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**Punctuation Marks Deficiency in EFL Students' Paragraph writing
The Case of Second Year LMD English Students at Biskra University**

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Declaration

I, **BOUALAM MAROUA**, do hereby declare that this submitted work is my original work and has not previously been submitted for any Institution or university for a degree. I also declare that a list of references is provided forward indicating all the sources of the cited and quoted information. This work was certified and completed at Mohammed KHEIDER University of Biskra.

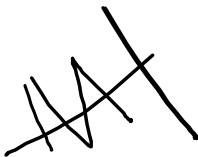
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Dedication

In the Name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

It is a great feeling to dedicate this work to my dearest parents. Needless to say, my *brothers* and beloved my *sister* who they want to share happily with me these pleasant moments that I am so eager to feel.

Dear *Mother* and dear *Father*, it is too hard to put in words what I feel inside towards you. You have put me on the right track, supported me throughout my academic career and helping me to bring this worthwhile research to an end.

Honestly, I remain speechless.

A special dedication goes to my *SUPPORTER* who encouraged me to continue this

work.

Thank you

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Abstract

This work attempted to explore and illustrate the EFL students' use of punctuation marks in paragraph writing. It shows how the proper use of the marks precisely would help in conveying the exact meaning and maintaining organization in paragraph writing. The researcher has noticed that the students are able to answer activities and tasks, but when it comes to writing; they misuse them. Through the hypothesis, we intended to show the role of correct placement of punctuations in enhancing the students' paragraph writing. Our hypotheses- students are not familiar either with the importance of punctuation marks or their use, most of the students make the same errors when it comes to punctuation marks and students are not interested to learn the details due to the old- fashioned strategies in teaching writing. The data was gathered from a questionnaire. The gained results in the students' questionnaire were contradictive to the students' performance in their paragraph. In the questionnaire, students seem aware about the significance of the marks, but they keep ignoring them. They are not interested, and they prefer a modern means to facilitate using them. Finally, it can be concluded that students have to change their attitude toward each single element because whenever they learn it; they stay foreign language learners: each language has a grammatical rule academic function.

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

e.g.: *exempli gratia* (for example)

Et al.: *et alia* (and others)

L2: second language

LMD: Licence, Master and Doctorate

Q: question.

p: page.

RQ: Research questions

RH: Research hypothesis

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In the English learning community, EFL learners and students seek to improve their level. They cannot master the language unless they do not be skilled in the four language skills: reading, writing, speaking and listening. Writing classified as a challenging task comparing to the other skills. In other saying, words and letters are not the only thing that can help the learners to write a clear, coherent and meaningful sentence. writing is a process of producing and recording words in a form that can be read and understood. (Intesar,2018) Writing is a process used by teachers to guide the learners from random thoughts to a cohesive once (Anne, 2015).

This process cannot be completed without its full elements; grammar, capitalization and punctuation marks, spelling and vocabulary. All of the previous mentioned elements will affect on the meaning which will not be achieved unless one of these elements is neglected or not considered during writing a paragraph because the context will be ruined.

Besides, these marks indicate how ideas are conveyed to the reader properly. Punctuations marks show the structure of the sentence. It includes the sentence starts, ends and when to pause. They are one of the significant components in writing, especially the academic one. It gives an important role in giving the speakers intended meaning to the reader or the listener. Punctuation is the system of signs or symbols given to a reader to show how a sentence is constructed (Noviana, 2021).

However, punctuations show how the sentence should be read and make the meaning clear in which these sentences should include at least a capital letter at the start, and a full stop or exclamation mark or question mark at the end. This basic system indicates that the sentence is complete.

Moreover, punctuation marks give all the types of writing with silent intonation touch: the reader pauses, stops, emphasizes, or questions using a comma, a period, an exclamation or a question mark. (Effective Writing Practices Tutorial: Punctuation, n.d.) Correct punctuation adds clarity and precision to writing. It allows the writer to stop, pause, or give emphasis to certain parts of the methodology.

2) STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Punctuation marks play a significant role in giving the intended meaning to the language. Use of wrong any mark or even a wrong placement will change the entire meaning of the sentence completely and sometimes even convert it to a complete nonsense (Singh, 2015).

Unluckily, Neither the ordinary people nor the students are familiar with its importance as much as they have to. For this reason, you may notice its deficiency in most of their writings especially the beginners (hence second year students of English). However, the research is going to investigate the lacks between the marks' importance, the frequency of using them and the student's attitude toward them. It will cover the reasons why the students at this level do not give that much attention to them although they effect on the meaning from a way to another.

3) SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The significance of this study is going to shed the light on one of the important components of the English language structure in paragraph writings. However, students at early years in the university will not give that importance to the small details unlike to their thoughts, writing style and vocabulary because these marks get the less heed compared to other elements.

This research is mainly addressed to second year student of English in Biskra city. It is going to benefit them to improve their writing performance and to be prepared for their future academic career and assessments, such as; dissertation, PhD thesis, research papers or essays. In addition, it will help them how to recognize the different functions in different context. It is also going to help teachers to guide their students from the beginning about the importance of punctuation marks.

4) OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this work is:

4.1 To investigate the EFL students' knowledge about dealing with punctuation marks.

4.2 To examine the common punctuation errors committed by EFL students when they write paragraphs.

4.3 To explore a useful means to facilitate writing.

5) RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the study will try to answer the following questions:

5.1 Are second year student of English aware about the different uses of punctuation marks?

5.2 What are the common punctuation errors made by students when they write a paragraph

5.3 What is the students' attitude toward these marks?

6) RESEARCH HYPOTHESIS

In order to accomplish the aforementioned questions, the study will try to hypothesize the following hypothesis:

6.1 Students are not familiar either with the importance of punctuation marks or their use.

Students in the early stages of English writing will focus on ideas, thoughts and words- choice more than the small details.

6.2 Second year students of Biskra are not interested to learn such details due to the old-

fashioned strategies in teaching writing.

6.3 Most of the students make the same errors when it comes to punctuation marks. Yet, they use more commas, full stops and capitalization compared to other punctuation marks.

7) METHODOLOGY

Each study has its specific methodology to follow in order to find the wanted solutions.

7.1 Participants

The main participants included in this study are second year students at the English department of Mohamed kheider university of Biskra. In order to attain the main objectives of the research, A sample of twenty- five random students out from,three hundred thirty-six, the whole population will be examined.

7.2 Data collection

This study aims to investigate the defect of punctuating that occurs a misunderstood and misuse.As a technique, the research will collect the data using a questionnaire. The research will evaluate, analyze and discuss the mentioned questions.

7.3 Data analysis

In order to investigate the lack of punctuation marks' use in paragraph writings. The suitable method that can be used in this type of the experimental research is the mixed- method approach. This approach will try to prove the mentioned hypothesis. Besides, concerning the procedures, the participants are going to be evaluated individually by correcting their answers without any need of direct presence.

8) LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The findings of the study are not extremely restricted to second year students of English. All the EFL students and learners of English are able to use it as a guide in order to avoid any future mistakes. Moreover, students' errors are most of the time similar to each other. They may use extra commas, omit semicolon and forget to capitalize. However, the results of the study are limited to the instrument used in the study.

9) Literature review

In the last few decades, many countries are using English as a second language in their scientific research. This language has surprised the others as the world's primary means of communication, education and the other domains. Thus, mastering English became a necessity to the students. However, being an advanced speaker, listener, reader and writing of English is not an easy mission. Students should learn to correct their mistakes; otherwise, it occurs errors: these errors lead to unacceptable work that oppose with the academic conditions. This problem makes the scholars and researchers of linguistics to write different studies in order to find solutions. **Nurwahyuni** (2017) writes about the Error Analysis of the Punctuation in Students' Writing. The purpose of this study is to examine the use of punctuation errors in the writing of English Department Students. He decides to choose all the sixth semester students of English Department of UIN Ar- Raniry. After analyzing the data of this study, it has been found that most frequent type of punctuation errors in students' writing is omission of comma. Moreover, four factors of errors were found in the students' answers. There was omission some of punctuation marks, lack of accuracy, misuse of using some marks such as question marks and commas before quotation marks, and misunderstanding of the meaning of the text. (Nurwahyuni, 2017)

In the other hand, **Nidal et al.**, (2017) searchers about the investigating the Problems of Using Punctuation Marks in Paragraphs among University Students. The purpose of this study was to investigate punctuation mark problems made by students

in their writing performance. The researchers of this study chose second year students in the Sudan university of science and technology. The students were asked to answer a test using the SPSS program. After analyzing the data of this study, it has been found that the majority of the students confuse the use of some punctuation marks such as the colon, semicolon question mark and the full stop, due to the poor and inadequate punctuation marks activation presented in the text book.

In addition, **Intesar** (2018), writes about the difficulties Faced by Ninth Grade EFL Students When Practicing Writing Skills: Spelling and Punctuation Marks. The purpose of this study was to investigate the difficulties faced by ninth grade EFL students while handling the writing skills (in terms of spelling as well as punctuation marks). The study revealed the causes of writing skills issues and support English Language teachers to solve these issues. The author of this study examined all ninth-grade students in Madaba schools, Jordan. The students of this college were asked to participate in an interview. In addition to answering a test. After analyzing the data of his study, it has been found that the instructional design maybe altered to the students did not know about some meanings from the paragraph so answered some questions. It also found that the results show that comma is the most frequent error that made.

Chapter one:

Introduction to writing process

Introduction

This chapter is dedicated to writing process. At first, it provides a definition of writing. It presents general ideas to make the process clear for the learners. Then, the chapter adds writing's importance because EFL learners give it the less important. Thereafter, the chapter presents its types, aspects; these provided titles will help the beginner learners to read, in brief, about writing.

Over and above, in the first chapter, the second part is concerned with paragraphs writing. The researcher will move on from writing as a general process to a specific assignment, the paragraph. The study will define it, presents its types, parts and the characteristics of writing a good paragraph. Thus, leads to explore the difficulties that face learners in writing a paragraph. After that, we will shift and elaborate the punctuation marks.

1.1 Definition of Writing

Writing is one of the important fundamental language skills in the language learning process. It allows learners to record their speaking background and vocabulary using letters. It conveys ideas thoughts and concepts or feelings to others in written form. (Munfadlila. 2022. p58) Yet, Writing is not only concerned with expressing ideas and random thoughts; it saves nations from the extinction. It gives life after destructions: without writing there would be no history(Marzban, 2018).

1.2 Significance of Writing

Writing is an important skill because it allows people to get a point across without anypresence. Mostly, if the readers get their impression of any piece of writing through this skill:

It influences the quality of the writer skill and how others perceive their style. Farzanehet al., (2018, p34) state that writing gives the writer the opportunity to express his ideas, feelings, and viewpoints to others and convert them to visible manuscript. In addition, it is significant in many areas of lives and most of the student needs. Also, it is essential for expressing and preserving the ideas and memories.

