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Punctuating Proficiency on Writing Skill by The Sophomore Students of The English Educational Study Program UPG 1945 NTT in Academic Year 2024/2025

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Abstrak

Tujuan utama penelitian ini adalah untuk mengevaluasi pemahaman dan penerapan aturan tanda baca oleh mahasiswa, serta mengidentifikasi tantangan umum yang dihadapi dalam penulisan mereka. Menggunakan pendekatan metode kualitatif, data dikumpulkan melalui contoh tulisan dan survei untuk memberikan evaluasi komprehensif tentang keterampilan tanda baca. Temuan menunjukkan tingkat kemahiran yang bervariasi, dengan kesulitan yang menonjol dalam aturan tanda baca dasar yang berdampak negatif pada kualitas penulisan secara keseluruhan. Analisis menyoroti pola kesulitan dan efektivitas praktik pengajaran saat ini. Pembahasan menekankan perlunya strategi pedagogis yang ditargetkan untuk mengatasi kesenjangan ini, dengan mengadvokasi latihan praktis dan umpan balik yang dipersonalisasi dalam kurikulum. Secara keseluruhan, penelitian ini memberikan wawasan berharga tentang kemahiran tanda baca, menawarkan rekomendasi untuk meningkatkan keterampilan menulis dan metode pengajaran, yang pada akhirnya membentuk pendidik masa depan yang kompeten dan memperkaya pengalaman pendidikan.

Abstract

The primary aim is to assess students' understanding and application of punctuation rules while identifying common challenges faced in their writing. Employing a qualitative methods approach, data were gathered through writing samples and surveys to provide a comprehensive evaluation of punctuation skills. Findings reveal varying levels of proficiency, with notable difficulties in fundamental punctuation rules that adversely impact overall writing quality. The analysis highlights patterns of struggle and the effectiveness of current instructional practices. The discussion emphasizes the need for targeted pedagogical strategies to address these gaps, advocating for practical exercises and personalized feedback in the curriculum. Overall, this research contributes valuable insights into punctuation proficiency, offering recommendations to enhance writing skills and instructional methods, ultimately shaping competent future educators and enriching the educational experience.

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INTRODUCTION

Language serves as a means for humans to interact and express ideas through speaking, listening, reading, and writing. This study emphasizes writing skills, particularly punctuation, which is crucial for clarity and coherence in written communication. Writing enables individuals to convey thoughts effectively, requiring careful attention to vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation as highlighted by Semi (2007) and Tarigan (1986).

Punctuation significantly impacts the readability and understanding of texts. It not only separates sentences but also illustrates relationships between ideas and reflects the intonation of spoken language,

as noted by David Crystal (2004) and Geoffrey Nunberg (1990). Lynne Truss (2003) further emphasizes that proper punctuation preserves meaning and avoids misunderstandings.

A strong grasp of punctuation enhances the quality of writing, preventing ambiguity and enriching the connection between ideas. It is essential for writers to communicate messages effectively and craft engaging narratives. Thus, developing proficiency in punctuation is vital for improving writing skills in both academic and personal contexts, highlighting the need for ongoing exploration of writing practices.

REVIEW LITERATURE

In the previous studies section, several research works highlight the significance of punctuation in writing. Ning Setio Wati (2021) emphasizes that students often lack instruction in using punctuation effectively, which can hinder their writing skills. Fatma Suliman et al. (2019) reveal that improper punctuation negatively affects reading comprehension, indicating the need for effective punctuation teaching. Ömer Faruk Tavşanlı (2021) finds that peer and self-assessment significantly improve students' use of punctuation and spelling, promoting a more serious approach to writing. Another study focuses on students' overall punctuation proficiency and its impact on writing quality, exploring both errors and overarching skills.

In the punctuation section, punctuation is defined as a system of marks that separates sentences and organizes ideas, facilitating clarity and understanding in writing. Proper

punctuation is crucial for effective communication, guiding reader interpretation. Keith Houston (2013) notes that punctuation has a complex history tied to organizing information, while Adrian Bread (2001) stresses its importance in coherence and clarity, making it essential across all forms of writing.

METHODS

This study focuses on assessing punctuation proficiency in narrative writing among second-semester students in the English Educational Study Program at the University of Persatuan Guru 1945 NTT. It employs a qualitative descriptive research strategy, which aims to analysed and present findings regarding various phenomena without making comparisons or establishing connections with other variables. Descriptive research, as noted by Suharsimi Arikunto and Sugiyono, involves investigating specific conditions and presenting results in a research report format. Qualitative research methods, including

interviews and case studies, are utilized to gather non-numerical data, with an emphasis on exploring social symptoms without the need for prior hypothesis formulation, as highlighted by Etna Widodo Muchtar.

