identify the errors in the given sentences'. The researcher selected the following punctuations marks - full stop, apostrophe, double quotation, capital letter,

brackets and hyphen. In Section-C, the researcher asked the test takers to 'Punctuate a paragraph'. The researcher has concentrated in the following punctuations - comma, apostrophe, hyphen, capital letter and double quotation.

In Section-A, the test takers scored a maximum of 9 mark out of 10 and a minimum of 0

The following paragraphs would analyse students' performance in detail in each and every section:

SECTION-A

	Double Quotation	Comma	Question Mark	Apostrophe	Slash	Full Stop
No. of students secured marks	27	19	9	21	51	25
No. of students didn't secured marks	24	32	42	30	0	26

For this section, the researcher chose questions from two questions from double quotation, two questions from comma, one question from question mark, one question from apostrophe, two questions from slash and two questions from full stop.

In this section, the researcher asked two questions from double quotation out of 51 test takers, maximum 27 test takers do it correctly and minimum 24 test taker do it wrongly. Then the researcher asked two questions from comma, minimum 19 test takers do it correctly and maximum 32 students do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from question mark,

SECTION-B

	No Error	Full Stop	Apostrophe	Double Quotation	Capitalization	Brackets	Hyphen
No. of students secured marks	5	9	8	6	12	23	4
No. of students didn't secured mark	46	42	43	45	39	28	47

In Section-B, the researcher asked the test takers to 'Identify the errors in the following sentence'. The test takers have found it more difficulty especially in this section, because in the previous section the test takers just punctuate the following sentence. But in this section, the test takers have to identify the errors in the sentence about punctuation. The questions asked from identify the errors-4, full stop-1, apostrophe-1, double quotation-1, capital letter-1, brackets-1 and hyphen-1.

mark. In Section-B, they scored a maximum of 5 marks out of 10 and a minimum of 0 mark. In Section-C, they scored a maximum of 4 mark out of 10 and a minimum of 0 mark. This shows that, the test takers found it difficult to take Sections - B and C.

minimum 9 test takers do it correctly and maximum 42 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from apostrophe minimum 21 test takers do it correctly and maximum 30 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked two questions from slash, maximum 51 test takers do it correctly. The researcher asked two questions from full stop minimum 25 test takers do it correctly and minimum 26 test takers do it wrongly.

In Section-A, it is inferred that out of ten questions the test takers scored maximum mark in Slash and minimum mark in Question Mark.

In this section, the researcher's main idea is to know whether the test taker able to know the sentence which has correct punctuation mark. So, the researcher asked maximum four questions based on this type. The researcher found that in this section the test takers committed mistakes due to omission of some and punctuation and not even try to add some punctuation marks.

The researcher asked four questions from no error, out of 51 students maximum 5 test takers do it correctly and maximum 46 test takers do it

wrongly. Then the researcher asked one question from full stop maximum 9 test takers do it correctly and maximum 42 students do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from apostrophe, maximum 8 test takers do it correctly and maximum 43 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from double quotation, maximum 6 test takers do it correctly and maximum 45 students do it correctly. The researcher asked one question from capitalization, maximum 12 test takers do it correctly and maximum 39 test takers do it wrongly.

SECTION-C

	Comma	Apostrophe	Hyphen	Capitalization	Double Quotation
No. of students secured marks	25	7	1	32	5
No. of students didn't secured marks	26	44	50	19	46

In Section-C, the researcher asked the test takers to punctuate a paragraph. The researcher's main objective was to check the test takers idea and capability of splitting the passage into sentences with punctuation marks.

The researcher asked four questions from comma, maximum 25 test takers do it correctly and maximum 26 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from apostrophe, maximum 7 test takers do it correctly and maximum 44 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked two questions from hyphen, maximum one test taker do it correct and maximum 50 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from capitalization, maximum 32 test takers do it correctly and maximum 19 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked two questions from double quotation, maximum 5 test takers do it correctly and maximum 46 test takers do it wrongly.

In this section, the researcher found that most of the test takers felt easy to do capitalization and maximum number of test takers has felt difficulty in hyphen.

The researcher found that in Section-A, B and C the test takers scored maximum marks in slash, brackets and capitalization and minimum marks in question mark and hyphen. By analyzing, Section-A, B and C it is inferred that most of the test takers have a clear idea about Slash and they have an average score in Brackets, Double Quotation and Comma. In the diagnostic test, the researcher finally comes to know that the test takers felt more difficulty in using Hyphen.

The researcher asked one questions from brackets, maximum 23 test takers do it correctly and maximum 28 test takers do it wrongly. The researcher asked one question from hyphen, maximum 4 test takers do it correctly and maximum 47 students do it wrongly.

In this section, the researcher found that out of ten questions, 51 test takers scored maximum mark in brackets and minimum mark in hyphen. This table shows that the test takers felt very easy in brackets and felt more difficulty in hyphen.

INFERENCE AND DISCUSSION

The results suggested that the four types of punctuation errors were found in test taker's writing. The four types were apostrophe, double quotation, hyphen and full stop. In this five, 117 errors were made by the test takers in apostrophe and 115 errors in double quotation and 97 errors in hyphen and 68 errors in full stop. The most frequent type of punctuation errors out of these four types by the test takers was omission of double quotation.