1.3 Types of Writing

Writers seek to produce a masterpiece in every single sentence they write: this process cannot be fully completed without determining which way they should follow either in the types of writing or the topic itself. Each writing type has a different purpose and requires a different writing skill having an objective. Each of these writing styles is used for a specific purpose. A single text may include more than one writing style. (Jeffrey, n.d.)When writer Understand his/her purpose: types of writing allow them to distinguish which type should be used, followed by its characteristics. Nguon() lists different types of writing that the students have to be familiar with, as the following: explanation and analysis type, argumentation type, narration and description and summary (Nguon, 1976).

1.3.1 Expository Writing

Expository writing is the most common type of writing styles, in which it is written with alogical order and sequence. The main focus of the author is to tell about a given topic or subject and leaves out their opinions. “Subject-oriented writing style.” It contains opinions, biasness and justification of the author.

1.3.2 Descriptive Writing

This type of writing is a style where focuses on describing a character, an event or a place in very detailed manner. It is sometimes poetic in nature in which the author is specifying the details of the event rather than just the information about what happened. It also has an aesthetic touch that the author visualizes what he sees, hears, tastes, smells and feels.

1.3.3 Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is a type of writing which contains justifications and reasons to make someone believes in what the author believes in. In persuasive writing, the author takes a stand and asks you to believe their point of view.

1.3.4 Narrative Writing

Narrative writing is a type of writing in which the author places himself as a character, or not, and narrates the story, such as, Novels, short stories, poetry and biographies; This type of writing often has situations like disputes, conflicts, action, motivational events, problems and solutions.

1.4Aspects of writing

Regardless any type of writing, a good writing has several common elements. Wilbers states that any type of writing should contain five elements, He clearly presents them as follow (Wilbers)

1.4.1 Central idea

This element involves focusing on a clear idea, argument, or thesis around which to organize the target material. In other words, it focuses on how to select ideas to support the main idea in writing because it is about the author's primary message (J, Goldberg,2013).

1.4.2 Organization

This element of writing has to do with coherent arrangement. It involves keeping the reader oriented to the central and subordinate ideas. Good organization is logical and sequential. It guides the reader between divisions of the material (Wilbers, n.d).

1.4.3 Supporting material

Supporting materials make the ideas and information presented meaningful and memorable for the reader. It clarifies; more argument, and persuading the topic. Writer can use explanations, examples, statistics, and quotations (Wilbers, n.d).

1.4.2 Expression, word choice, and point of view

Writers should use a clear, specific, accurate, and appropriate language, The sentences Also, should be contains simple words that are free of wordiness and ambiguity (Wilbers, n.d).

1.4.3 Spelling, grammar, vocabulary and punctuation

This element of good writing counts only when the writer makes a mistake or an error in his/her writing. The reader can notice them when something is wrong with their sentences structure: spelling, grammar and punctuation.

Moreover, Spelling includes technical terms and proper names. Correct words are used to convey the intended meaning. Generally, accepted rules of grammar and syntax follows including pronoun/noun agreement, subject/verb agreement, appropriate verb tense, pronoun case, possessive forms, parallel construction, etc. Punctuation, particularly comma placement, reflects standard usage (Wilbers, n.d).

1.5 Definition of paragraph

A paragraph is the essential unit of thought in writing. Paragraph can include many different kinds of information and serve different purposes, in which they are related to the same topic; for example, some paragraphs describe people or places, other explain how to do or to make something, narrate a series of events, compare or contrast two things, or describe causes and effects. Although it may consist of a single sentence. It is usually a group of sentences that develop one main point or controlling idea. The form of paragraph is distinctive: the first line is indented.(Sidoli)

1.6 Types of paragraphs

When it is coming to paragraph writing, students feel confused about the appropriate format that can be used in their writing; Which criteria they have to use in presenting their thoughts successfully. However, linguists divided paragraphs into different types in order to suit writers', or students' goals and achieving their aims concerning presenting ideas and explaining the different concepts in an understandable way for the readers/ teachers. Heard, et al. (2012)states that there are types of Paragraphs. Each one must sort of the logical order and organization. These kinds of paragraph have a different purpose and different methods of organization.

1.6.1 Narrative Paragraph

This type of paragraph narrates details, information and series of actions about an event, story or biographies. It includes characters, obstacle, and climax, setting, theme and the moral of the story. It differs from others in its use of informal language and lack of descriptive analysis. (Przybyla, 2009). It includes personal thoughts, feelings, and growth. Writers in this case need to master the language in order to play with words.

1.6.2 Descriptive Paragraph

Writers use this type to picturize any physical concept. The Supporting sentences include information on the size, shape, and color, location, and status. Descriptive type of paragraph helps writers to vivid the language and vibrant their experiences. However, writers do not need to include their personal views. they just describe things as it is. (Brooks, 2020)

1.6.3 Compare and contrast Paragraph

Writers have to point out the similarities and/or differences between two or more things. A compare and contrast paragraph could be used to show that one thing is superior to another or to show changes over time.

There are two methods for organizing a compare and contrast paragraph: point-by point where the writer separates similarities and differences; The block method, in which writers discuss one subject in the first paragraph and the other in the second. (Kelly, 2019)

1.6.4 Cause and effect Paragraph

In a cause-and-effect paragraph, the writer analyzes the causes answering the question, “Why does/did this happen? or factors that brought about an event and examines the results or consequences of that event answering the question “What are/were the results of this?.”(Heard, et al., 2012).

1.6.5 Problem Analysis and Solution Paragraph

In this type, writers try to treat a subject. They identify the problem. Then, they solve it, or suggest solutions (Heard, ET AL., 2012).

1.6.6 Persuasion Paragraph

Meanwhile, some writers want to convince readers by their distinctive point of view, persuade them, or judge them. The suitable type in this case is persuasion one. persuasive paragraph considers both sides of an issue, but it reveals a bias in favor of one side over another (Clint,2019).

1.6.7 Process Paragraph

This type of paragraph is made for explaining processes and stages of something already happened. For example, how to bake a cake. Writers, here, have to explain the steps chronologically from the components to the final result, which is decorating and presenting it.

The tense should be used is the past. They need to use transition words, such as, first, second, and finally. There are two kinds of process paragraphs: directional and informational. A directional process paragraph explains the directions to perform a task. It provides the reader a set of instructions or a step-by-step guidance (Pardede,2012).

All the previous mentioned types of paragraphs are important in deciding what writer want to write. They are a significant part of writing structure; They facilitate to transmit a well understood message to the readers.

1.7 Parts of paragraph

Certain written conversation rules and governs with paragraphs' construction of a paragraphs. The reader expects a paragraph to be coherent, well developed and unified. A Good opening paragraph creates good first impressions, which consistently serve the author's purpose. The effective paragraph should consistently contain three main parts. They are as follow: the topic

sentence, supporting sentences and conclusion sentence (Paragraphs).

1.7.1 The topic sentences

It is a passage with distinct portion of text. It usually begins with an indented line. The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of the paragraph and states its main idea. It is not really detailed, but introduces an overall idea that will be discussed later in the paragraph. The paragraph does not only name the topic/ the subject, but it limits it to one or two areas that can be developed completely in the space of one paragraph. To specific area is called “the controlling idea.”

1.7.2 The supporting sentences

The supporting sentences came after the topic sentence to develop it. It explains by giving reasons, examples, facts, statistic, description, definitions, anecdotes, quotations and questions. All the supporting sentences must be clearly related to each other in order to develop the main point presented in the topic sentence (Paragraphs).

1.7.3 Concluding sentence

It is the last sentence of the paragraph. It concludes, or wraps up, a paragraph. It lets the reader know that you have finished talking about the idea introduced by the topic sentence. A concluding sentence often has one of these four important purposes:

1.7.3.1 Restating the main ideas

Perhaps the easiest concluding sentence to write is one that simply restates the main idea or

summarizes the main points of the paragraph. The following transitional words and phrases are commonly used at the beginning of a concluding sentence:

- As a result.
- Certainly
- In conclusion
- Clearly
- Overall.
- Because of this
- Therefore
- Thus
- For this reason
- Surely
- In brief
- For these reasons

1.7.3.2 Offering suggestion, giving an opinion, or making a prediction

A concluding statement can offer a suggestion, give an opinion, or make a prediction. Sometimes a concluding statement does a combination of these three options.

1.8 Characteristics of a Good Paragraph

Sometimes writers give information that is not closely related to the topic. When this happens, the paragraph does not read smoothly, and the reader might get confused about the writer's message. It is necessary that each sentence in a paragraph have to be connected to the controlling idea or ideas in the topic sentence of the paragraph. Paragraphs are usually characterized by improving the writing quality beyond words and sentences. However, paragraph has five elements of good writing: purpose, audience, clarity, unity and coherence (Five Elements of Good Writing, n.d.).

1.8.1 Purpose

One of the first elements in producing a good characterized paragraph is the purpose, or the reasons. It is writing a particular paragraph in order to stay focused on the topic. Writers must understand the goal that they are trying to accomplish, fulfill and achieve. Moreover, the three most goals of academic writing are: to inform the readers, to persuade the readers and to entertain the readers. In addition, writers should determine their purpose statement before they begin writing: a purpose statement is a short sentence that clearly defines the point of the paragraph (Five Elements of Good Writing, n.d.).

1.8.2 Audience

Audience, or readers, it is the second element of good writing. It refers to a good writing know who their audience is. writers have to consider the viewpoint or person (first, second, or third) and the formal or informal writing. They should keep them just behind the purpose before they start writing (Five Elements of Good Writing, n.d.).

1.8.3 Clarity

Clarity refers to how easy it is for the reader to understand your writing. Good writers explain their points clearly. Clear sentences are not vague or indirect; they get the point across to the reader by using specific, concise language. Here are two ways that you can improve clarity (Five Elements of Good Writing, n.d.):

- Use descriptive (or precise) words.
- Use clear pronoun references using clear, descriptive language improves clarity in a

paragraph. It helps the reader see accurately the person or thing the writer is describing. Avoid vague and unclear words, such as good and nice. Instead choose clear and precise words.

1.8.4 Unity

Unity in a paragraph means that the entire paragraph and all the sentences are focused and related to the topic sentence and its controlling idea. The supporting details should explain the main idea. The concluding sentence should end the paragraph with the same idea. If a paragraph does not contain a sentence or some sentences that are not related to the main topic, then, we say that the paragraph "lacks unity." "The sentence which is off-topic is called "an irrelevant sentence." (Five Elements of Good Writing, n.d.)

1.8.5 Coherence

A coherence means that all the ideas in a paragraph organized in flow smoothly from to another. They are arranged in a clear and logical way. The reader can easily understand the main points. When a paragraph has coherence, the reader can follow the main ideas more easily. The three important features of coherence are: logical order, repetition of key words use of transitional words and phrases Logical Order. It is important to follow a logical order in your writing because the sentences are connected logically together owing to the cohesive devices. Moreover, they are words or phrases that connect sentences and paragraphs together, creating a smooth flow of ideas. They include: (Five Elements of Good Writing, n.d.)

1.8.5.1 Transitional Words and Phrases

Transitional words and phrases are essential to maintain the flow and coherence of a paragraph. They are the links between ideas. They connect sentences together or relate ideas to one another.

They presented on several types of writing and some common transition that are used with them.