Research Instrument

This study evaluates the knowledge of punctuation among second-semester students in the English Educational Study Program at the University of Persatuan Guru 1945. Initially, the researcher observes the students' punctuation skills to establish a baseline. Following this observation, a treatment involving descriptive and narrative text exercises is implemented to enhance their understanding. The outcomes of these exercises are then analysed to assess the effectiveness of the approach. The research focuses on a population of 48 students, with a sample of 23 students selected from class B to provide targeted insights into the treatment's impact on their punctuation proficiency.

Research Procedure

In the course of this research, a structured approach will be undertaken to gather data and insights. Initially, the writer will conduct observations during the first meeting, where both the researcher and the subject will engage in discussions to establish a rapport and outline the objectives of the study.

Following this, in the second meeting, the writer will provide a specific treatment tailored to the subject's needs. This intervention will be carefully designed to enhance understanding and address the focal points of the research.

The final meeting will involve a practical exercise where the subject is presented with a series of texts lacking proper punctuation. The subject will be tasked with correcting these texts, applying their understanding of punctuation rules. Following the exercise, the results of the corrections will be analysed by the researcher to draw conclusions about the

subject's progress and areas that may require further attention. This systematic process aims to illustrate the subject's development throughout the research.

Technique of Data Collection

The Text Correction Test is a data collection method used to evaluate students' punctuation proficiency in writing. Students are given an essay with intentional spelling and punctuation errors and are tasked with correcting them. Researchers gather data on how many mistakes each student identifies and corrects, which helps assess their skills in punctuation and capitalization. The corrections are scored, and average performance is calculated, allowing researchers to categorize students based on their proficiency levels. This information can be valuable for educators aiming to improve students' writing skills.

Technique of Data Analysis

The process of evaluating students' writing begins with a careful analysis of their work, focusing specifically on the use of punctuation. The instructor meticulously reviews each piece, noting every punctuation mark employed by the students. This step is crucial for identifying both correct and incorrect usages.

Following this initial review, the instructor classifies any punctuation errors, creating a comprehensive overview of the types of mistakes made. This classification helps in understanding common patterns in students' writing, providing insights into their comprehension and application of punctuation rules.

Subsequently, the instructor assesses the overall accuracy of punctuation marks used. This analysis involves determining how often students successfully employ punctuation correctly compared to how frequently they misuse it.

Finally, the instructor draws conclusions regarding the level of punctuation errors present in the students' writing. This

assessment not only highlights areas where students excel but also identifies specific aspects where they struggle, allowing for targeted feedback and support to enhance their writing skills. Through this thorough examination, the instructor can effectively guide students toward improved punctuation proficiency.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

Finding

The study utilizes a qualitative descriptive method to thoroughly identify and articulate students' abilities to utilize various skills. Through detailed observations and open-ended interviews, the research aims to capture the nuances of how students interact with their learning materials and apply their knowledge in practical contexts. By focusing on real-life experiences and perspectives, the study illustrates not only the competencies students possess but also the challenges they encounter in effectively using these skills throughout their educational journey. The descriptive approach enables a rich, in-depth exploration of student behaviour and thought processes, providing valuable insights for educators and researchers alike. In this chapter, the writer attempts to address the question posed in the research problem introduced.

Table 4.1.1

Test result data

No.	Name	Pre-test	Post-test
1	M.I.H	55	75
2	M.S.B	30	50
3	M.N.	60	75
4	M.M.T.	60	80
5	N.K.L.	55	85
6	N.L.N.	50	80
7	N.A.M.R.K.	20	40
8	O.S.B.	60	75
9	R.M.P.	50	65
10	R.H.D.	45	70
11	S.T.K.S.	50	80
12	S.M.	50	75
13	S.N.	60	95
14	S.L.L.	55	70
15	S.P.	60	85
16	S.T.	70	85
17	W.E.	50	75
18	W.R.T.	55	90
19	W.W.B.	45	75
20	Y.L.B.	65	80
21	N.S.F.	75	90
22	F.M.	65	85
23	I.D.N.	60	85
	Mean	54.13	76.73

Recognizing this need for improvement, the author implemented a targeted instructional approach to teach students the fundamentals of punctuation. This

intervention involved comprehensive lessons focused on the correct use of punctuation marks and their impact on writing clarity and coherence.

Following this instructional period, students were given a final test designed to evaluate their progress and the effectiveness of the training. The results were encouraging, demonstrating a notable improvement with an average increase of 22.60%. The post-test average score reached 76.73%, reflecting a marked enhancement in the students' punctuation skills and overall writing proficiency. This positive outcome underscores the importance of focused educational interventions in addressing specific areas of student difficulty. The analysis of the data reveals a significant challenge that students face when it comes to using punctuation marks effectively in their writing. In the initial test administered, nearly all students exhibited various mistakes, highlighting a gap in their understanding of proper punctuation. Recognizing this need for improvement, the author implemented a targeted instructional approach to teach students the fundamentals of punctuation. This intervention involved comprehensive lessons focused on the correct use of punctuation marks and their impact on writing clarity and coherence.