The researcher also found about the factor influencing the test takers to make error in using punctuation marks. Based on the finding, factor of errors were found in the test takers answers. The errors were described in the following categories:

1. Omission
2. Addition
3. Misordering

OMISSION

There were omission of some punctuation marks like double quotation and hyphen. The following were the descriptions of each punctuation and examples of errors made by the test takers.

a) Double quotation

There were 115 errors made by the test takers found in double quotation. The errors occur when the test takers omitted quotation marks that should be used in the correct place. The errors were described in the following examples:

Error made by the test takers

1. The secret is an interesting short story written by swaminathan.

Suggested Punctuation

1. "The Secret" is an interesting short story written by Swaminathan.
- b) Hyphen

There were 97 errors made by the test takers of using hyphen were found in omission category. They can be seen in the following examples:

Error made by the test takers

1. The one horned Indian rhinoceros is Asia's second largest land mammal.

Suggested punctuation

1. The one-horned Indian rhinoceros is Asia's second largest land mammal.

ADDITION

Over addition of some punctuation marks like full stop and comma. Example for this type is:

1. Full stop

There were 68 errors made by the test takers found in full stop. The error occurred when the test takers added full stop which must not appear in the sentence. The errors were described as the following example:

Error made by the test takers

1. And with nearly 600 in Nepal. There are around 2400 rhinos in the Indian subcontinent.

Suggested punctuation

1. And with nearly 600 in Nepal, there are around 2400 rhinos in the Indian subcontinent.
2. Comma

In addition category of using comma, there were 58 errors made by test takers were found. They can be seen in the following examples:

Errors made by the test takers

1. Fully grown males, can reach up to nearly, six feet at the shoulders and weigh up to 2500 kilos.

Suggested punctuation

1. Fully – grown males can reach up to nearly six feet at the shoulder and weigh up to 2500 kilos.

MISORDERING

In misordering category, there were 117 errors made by the test takers. They occurred only in apostrophe. The test takers misplaced apostrophe with other punctuation marks. The errors were described in the following examples:

Errors made by the test takers

1. My mothers, briefcase was lost during our travel.

Suggested punctuation

1. My mother's briefcase was lost during, our travel.

These are the errors that the researcher found in this analysis. These shows that the test takers committed more mistakes in omission, addition and misordering of punctuation marks. The test takers should take steps to reduce this type of mistakes.

Suggestions and Conclusion

This diagnostic test on error analysis of punctuation marks among the first year English Literature students on NMSSVN College, Madurai has given a lot of cues to the professors in the department of English about their newly admitted students. The teachers can pay more attention to teach some punctuation items in which the errors have occurred, which would reduce the students' errors while using punctuations.

Regarding the factors influencing the test takers to make error in using punctuation, the test takers have to remember and be aware of what errors they have mostly committed. They should not take punctuation as an area of less importance and should not pay less attention to certain punctuations like hyphen, comma and double quotation. This diagnostic test has also given an insight that students are very poor in reading and comprehending a passage or a sentence. If they had understood the essence of what is written, they would have punctuated well.

These students must be given tutorials or exercises regarding punctuation regularly to improve their skills in punctuation. It would habituate and train themselves with the proper usage of punctuations.

Questionnaire**SECTION-A****PUNCTUATE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE:-**

1. *The Secret is an interesting short story written by Swaminathan*
2. *Platinum is a rare and valuable metal white in color and next to silver and gold the easiest to shape*
3. *May I expect the bank statement within five days*
4. *My mothers briefcase was lost during our travel.*
5. *How long will John take to reach home if his speed is 5 km hr*
6. *3 4th of population of this village lives in poverty*
7. *Mahatma Gandhi commented that the mind is a restless bird*
8. *Over the past several years cases of brain injury have increased*
9. *Try to catch me challenged the boy.*

10. *The three main islands in North America are Malta Gozo and Comino*

SECTION-B
IDENTIFY THE ERRORS IN THE
FOLLOWING:-

1. *We should send the cheque tomorrow, should we not?*
2. *The meeting will start at 9.00 AM...*
3. *UNESCOs circular was, ignored by it's member countries.*
4. *As "you eat a hot curry" the pain receptors in the tongue, get less sensitive?*
5. *The crowd reported that someone's luggage has been stolen.*
6. *Banner advertisement are the most researched way to promote a website.*
7. *"Perhaps", he cried, "there may be such monsters".*
8. *both my brothers were treated by dr. Mohan after the mountain climbing accident.*
9. *The boiling point of water is 100(C).*
10. *The best place to visit in Kerela is its capital city – Trivandrum.*

SECTION-C
PUNCTUATE THE FOLLOWING
PARAGRAPH:-

The one horned Indian rhinoceros is Asias second largest land mammal. Fully grown males can reach up to nearly six feet at the shoulder and weigh up to 2500 kilos. a couple of centuries ago a large number of these animals inhabited various parts of north India. But by the beginning of the 20th , century incessant hunting and loss of habit reduced the population to just a few dozen. In 1910, the government banned the killing of rhinos and today India has more than 1800 – most of them in Assam's Kaziranga National Park". And with nearly 600 in Nepal there are around 2400 rhinos in the Indian subcontinent.

Reference

Richards, Jacks. 1972. *Error Analysis*. Cambridge Corder Longman Group