(TRANSITION WORDS FOR COHESION AND COHERENCE)

Table 2

Adapted table of transitional words and phrases

Transition words	Examples
Chronology	Before - after - next - since - while - then.
Comparison	Likewise - compared to - similar - as.... as well.
Contrast	However - but - yet - instead - although - in contrast.
Additional information	And - also - besides - moreover - equally important.
Examples	For example - for instance - in particular - indeed.
Cause and effect	Therefore - thus - as a result - since - because
Concluding ideas	In conclusion - in summary - finally - therefore -

1.8.5.2 Pronoun References

They are two sentences can be connected by the use of pronoun. Coherence has to do with organizing and ordering the idea “chronology”. There are three ways to think about organizing details in paragraph.

➤ **Logical order**

One idea leads logically to the next. For example, least important to most important. Generally, from the familiar and specific point to new or unknown.

➤ **Space order**

Space ordering is putting details in an order. For example, left to right, top to bottom, close to far away.

➤ **Time order**

Writers organize their writing using a time order. It is putting the details in an order relating to time (hours, days, months,); for example, past to present, present to future, first to last.

1.9 Difficulties in writing a paragraph

Writing is considered as a challenging task. Foreign English learners may struggle while improving this process. However, every single piece of writing has its own characteristics and process. It cannot be well performed unless if the students apply them. Since English language is not the mother tongue, learners will face different problems; Some of them cannot find words to express their thoughts, while the others do not know how to write them. Akhtar (2020) states that reading is the key to both natives and non-native speakers. The less they read, the more problems will face them. It makes them native the arrangement of words, how they are written, and the way are organized.

According to many researches, Kamran says that students have almost the same problem. It is illustrated in terms of spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure linguistic difficulty, and organization of ideas. Furthermore, the author mentions the most problems that

EFL students face. Students do not differentiate between topic, closing sentences and developing a paragraph properly, or not focusing on one idea in their paragraph. Secondly, in subject-verb agreement, verb tense, inappropriate vocabulary, and spelling. They also face difficulties in writing a “well-organized” presentation of information study highlighted spelling, punctuation, capitalization, the task of thinking, then translating the thought (Akhtar, 2020).

However, writing skill of students is mainly influenced by two factors: Teacher’s pedagogy and teacher feedback; They almost correct spelling mistakes ignoring little details. The teachers’ lack of proper training, their traditional pedagogy, little or no (constructive) feedback, and their inability to motivate students for writing are a few factors related to teachers. (Akhtar, 2020)

Conclusion

This chapter is dedicated to investigate on writing and its structure. Since English is the first language used in the world, writing is a powerful tool for learning and progressing the international level. Students have to improve their writing starting from a small passage until they can produce their academic research: writing can be reliable in any type research. The researcher aimed to present an overview about the skill to the beginner students. They have to be familiar with the different types and aspects of the process. Therefore, they can decide which type they prefer.

Chapter two:

Exploration of Punctuation Marks Errors

Introduction

The second chapter is devoted to English punctuation marks errors. The researcher has noticed that these marks are an essential parcel in writing because they organize ideas and tend the meaning.

At first, we will provide definition of punctuation marks, followed by the different types and uses with examples: readers will be able to have an initial view toward them. It will make them understand the right use of each single mark. Then, the study will dig in to the usage of punctuation in different types of paragraphs. This part will make a link to the exploration of the common errors, in paragraph writing, that occur from the students and learners. The research is going to propose strategies in teaching them. It will help either the teachers or the students to learn them.

To end up, in this chapter, punctuation is the nucleus of any writing. If the learners misuse or Neglect them, their written would be ruined.

2.1 Definition of Punctuation Marks

Since language is full of doubtfulness; people have different ways to express themselves. When people speak aloud, they punctuate using their body language. It helps the readers to hear them the way they want to be heard; the listener hears commas, dashes, question marks, exclamation points, quotation marks as they shout, whisper, pause, wave their arms, roll their eyes and wrinkle their brow (Baker, n.d.).

However, using a correct placement of each single mark writing allows writers and learners to talk about their thoughts and ideas in a clear way that the receiver can get. Punctuation plays the role of the guide. All the types of writing can never transmit the real messages without

punctuation. For instance, motivation speakers cannot affect on their listeners without choosing a higher words choice. Students are also concerned. They must be covered with all different grammatical and punctuating rules in order to enhance their academic career and their proficiency as a foreign language learners.

Lauchman (2010) defines them, the marks, as a code, used in writing, that is often necessary for meaning and for emphasis. The code originated in attempts to capture, in text, the various stops, pauses, and inflections of speech. Today, it is logical in application. Both writers and readers need to understand it and pay attention to it. Punctuation is the basting that holds the fabric of language in shape. Truss says that punctuation marks are the traffic signals of language: They tell us to slow down, notice this, take a detour, and stop (Truss, n.d.).

2.1.2 Types of Punctuation Marks and its Uses

In English writing, there are about a dozen marks of punctuation marks. Most of these marks have highly specialized functions, and once these are understood, it is easy enough to use them conventionally. The use of punctuation marks is divided into two parts. Some of them are commonly used, and others are neglected: students need to be aware about their use because they make a confusion and misused. Moreover, mastering the use of these marks will not take a long time because these uses, or the rule are few. (Denton, 1959): English students have to learn these marks because they are not a matter of inconsequential bit of decoration. They are unlike the other aspects. (Trask, 1997)

However, it is common that every sentence starts with a capital letter and ends with a full- stop. In addition, there are twelve almost punctuation marks in the English writing. These marks are: commas (,), semicolons (;), colon (:), question mark (?), exclamation point, ellipses (...), dashes (—), hyphens (-), parentheses (()) and apostrophes (‘), quotation Marks and Brackets(Hale, 2019).

Furthermore, Vivekananda (1863) classifies them into four types. The first one is counted as in ending of a sentence, which include periods, question marks, and exclamations marks. The next one is internal punctuation marks, which occur within sentences. They are used to express the relationship of any word or group of words to the rest of the sentence. These include commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, and parentheses. The third type is the direct quotation punctuation. It includes quotation marks and brackets. The fourth type is word punctuation, which includes capitals, apostrophes, and hyphens, often used to indicate that certain words have a special character.

Table 2

adapted table illustrates the types and the uses of punctuation marks (trask, 1997).

The mark	Definition with the use
Period	The period (also known as a full stop, especially in British English) is a punctuation mark. It is primarily used to indicate the end of a sentence. It appears as a single dot on the bottom line of the text, and it comes immediately after the last word of the sentence without a space. Usually, it is used at the end of sentences. It separates complete thoughts, and to mark the end of declarative and imperative sentences, after initials used in names, after the abbreviations and to show decimals, dollars and cents.

Comma	<p>Comma is the most common mark of punctuations, and the one with the most uses in all the types of writing. It gives cadence a pause and break. It is always followed by a hit space. It is used to prevent a confused, ambiguous, or awkward reading, to separate in a series, separate elements in dates, addresses, and names of places and to separate the introductory Yes or No from the sentence that follow them.</p>
Semicolon	<p>Semicolons [;] are a way of dividing a sentence, or joining two sentences. In the academic field. Semicolon is used to use a semicolon between two independent clauses of a compound sentence when they are not joined by a coordinate conjunction. It is used between two independent clauses of a compound sentence when they are not joined by a coordinate conjunction if commas are also used in the sentence. It is used before a conjunctive adverb that introduces a clause in a compound sentence, or explanatory expressions (for example, namely, on the contrary, in fact, that is, on the other hand) are used similarly as conjunctive adverbs with a semicolon preceding them and a comma following. It is also Used to separate phrases or clauses of equal rank which contain commas (Trask, 1997).</p>
Colon	<p>Colons are the marks you use to introduce a list of things. Usually, it is used to link two thoughts that are very closely related to each other, after the salutation of a business and before list of predicate nominatives, direct objects, or objects of the preposition. A colon should not hinder the natural flow of the sentence, colon between the numbers referring to volume and the pages of books and magazines.</p>
Apostrophe	<p>The apostrophe (') is the most troublesome punctuation mark, the least useful one and makes a confusion. It is used to indicate possession with nouns. A singular noun form the possessive adding 's and to show ownership</p>

Question Mark	A question mark (?) encloses the end of a sentence which is a direct question. It is used to indicate that a sentence is to be understood as a question, a doubt about the accuracy of a date or number and to show great surprise.
Exclamation point	Academics insist that this type of punctuation is mostly used in the informal writings. They advise to avoid it. It is used to show strong feelings, and with interjections, an excitement and to show that a speaker is shouting, or that a noise is loud.
Ellipsis	An ellipsis ("...") is the omission of one or more words, which must be supplied by the listener or reader for the sentence to be understood. It is also called by the suspension or omission marks. It has just two uses. It is used to show the location of missing words in a direct quote. This mark can also be used to indicate a long pause or a speech trailing-off.
Parentheses	Parentheses (()), or round brackets, always occur in pairs. It is used to set-off a strong or weak interruption, rather like a pair of dashes or a pair of bracketing commas. In the case of a strong interruption, very often it is possible to use either dashes or parentheses.
Hyphens and Dashes	A hyphen is short stroke [-]. It is used between parts of a word, to connect the parts of a compound words, in the beginning with the prefix self, ex, pro and anti and at the end of a line when a word is broken into syllables and part of the word is put on the next line. In other hand, dash is a punctuation that symbolizes horizontal line [–]. It is used to show a break in thought or sentence structure, to show hesitation and to introduce steps/ levels.
Quotation mark	Quotation marks are also called inverted commas. They may be double "..." or single '...'. Quotation marks are used at the beginning and end of a phrase to show that it is being written exactly as it was originally said or written.

However, in the academic writing, students cannot use whatever symbol. In this case, only few of them are allowed to be used in their research papers, dissertation, essays and articles. Students should not put punctuations in the way they want because they punctuation an aid to understand the intended meaning not, not to respirate their written works.(Trask, 1997, p. 45)

2.1.2.1 Other Types of Punctuation Marks

Punctuation marks' exploration is an interesting subject for the linguist researchers. Linguists are trying to help language' s writers to express themselves in their written works. The production of the marks' variety is not catch- on. However, there are multiple types of punctuation marks. Some of them can be used in the academic field, while the others are restricted only to communicate in social- media. For instance, the Asterism, Hedera, Fist, Interrobang, Irony Punctuation, Lozenge, Reference Mark, Tie, Herve-Bazin's punctuation and ElRey- Mark. All of these mentioned punctuations are originated from Latin's and Greek's texts. They are used to express feelings and sentimentacclamation authority, certainty, doubt, irony, and love. They also were used to decorate texts.

Henceforth, everyone can be creative to invent his/her own punctuation marks; academic writing does not allow using any of them. Students are obliged to follow the rules (Brasier, 2016).

2.2 Significance of Punctuation Marks

Writers have a plenty of words that can be used to express feelings, thoughts and ideas. They can present them into sentences, and take their time to change and edit things that they do not

like. However, these sentences have no voices or faces to express these feelings. Readers can never understand their aims without limiting their sentence structure. Otherwise, they will be judged and make a wrong opinion. Thus, leads academic writing to make a strict rules that make its writers avoid any kind of subjectivity.

Punctuation marks play significant role in melting the intended meaning within the sentences.

They are a well- mannered symbol that lead around like a faithful butler; remove them, and dance free form (Avery, n.d.). She also describes them as a road signs; without them we just may get lost. Without punctuation marks, many sentences are mere disorders of words.

Lukeman (2011), describes punctuation like music of language, as a conductor can influence the experience of the song by manipulating its rhythm. So, it can influence the reading experience, bring out the best (or worst) in a text. It also gives an accurately and fosters the understanding of the message. Academy (2021) states that writing formally in English is more than just choosing the right words in the right order. He believed that punctuationhelps the reader to understand the message that is being conveyed without any self-interpretation. A wrong, or a missing punctuation can change the entire meaning of a sentence.

However, Awad (2012) makes a discussion about the three important functions of English punctuation marks. They are as the follow:

2.2.1 Phonetic function

In order to avoid any free interpretation, and understand the main points of any written passage. Punctuations marks can give a phonetic function. It makes readers focus on the tone,

in which is controlled by commas, semicolons, colons, and ellipsis, etc. The phonetic function controls when should readers stop, pause, and loud their voices.

2.2.2 Grammatical function

Students can use punctuation marks in direct style. For instance, they can use them to mark emphatic content, to form interrogations, to emphasize syntactic elements displaced from their natural positions, and to frame the structure of the sentences, complex sentences, paragraphs and documents.

2.2.2 Semantic Function

Readers can highlight punctuations differently than ordinary text, utilizing italics, underlining, bolds, in order to comprehend the transmitted content which is intended by the writer and to understand the significance of particular words/phrases.

Punctuation marks are important because they guide readers to comprehend the meaning of any text. Certain use of punctuation, or lack of punctuation, can give text a completely different meaning. Students will struggle as readers and writers without a foundation and of these symbols.

2.3 Punctuation Marks in Paragraph Writing

Writing is an important process in earning. It is a tool of extending knowledge and comprehension. It feeds mind and enlighten life. It is a complex ability that requires very organized design and structure.

Writing is not about grouping words; It is about writing in a right way using different linguistics items, such as, spelling, vocabulary, grammar and punctuation.

Suliman et al., (2019, p33) states that writing plays distinct roles: It is a skill that draws on subskills and processes such as handwriting and spelling; A rich knowledge of vocabulary; mastery of the conventions of punctuation, capitalization, word usage, and grammar; and the use of strategies such as planning, evaluating, and revising the text.

Besides, formatting correct grammar, punctuation, spelling, and sentence structure are essential components of scholarly writing. In addition, punctuations are very crucial, because if the writing is not well written, many educated readers will not even bother to read it, either because it is too difficult what the author is trying to state, or they will just assure that it will not be good as it does not appear to be well written. A proof of that could be the correct use of punctuation marks and how they cut the steam of words into meaningful groups and prevent confusion. (Robert, 2006)

2.4 Errors while Punctuating

In English language, punctuation marks have a significant role in communicating and transmitting the intended meanings. A small misusing of these marks is able to misrepresent the entire meaning of a sentence or phrase to the reader. They can also give an impression that the reader is not familiar with the rules of formal writing.

EFL learners aim to master the language. However, they aim to improve their writing skill; this process will not be completed if they do not master punctuating. Furthermore, they occur mistakes with a way or another; after a time, these mistakes become error.

However, there are lots of rules to be taught to avoid making mistakes; students still make

mistakes. Regardless, there are three types of errors that occur while punctuating in most of the foreign Languages' studies, especially, when it comes in the small details. Romes (2017) states that students add commas wherever they want to pause and breathe in a sentence. This misleads readers. They have to follow the rules, unless if they want to achieve a certain effect. He also declares that students produce comma splices, which means putting a comma between two complete sentences instead of breaking them with a period or a semicolon. They also use it after coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) and in compound predicates: They are a series of two verbs that belong to the same subject, in which they do not need a comma.

Moreover, Students use apostrophes to form the plural of a noun. It shows possession and indicate contractions and omissions only. Apostrophe makes a confusion between the contraction of " it is " by writing "it's" and its, which is a possessive pronoun. Students overuse exclamation marks. This type of punctuation mark is forbidden in the academic writing. It conveys emotions instead of writing facts and being objective.

2.5 Strategies in Teaching Punctuation Marks

When it comes to learn a foreign language, it is important to give students a strong foundation in certain modules. Memorizing the grammatical rules and punctuations seems terrifying, but paired them with helpful examples and jailable practice, it will soon become second nature to students. After a period of time, students are going to find themselves skilled and polished in their studies. However, whenever teachers make a creative way in

teaching grammar (hence punctuation). It allows students to become their own editors, confident in their ability to use these details within their writing.

Hakala (2020) suggests to the teachers some strategies in order to facilitate learning punctuation marks, and make them easy to be used. She insists to make sure to give a strong foundation of different types of punctuations. At first, teachers can ask students to write a group of different types of sentences. Then, they have to punctuate them and read these sentences aloud. This step emphasizes on punctuations use. It will help them to recognize some rules, such as, comma makes a breath and a period makes a pause. Teachers can use activity cards to introduce the punctuation symbols. They can also use a worksheet including a short text. Then, they are going to punctuate them using colorful pencils. It is known that students prefer to use colors and highlighters while writing, which make them excited to make more effort in learning.

However, due to the modern means, there are various online resources and courses with their activities and rating that can improve their level from the beginning till mastering that target mission.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter is dedicated to investigate the basic rules of the English punctuation marks. The study presented different details, to whom are concerned, about punctuating use, its type, significance, and the repeated mistakes that occur the errors. In addition, the study presented some useful strategies to teach them.

Furthermore, punctuation usage is not a hard mission to be practiced while learning a foreign language. If learners and students start to take care about each single one: they will very soon become automatic users.

Chapter Three:
Field Work and Data Analysis

Introduction

The present study that is represented in this chapter is concerned with an investigation of the students' misuse of punctuation marks in EFL students' paragraph writing among second year LMD foreign language students of English at Biskra University. This chapter, using a questionnaire, highlights the research methodology which includes the choice of research design, sampling and participants as well as data collection tool. Thus, the chapter will represent, analyze and discuss the research findings.

3.1 Research Methodology

Each research needs a specific research methodology that the researcher follows while conducting their research.

3.1.1 Research Approach of the Study

Since this study aims to explore the second year students' use of the English punctuation marks in their paragraph writing, this study adopted the mixed approach because it is suitable for the exploratory nature of the present study. It desires to find- out the lacks and causes that suit the research hypothesis.

3.1.2 Research Design for The Study

According to the nature of research which is exploratory; the present study employed the mixed method approach between the quantitative and qualitative method. It is a new strategy

According to Creswell (2006, p6), mixed method is a new strategy that involves philosophical assumptions to guide the direction of the collection and analysis of data and the mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches in many phases in the research process. However, it focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or series of studies. Its central premise is that the use of quantitative

and qualitative approaches in combination provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone. (Creswell, 2006)

The study was done through one stage, which is a questionnaire. The research is going to use the chosen tool to answer the attempted questions. They are as follow:

- Are first year student of English aware about the different types and uses of punctuation marks?
- What are the common punctuation errors made by students when they write a paragraph?
- What is the students' attitude toward these marks?

3.1.3 Sampling and Population of the Study

For the practical chapter, the participants of the present study are twenty- five students chosen randomly from the whole population- three hundred thirty- six- of second year EFL students of English section at university of Biskra for the academic year 2022-2023. Age and gender is not needed variables; they were not taken into consideration.

However, some students received the questionnaire as a printed copy.

For students

The population of this study was the second year students of English at Biskra university. There are many reasons behind choosing this population that they, in the second year, start to learn about writing paragraphs, in which the English punctuation marks needs to be required. More importantly, we observed that they misuse and neglect using them. In the other hand, students focus more on grammar and the other writing elements.

Thus, we have chosen twenty- five students according to the purposive sampling technique.

3.2 Data Collection Tool

Data collecting is a process to collect the primary data for doing the research. In this research, the suitable tool of collecting the data is a questionnaire. It seeks to explore the use of the marks. However, all the conducted work is made for the second year students of English at Biskra university.

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

After thoroughly reading and arranging the data from the questionnaire, the researcher analyzed the data manually using statistics through counts, percentages, and descriptions in open-ended questions. Then, used Excel, the researcher presented the results in tables and figures. After that, analyzed them verbally.

3.3.1 Description and Analysis of the students Questionnaire

The research chose the suitable tool in order to collect the data. This tool is a questionnaire. A sample of twenty- five second year students answered of the tool' s questions.

3.3.2 Description of the questionnaire

The current questionnaire is a data collection tool designed for second year students of English at Biskra university. The researcher distributed the questionnaire randomly after their second semester exams. The questionnaire was divided into three sections:

Section One: General information (from Item01 to Item07)

The first section of this questionnaire contained seven (07) questions to collect general information about the respondents: Students ' name, gender, class are not necessary. The students are asked to rate their level in English and in which extent they are good at writing skill between the other skills. Furthermore, the researcher intended to gather the students' opinions towards their difficulties and reasons behind it.

Section two: punctuation and writing (from Item08 to Item14)

The second section included seven (7) questions focused on the importance of English marks and its relation to writing skill. In the beginning, the tool seeks to make an exploration on the punctuation and its relation to writing.

Section Three: Paragraph Writing and Punctuation Marks (from Item15 to 19)

The last section of the questionnaire consists of five (5) questions. From this section, we aimed to discover the students' awareness about the marks' use.

In the end, the last questions estimated to know the students' suggestions to use technology in order to facilitate using these marks. However, they are free to add or comment on the topic.

3.3.3 Aim of the students' Questionnaire

The purpose of the current questionnaire was to collect data from second year students of English. It was used as a tool for the study to investigate and explore the students' lacks, misuses and neglection. Furthermore, it attempts to collect the students' thoughts on other ways to facilitate the use of these symbols to help them in any future writings.

3.3.4 Administration students' Questionnaire

After the research designed the final draft of the questionnaire, we, the researcher, decided to distribute the questionnaire online through "Facebook.com" as the students are available in their study groups. Later on, the researcher did not get the wanted number. So, she distributed it to them after setting their exams. After discussing with the supervisor, we decided to work with 25 students. The idea of using Facebook was not useful; it did not allow us to receive the intended number of answered questionnaires. In other hand, meeting the students face to

face helped to receive a straightforward and filled-out questionnaire. They answered all the questions unlike the online once.

3.4.4 Data Analysis

In this part, the researcher is going to analyze the gathered data from the questionnaire. The tool was directed to second year students of English at Biskra university. It is divided into three sections. Each section will help to answer the questions. In the other hand, the hypothesis either will be confirmed or refused.

3.4.4.1 Analysis and Interpretation of Students' Questionnaire

Section One: General Information

Item01: Rating students' level

Table03

Students' level in English language

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Elementary	2	8%
b) Pre- intermediate	1	4%
c) Intermediate	10	40%
d) Upper intermediate	9	36%
e) Advanced	3	12%
Total	25	100%

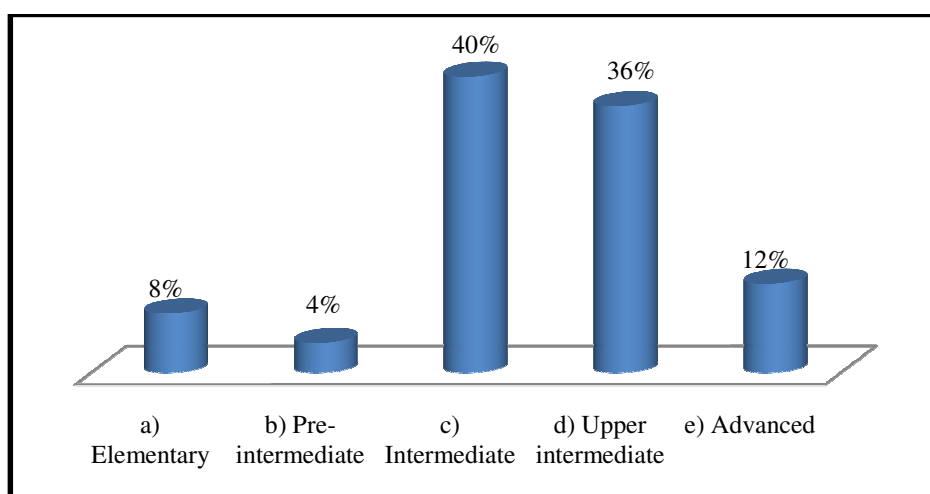


Figure01: Students' level in English language

Item02: The significance of the language skills

Table04

The degree of importance of each language learning skill

Skill	Important	So important	Not important
a) Speaking skill	56%	44%	0%
b) Reading skill	72%	28%	0%
c) Writing skill	64%	36%	0%
d) Listening skill	68%	28%	4%

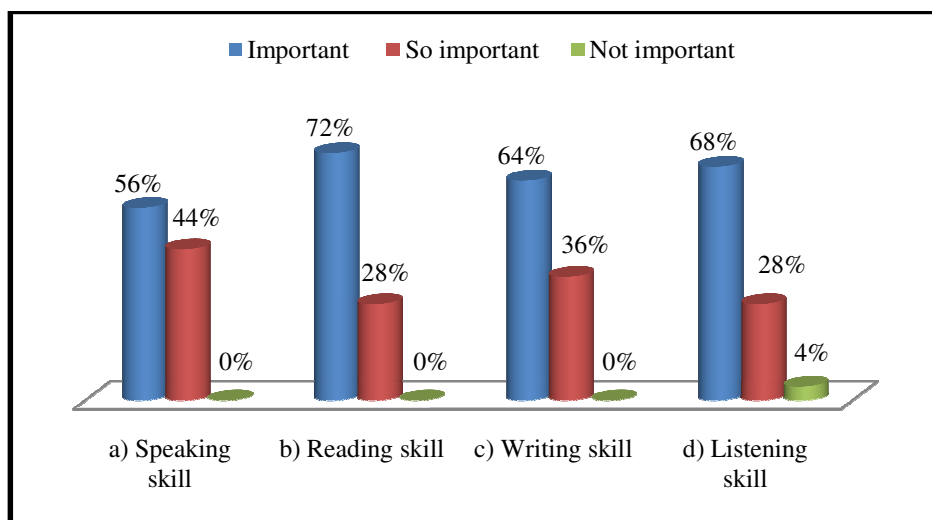


Figure02: The degree of importance of each language learning skill

Item03: Difficulties in learning language skills with justification

For speaking skill

- Speaking: because it requires lots of efforts and it is instant.
- Speaking: because it needs a large vocabulary and fast thinking.
- Speaking: because it is difficult to master the right accent and pronunciation of words.

For writing skill

- Writing: because of the lack of practice.
- Writing: it has many aspects to consider (grammar, punctuation, etc.)
- Writing skill is the most difficult because it needs a good balance of knowledge.
- Students need to know many aspects in order to produce a good piece of writing.
- I think it is writing because it is full rules.

For listening skill

- I think listening is the most difficult skill because you must focus on what you lesson to carefully and if you miss any word, you won't be able to understand.
- Listening is the most difficult skill because it so complicated to understand different accents and the slang language especially for the native speakers when they speak fast.

- Listening is the most difficult skill because it hard to understand each word alone especially when the speaker is speaking fast and when the listener does not know much words in the target language.

Item04: Students' satisfaction toward their level in writing skill

Table05

Students' satisfaction with their level in writing skill

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	11	44%
b) No	14	56%
Total	25	100%

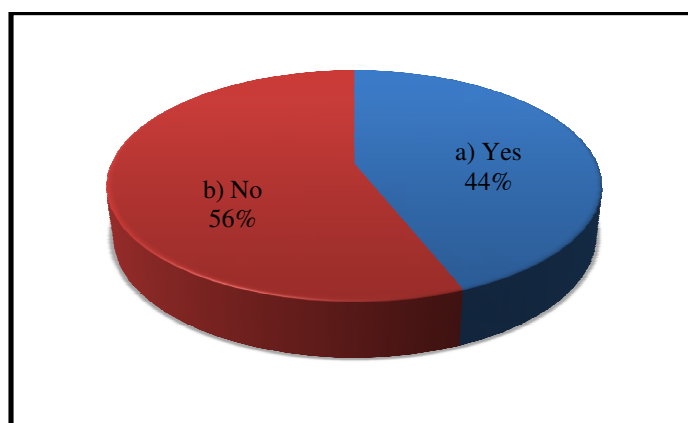


Figure03: Students' satisfaction with their level in writing skill

Item05: Students' responses about their difficulties as a writers with justification

Table06

Students' responses about whether they find difficulties when writing or not

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	14	56%
b) No	11	44%
Total	25	100%

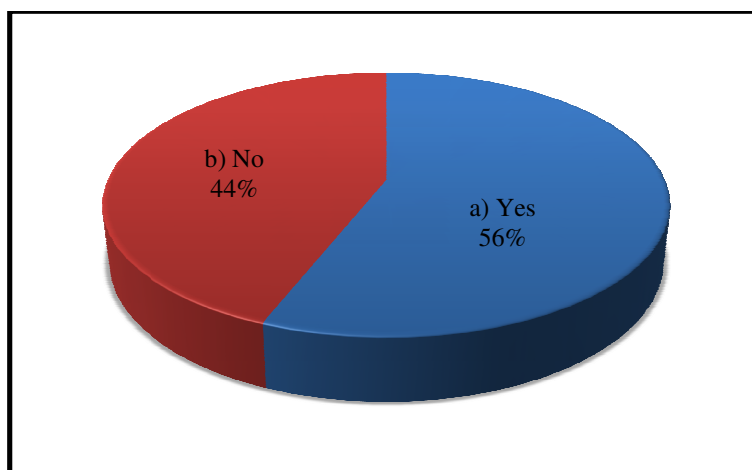


Figure04 Students' responses about whether they find difficulties when writing

Students' justification

Table07*Students' main writing difficulties*

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Coherence and cohesion	0	0%
b) All of them	1	7%
c) Inability to recall previous knowledge	1	7%
d) Poor grammar and vocabulary	1	7%
e) Punctuation	1	7%
f) Organization	1	7%
g) Lack of ideas and knowledge about the topic	1	7%
h) All of them	1	7%
i) More than one difficulty	7	50%
Total	14	100%

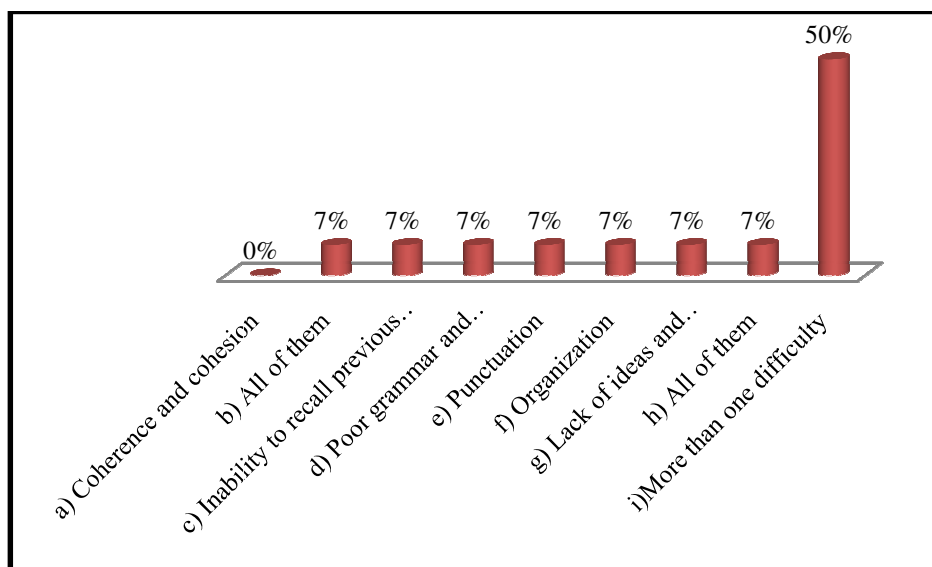


Figure05 Students' main writing difficulties

Item06: Students' problems in writing' s levels

Table08

The level where students' writing difficulties occur

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Sentence	1	4%
b) Paragraph	11	44%
c) Essay	9	36%
d) No difficulty	4	16%
Total	25	100%

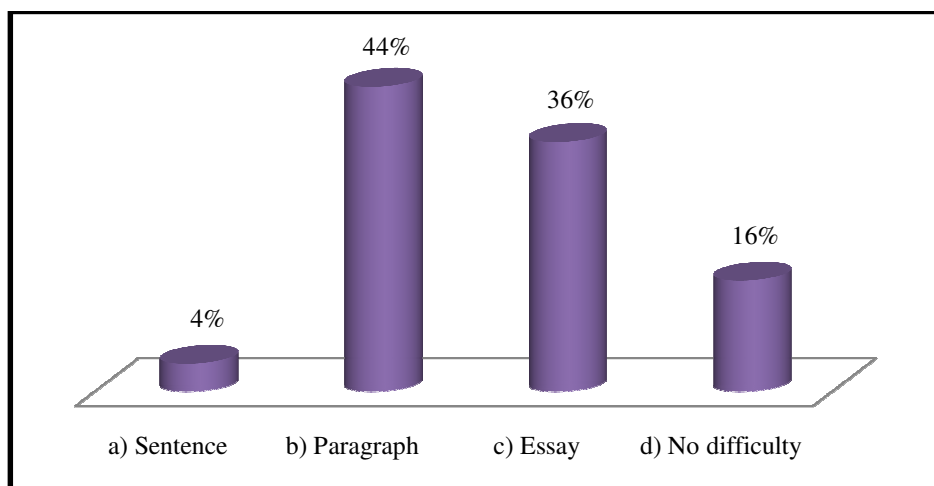


Figure06 The level where students' writing difficulties occur

Item07: Causes of difficulties in writing

Table09

Students' reasons behind their writing difficulties

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Lack of exposure to different text genres	0	0%
b) Lack of reading	3	12%
c) Lack of practice	4	16%
d) The way writing is being taught and assessed	1	4%
e) All of them	7	28%
f) More than one reason	10	40%
Total	25	100%

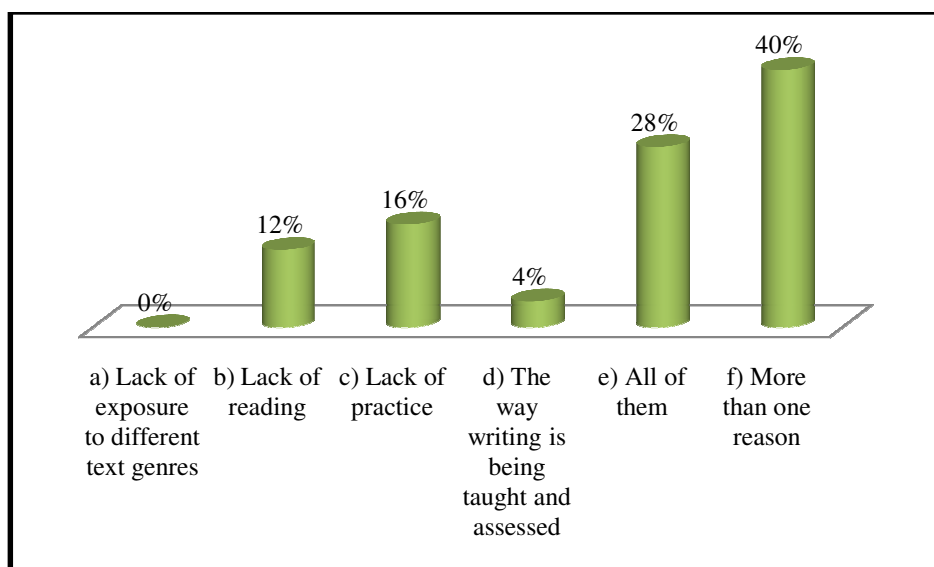


Figure07 Students' reasons behind their writing difficulties

Item0: The main element that the students focus on

- I focus on the content and the format.
- Ideas and grammar
- Unity, coherence and correctness
- The information I use and the academic writing rules
- The form of the paragraph
- The ideas and the background about the topic
- Ideas and how to formulate them

Section Two: Punctuation and Writing

Item09: Students level in using punctuation marks

Table10

Students' evaluation of their mastery in punctuation

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Good	8	32%
b) Average	14	56%
c) Weak	3	12%
Total	25	100%

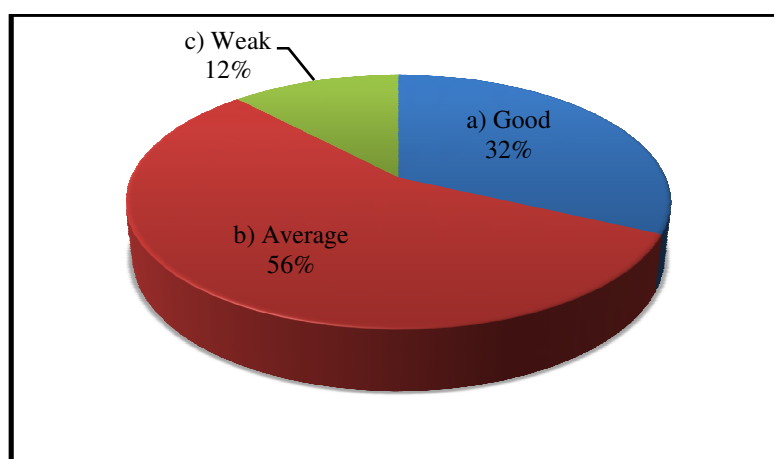


Figure08 Students' evaluation of their mastery in punctuation

Item10: Students attitudes towards the importance of punctuation marks with justification

Table11

Students' attitudes towards the importance of punctuation marks in written language

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	23	92%
b) No	2	8%
Total	25	100%

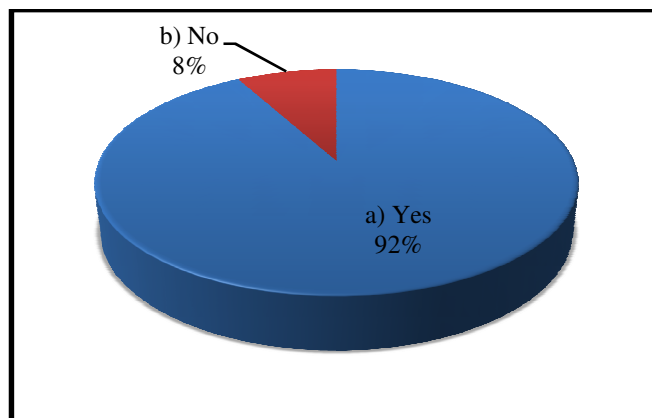


Figure09 Students attitudes towards the importance of punctuation marks in written language

Students' justification

- Because it guides readers and separates ideas

- It makes your writing more professional
- It is part of cohesion and coherence
- It helps to understand the written language and facilitates the process of reading.
- Changing the punctuation mark changes the meaning and the receiver understanding of the message.
- Because sentences without punctuation marks would have another meaning.
- From them you know where to stop reading and continuing and also when the ideas stop and others start.

Item11: Classification of the writing aspects

Table12

Students' classification of the writing aspects according to their importance

Option	1	2	3	4	5
a) Grammar	16%	28%	36%	20%	0%
b) Spelling	16%	32%	8%	16%	28%
c) Vocabulary	28%	32%	20%	12%	8%
d) Capitalization and punctuation marks	0%	8%	16%	32%	44%
e) Organization of ideas	40%	4%	20%	24%	12%

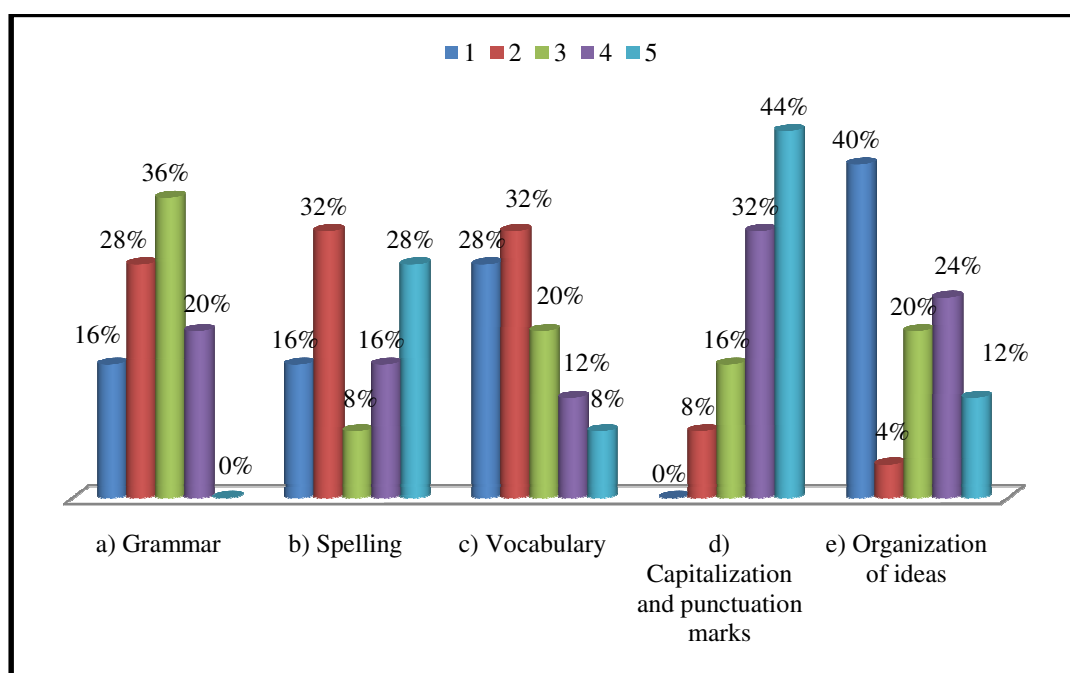


Figure10: Students' classification of the writing aspects according to their importance

item12: The effects of poor punctuation

Table13

Students' responses about the effects of poor punctuation on their written productions

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	12	48%
b) No	13	52%
Total	25	100%

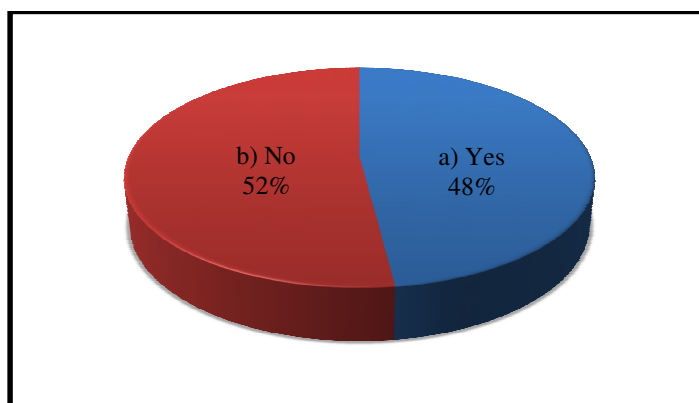


Figure11: Students' responses about the effects of poor punctuation on their written productions

Item13: Students' usage of punctuations

Table14

The frequency of students' use of punctuation rules in their written works

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Always	15	60%
b) Sometimes	7	28%
c) Rarely	1	4%
d) Never	1	4%
e) No answer	1	4%
Total	25	100%

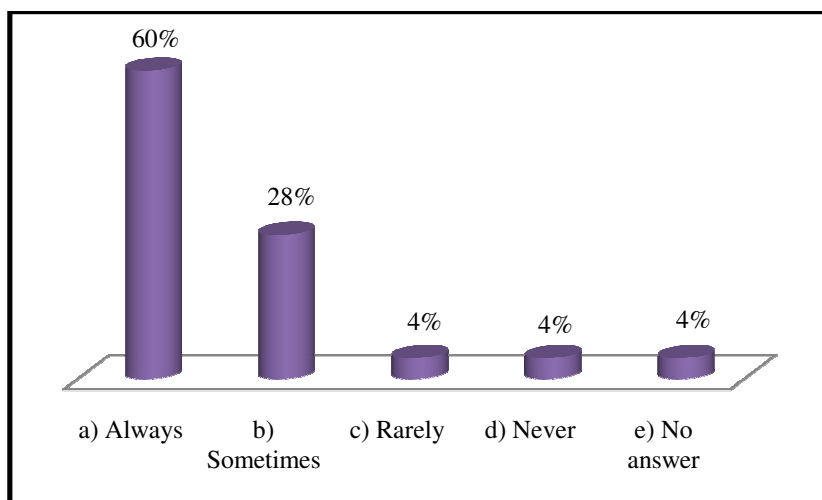


Figure12: The frequency of students' use of punctuation rules in their written works

Item14: Students' opinions toward misuse of punctuations with justification

Table15

Students' responses about whether punctuation' mistakes might be acceptable or not

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	11	44%
b) No	13	52%
c) No answer	1	4%
Total	25	100%

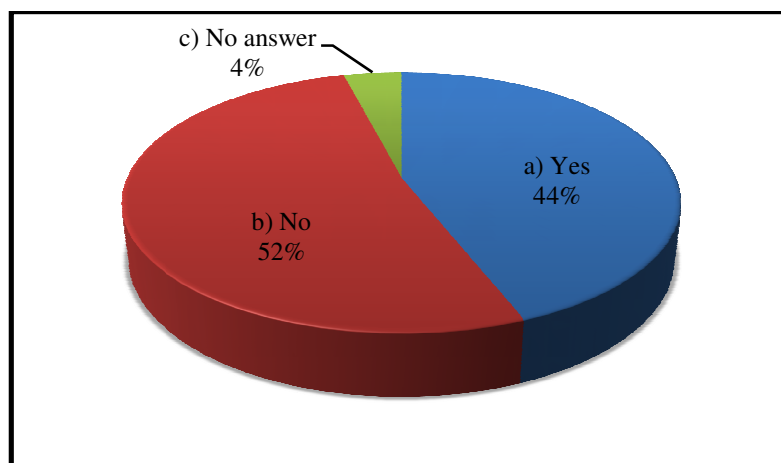


Figure13 Students' responses about whether punctuation' mistakes might be acceptable

Students' justifications:

For yes:

- The reader may understand what the writer means from the context.
- Because there are other more important elements than punctuation marks.
- Because no one cares about it.
- The punctuation mistakes can completely change the meaning of what we write.
- When there are not a lot of mistakes, it will not affect the meaning so much.

For no:

- Because it causes unchained ideas
- Because incorrect use of punctuation marks will ruin the ideas connection, which leads in turn to ruin the whole piece of writing's meaning.
- For example, when you use the wrong ones, you may confuse the reader (you put point while the idea is not complete).
- Maybe it changes the meaning of the sentences; it will be deterioration.
- Because any mistake in punctuation may affect the organization of ideas or even the meaning.

Item15: Poor punctuation impact on students' writing performance

- Using incorrect punctuation or using punctuation in the wrong place can completely change the meaning of the sentence. Therefore, it is important to use correct punctuation marks. These punctuation marks allow us to organize our thoughts in the correct manner and make one's writing easier to read and more appealing.
- It leads to lack of understanding by the readers.
- It does not affect students' writing.
- The paragraph will be totally wrong.
- Poor punctuation may affect negatively students' writing performance, especially, when they write academic essays or letters.

Section Three: Paragraph Writing and Punctuation Marks**Item16:** Reasons of the absence of punctuation marks**Table16***Reasons behind the absence of some punctuation marks in the students' written products*

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Ignorance of rules	2	8%
b) Carelessness	4	16%
c) Lack of concentration	2	8%
d) Assumed as unnecessary	2	8%
e) All of them	3	12%

a+ b	4	16%
a+ c	4	16%
a+ c+ d	3	12%
No answer	1	4%
Total	25	100%

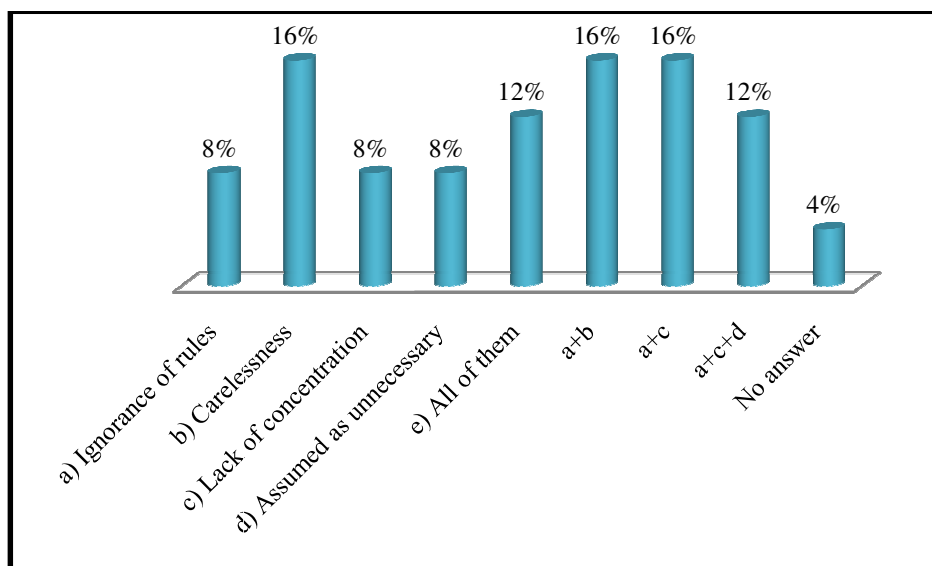


Figure14 Reasons behind the absence of some punctuation marks in the students' written products

Item17: The common misuse marks

- I find difficulties with exclamation mark.
- Commas
- Semicolon
- Comma

- Sometimes I fail in using semicolon
- Comma and semicolon
- Capital letters, full stops and apostrophe
- Full stop, comma
- Those that are not common like ellipsis, dashes, parenthesis
- Comma and semicolon
- Comma

Item14: The misplacement of punctuation marks with justification

Table17

Students' responses about whether the use of some punctuation marks interchangeably can change the meaning of the written product or not

Option	Participants	Percentage
a) Yes	21	84%
b) No	4	16%
Total	25	100%

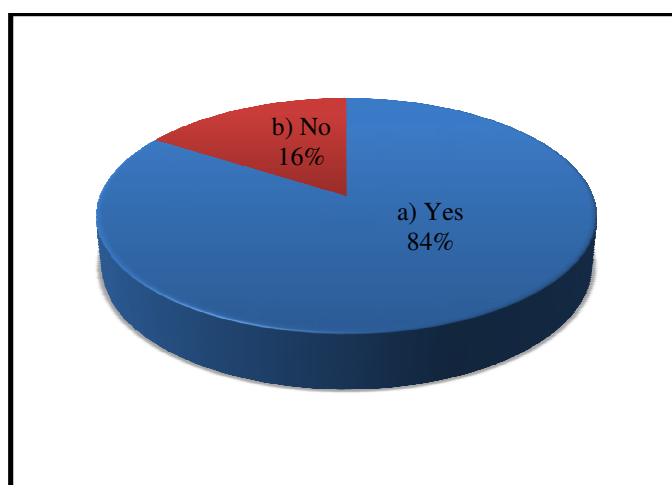


Figure15 Students' responses about whether the use of some punctuation marks interchangeably can change the meaning of the written product

Students' justifications:

For yes:

- Punctuation changes the meaning... For example, you do not know the elements s/he emphasizes, and some punctuation marks make different meaning. A comma can change the meaning and by it you can even know the intonation of the writer.
- Because punctuation marks clarify the meaning more.
- It helps you know the feelings of the writer and what he is trying to say exactly.
- On the basis of where we need to put or not to put a comma, we can change the meaning of the sentence.
- Missing or overused punctuation marks can change meaning and/or confuses the reader. In extreme cases, ambiguous sentences that are hard to decipher can be misinterpreted, putting lives at risk. For example, unclear instructions on the use of mechanical equipment or on medication packaging could lead to fatal errors.

For no:

- <Because the most important thing is the use of grammar and coherent ideas. So, the meaning will be clear.
- It does not as the writing is correct.

Item19: The use of technology

- I am against it because it keeps/ stops you from improving your writing.
- As we know, the technology blows our world. So, I advise students to chat with ChatGPT. It is useful to learn faster.
- It is very useful since the teacher is not available all the time.
- Technology helps by making it easy to edit written work, engage with ideas and content in multiple modalities.
- Since it helps, why would I waste my time while I can do it in seconds using technology?

- It is better to use technology; you will know your mistakes rapidly and you make sure about them.
- It is helpful, but students should not count on it that much.
- Using technology makes your skills in writing weaker.

Item20: Punctuations' competence

Table18

Students' competences in punctuation

Option	Yes	No	No answer
a) I can use commas correctly when I write.	76%	20%	4%
b) I can use colons correctly when I write. (:)	68%	28%	4%
c) I can use semicolons correctly when I write. (;)	48%	48%	4%
d) I can find the errors I make with grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.	56%	40%	4%
e) I can identify the types of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics errors I make.	48%	52%	0%
f) I can correctly fix the errors I make in punctuation.	64%	36%	0%

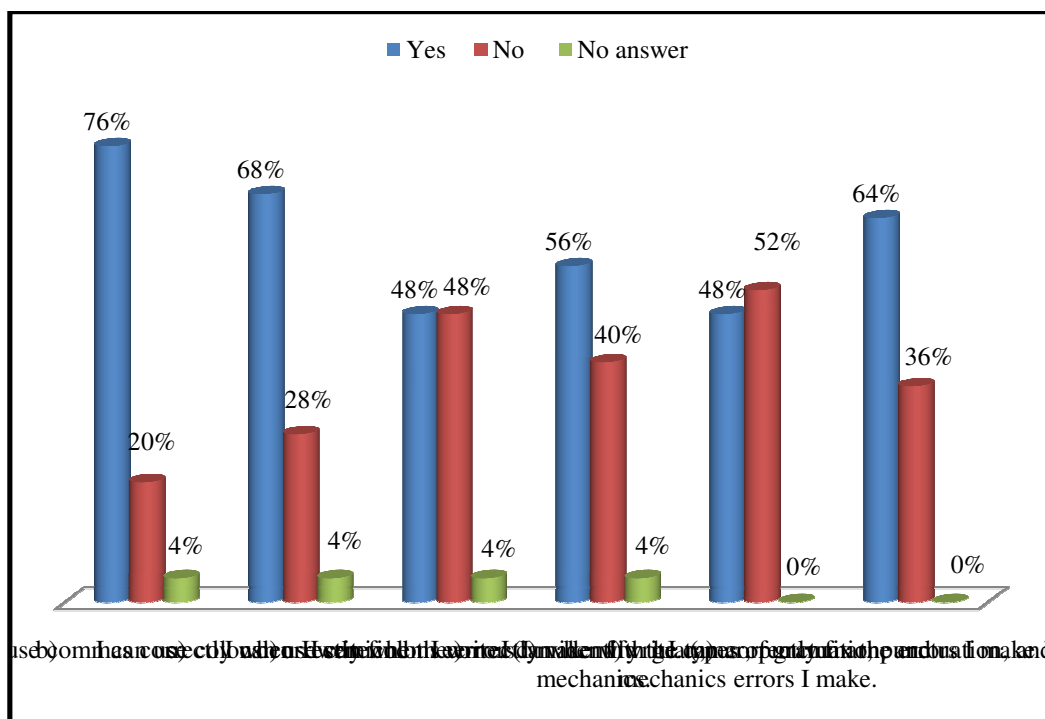


Figure16 Students' competences in punctuation

3.5 Data Analysis

The research has collected the sufficient data from the chosen population. The twenty- five students reflected to the questionnaire positively. They answered most of the questions even the one with justification. After that, the research analyzed them into tables and figures.

Therefore, after reading the students' answers and the way they handle the tool. The researcher evaluated them.

3.9 Discussion

Based on the questionnaire being distributed to Second Year EFL students at Mohammed Kheider Biskra University; the results of the present study showed significant evidence to support claim that the students at this level are not aware about the use of punctuation marks.

In the first section, the researcher noticed that most of the students (10 from 25) rated themselves as an intermediate level as EFL learners (40%). The students think that speaking skill is the most important one between the other language skills. In the other hand, listening skill is the less important skill (4%). However, writing is the hardest process in learning English. They justify their choice by its complex elements. In order to produce a good piece of writing, Writing needs a good balanced knowledge, extensive practice, full of rules and includes many aspects, such as: grammar, punctuation, etc. Thus, resulted the students' dissatisfaction toward their writing performance (14 students with 56%). Moreover, students have lot of difficulties in writing paragraphs (11 students with 44%). They justified this difficulty with their focusing on the content and the format, ideas and grammar, unity, coherence and correctness, the information I use and the academic writing rules, the form of the paragraph, ideas and the background about the topic and how to formulate them.

In the second section, the researcher investigated about the punctuation marks and its relation to writing process. The researcher has noticed that most of the students have the average in dealing with punctuation marks (56%). Second year students are aware about the use of the importance of punctuation marks in written language (92%). They justified their choice with punctuation marks' guide to the readers and separates ideas. They make writing more professional, help the reader to understand the written language and facilitates the process of reading; the change of the punctuation mark will change the meaning and the receiver understanding of the message. After that, students classified the organization of ideas as the most importance element in producing any written work while the capitalization and punctuation marks are the less importance element. They responded positively when it comes in the poor usage. They think that there is no impact on the written productions (52%). In this section,

students use the marks regularly (60%), and the misuse is not acceptable in their assignments (52%) They justified their answer with: its causes unchained ideas and incorrect use of punctuation marks will ruin the ideas and the meaning.

In the last section, from the gathered data, the researcher found- out that the students, in common, fail in using the semicolon, comma, and the full stop properly in their written assignments. Students said that they ignore the rules, they do not care about the symbols and they do not concentrate (16%). Moreover, the researcher found that the students are aware that they cannot be used interchangeably in any written product. They justified their answer with: punctuation changes the meaning. For example, you do not know the elements s/he emphasizes, and some punctuation marks make different meaning. A comma can change the meaning and by it you can even know the intonation of the writer. Punctuation marks clarify the meaning, it helps you know the feelings of the writer and what he is trying to say exactly. On the basis of where we need to put or not to put a comma, we can change the meaning of the sentence. Missing or overused punctuation marks can change meaning and/or confuses the reader. In extreme cases, ambiguous sentences that are hard to decipher can be misinterpreted, putting lives at risk. For example, unclear instructions on the use of mechanical equipment or on medication packaging could lead to fatal errors.

Furthermore, most of the students agree with the usage of technology while punctuating. They see it a useful, helpful, correct the mistakes quickly and consume time. Finally, the researcher tests the students in using the most used marks, commas, colon and semicolon; It seems that they easy of them. However, they cannot identify the errors (52%), but they are able to correct them (64%).

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the research data and its discussion above, the researcher can conclude that students could write in very well- manner. Since they are advanced learners, they can do better in their future academic career. They only need a well – organized and unified system for using punctuation marks. Learning and using punctuation marks will not take time. However, the students have to change their attitude toward them.

General Conclusion

The English punctuation marks are an important symbol that plays a significant role in language learning; learners who have limited writing style can have a problem with learning how to write a well-structured paragraph. The students who focus on some elements and ignore the other will not fulfill the process successfully. Hence, Linguists set a clear grammatical rule that unified the improvement and to help the learners to improve their level; they protect them from the English variation usage.

According to the obtained results, the researcher found out the following:

1) Second year students of English are not aware about the different uses of punctuation marks. However, they believe they are a significant element in writing a paragraph. Therefore, the research hypothesis is semi-confirmed. Students are familiar with the importance of punctuation. Yet, they are not familiar with the different uses of the marks. Students in the early stages of English writing will focus on ideas, thoughts and words-choice more than the small details.

2) The common punctuation marks errors made by students when they write a paragraph are the misuse of the semicolon and the comma. They think they are similar. So, students make the same errors while punctuating.

3) The students' attitude toward punctuation marks is positive. However, they show their ignorance and carelessness when their teachers ask them to write. Therefore, second year students of Biskra are not interested to learn these details. Furthermore, they agree using technology in order to facilitate using them and get-rid to the old-fashioned strategies in teaching writing.

Punctuation marks is an important element in writing. It is not a hard mission, but it requires a concentration. Students have to understand that the value of the written elements is not about using a higher and unknown vocabularies that make him appearing like a native: they are EFL

learners, and they have to follow the rules in order to fulfill. Therefore, these marks are a part of the process. They, with the other elements, are a linked chain, complete each other and tend the meaning.

This research, punctuation marks deficiency in EFL students paragraph writing, show the Algerian attitude (Hence, second year students of English at Biskra university in the academic year 2022-2023) toward the use of the English mark. They are aware and familiar with some of them, but they still neglect using them. However, since they are specialized in the target language; they keep behaving careless: the results of this attitude will appear soon in their future academic writing: writing essay and dissertation.

Recommendations and Suggestions

Based on the results of this research, some recommendations are deduced and can be future solutions to the issue under investigation. Furthermore, the existing research aims to provide a fruitful recommendation

1. For the students

The students need to make an intensified practice since their first year at the university. It makes them ready for the next year when they have to start writing paragraphs. They also can use online games and applications that offer different activities about punctuation marks use. They are able to use **Grammarly**: it helps them to identify punctuation errors and offer suggestions for correction. Students can use **ProWritingAid**: it provides detailed analysis of any written work. It offers suggestions for improvements and allow the students to choose the type of errors they want to focus- on. Another useful application called **Hemingway**, in which it provides color- coding for different types of errors. **Ginger** application, it identifies

the missing or incorrect marks and suggests correction too.

2. For teachers

Teachers can use special applications after any writing session as a remedial work. They can encourage their students to review each other's work, and identify punctuation errors. It helps the students to learn from each other and reinforce their understanding of using them. Teachers can use technology too; they can adopt useful tasks related to each other, and put some conditions: if the student does not answer the first task correctly; s/ he cannot answer the second following one. Teachers can use the previous tool at home.

Limitations of the Study

The major difficulties were the hesitation of some students toward the topic. Some of them stated that they cannot waste their time writing about PUNCTUATION MARKS. However, the other found it an interesting topic and enjoyable. In addition, the different grammatical sources and the researcher's self- background, in which it seems to readers as they are stolen. Moreover, there were a useful sources that help the research, but they do not contain the needed information in the citation. Finally, the researcher has changed the data collection tool many times, from paragraph correction to a test until making the questionnaire, in which it effects on the research earlier.

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Appendix 01

A Questionnaire for Second-Year EFL Students

Dear student,

You are kindly asked to fill in this questionnaire, which serves as a data collecting tool for a research about **“Punctuation Marks Deficiency in EFL Students’ Paragraph Writing”**. Your contribution will be of great importance for the success of this study. Please tick the appropriate answer(s) and write full statement(s) whenever necessary. Be sure that your responses will be anonymous and will be used for research purposes only.

Researcher's name:

Maroua Boualam

Supervised by:

Mr.CHENINI Abdelhak

2022-2023

Section One: Personnel Information

Q1. How do you rate your level in English?

- a) Elementary
- b) Pre- intermediate
- c) Intermediate
- d) Upper mediate
- e) Advanced

Q2: To what extent each of the following language skills is important for you?

Important So important Not important

a) Speaking skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
b) Reading skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
c) Writing skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
d) Listening skill	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Q3. Can you indicate which one of the mentioned skills is the most difficult? and why?

Q4. Are you satisfied with your level in the writing skill?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q5. Do you find difficulties when you write?

- a) Yes
- b) No

If “Yes”, what are the main difficulties?

- a) Coherence and cohesion
- b) All of them
- c) Inability to recall previous knowledge
- d) Poor grammar and vocabulary
- e) Punctuation
- f) Organization
- g) Lack of ideas and knowledge about the topic

If others, please specify.

Q6. Are these difficulties at the level of:

- a) Sentence
- b) Paragraph
- c) Essay

Others, please specify

Q7. According to you, what are the main reasons behind students’ writing difficulties?

- a) Lack of exposure to different text genres
- b) Lack of reading
- c) Lack of practice
- d) The way writing is being taught and assessed
- e) All of them

If others, please specify

Q7. When your teacher asks you to write a piece of writing, what is the main element that you focus more on?

Section two: punctuation and writing**Q8. How do you rate your mastery of punctuation marks?**

- a) Good
- b) Average
- c) Weak

Q9. Do you agree that punctuation marks are essential component in the written language?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Why?**Q10. Classify the following items depending on the importance you give when dealing with your written products just by putting 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.**

- a) Grammar
- b) Spelling
- c) Vocabulary
- d) Capitalization and punctuation marks
- e) Organization of ideas

Q11. Would the written product be good with a poorly punctuation?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Q12. How often do you apply punctuations' rules in your written works?

- a) Always
- b) Sometimes
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

Q13. Do you think that punctuation' mistakes might be acceptable?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Why?

Q14. To what extent can poor punctuation affect students' writing performance?

Section Three: Paragraph Writing and Punctuation Marks

Q15. In your opinion, do you think that the absence of some punctuation marks in the students' written products is often due to:

- a) Ignorance of rules
- b) Carelessness
- c) Lack of concentration
- d) Assumed as unnecessary

Others:

Q16. What are the common marks that you fail to use properly in the written assignments?

Q17. Does the use of some punctuation marks interchangeably change the written meaning?

- a) Yes
- b) No

Why?

Q18. What is your opinion about using technology to help you in correcting your paragraphs?

Q19. Which of the following represents you the most?

Statement	Yes	No
I can use commas correctly when I write.		
I can use colons correctly when I write. (:))		
I can use semicolons correctly when I write. (;)		
I can find the errors I make with grammar, punctuation, and mechanics.		
I can identify the types of grammar, punctuation, and mechanics errors I make.		
I can correctly fix the errors I make in punctuation.		

Please, feel free to add any comments.

المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى استكشاف نقص توظيف وإستخدام علامات الترقيم في كتابة الفقرات و كذا مدى فهمهم لانواع و تعدد استعمال هاته العلامات لدى طلاب سنة ثانية جامعي بجامعة محمد خيضر بولاية بسكرة- الجزائر.

يرى الباحث أن هنالك أخطاء مشتركة في استعمال العلامات. ولتأكيد الفرضيات المقدمة في خطة البحث قام الباحث بتطبيق استبيان على 25 طالب جامعي على المستوى المذكور. بعد البحث على العينات عشوائيا جمع البيانات تمت عملية جمع تحليل و تفسير النتائج التي أظهرت أن معظم الطلاب واعوون باهمية استخدام علامات الترقيم لكنهم غير مهتمين بهم و يروها كتضيق وقت. كذلك أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الطلبة فضلوا استعمال التكنولوجيا لتصحيح الأخطاء لتسهيل عملية كتابة الفقرات والتي ساعدت باثبات الفرضية الاخيرة التي تشجع على استعمال مستوى متقدم من التعليم.