Following this instructional period, students were given a final test designed to evaluate their progress and the effectiveness of the training. The results were encouraging,

demonstrating a notable improvement with an average increase of 22.60%. The post-test average score reached 76.73%, reflecting a marked enhancement in the students' punctuation skills and overall writing proficiency. This positive outcome underscores the importance of focused educational interventions in addressing specific areas of student difficulty, proper punctuation in writing. After treatment, students are given a final test to determine the changes. The results of the post-test showed a 22.60% increase. It can be seen from the average student post-test score of 76.73%.

Discussion

In this section, the writer observed that students were generally unfamiliar with punctuation. The initial test results, presented in narrative form, indicate that most students struggle significantly with proper punctuation. Many students misuse commas, such as placing them incorrectly between subjects and predicates, or neglecting to use them in complex compound sentences. Additionally, periods are often left out at the end of sentences, leading to confusion for the reader. This misplacement of punctuation results in unclear writing, ambiguity in the meaning of sentences, and a difficult flow of ideas. Some students expressed that they did not fully understand punctuation rules and felt confused about when to use certain punctuation marks.

This table displays student writing before treatment.

Errors on Pre-test	Symbols
1. In a small peaceful village...	1. Comma 2. Quotation marks
2. Never go near that forest Arya his grandfather said sternly	3. Comma 4. Comma 5. Semicolon 6. Comma 7. Comma 8. Period
3. One morning without anyone knowing Arya decided to venture into the Forbidden Forest	9. Quotation marks 10. Apostrophe 11. Comma 12. Quotation marks 13. Comma
4. Carrying a backpack filled with food and a bottle of water Arya stepped into the forest	
5. The atmosphere immediately changed the trees seemed	

taller and darker...	
6. As a token of my gratitude I will accompany you on your journey through this forest	
7. Together with the deer who introduced herself as Runa Arya continued his adventure	
8. Arya and Runa tried to open it but failed	
9. This must be the key to open the chest said Runa	
10. didnt" and "natures	
11. After spending several days exploring the forest Arya and Runa	

returned to the village	
12. Youve learned so much Arya said his grandfather	
13. The Forbidden Forest has taught you about courage friendship and wisdom	

The next phase involved planning the instructional strategies, which included explaining the rules and functions of various punctuation marks, supported with clear examples of their use in sentences. The lessons were interactive, encouraging students to actively participate in discussions and ask questions.

Following the planning stage, the action phase commenced with structured

exercises, such as correcting sentences with incorrect punctuation and creating coherent paragraphs that emphasized the proper use of punctuation. Feedback sessions were integrated into the learning process, providing students with direct responses to their work and fostering an environment of continuous improvement.

Observation coincided with students' engagement in the activities, during which the author monitored their understanding and application of punctuation rules. Notable progress was documented through formative assessments during the lessons, which helped to gauge the effectiveness of the interventions in real time.

Finally, reflecting on the outcomes of the treatment allowed the author to evaluate the impact of the instructional approach on student performance. The final test results highlighted a significant improvement, with an average increase of 22.60% in score.

Post-test

Following an extensive and thoughtfully designed treatment focused on punctuation, which encompassed both theoretical lessons and practical writing exercises, the qualitative post-test data revealed notable improvements. Participants exhibited a marked enhancement in their punctuation skills, demonstrating a more accurate application of commas to effectively separate elements within sentences, a consistent placement of periods to signify the end of statements, and an appropriate use of

question marks and exclamation marks that aligned well with the intended tone and context of their writing.

As a result of this intensive training, their sentence structures have transformed into clearer and more organized forms, making their messages not only more precise but also more engaging for readers. Students expressed a newfound clarity in understanding the essential functions of various punctuation marks, articulating how this knowledge has empowered them to approach writing with greater care and consideration. They have become more vigilant in both crafting and revising their work, ensuring that punctuation marks enhance rather than hinder the clarity of their expression. This newfound diligence reflects a deeper appreciation for the nuances of written communication, enabling them to articulate their thoughts more effectively.

Table 4.2.4

Pre-test and Post-test Scores

No.	Name	Pre-test	Post-test
1	M.I.H	55	75
2	M.S.B	30	50
3	M.N.	60	75
4	M.M.T.	60	80
5	N.K.L.	55	85
6	N.L.N.	50	80
7	N.A.M.R.K.	20	40
8	O.S.B.	60	75
9	R.M.P.	50	65
10	R.H.D.	45	70
11	S.T.K.S.	50	80
12	S.M.	50	75
13	S.N.	60	95
14	S.L.L.	55	70
15	S.P.	60	85
16	S.T.	70	85
17	W.E.	50	75
18	W.R.T.	55	90
19	W.W.B.	45	75
20	Y.L.B.	65	80
21	N.S.F.	75	90
22	F.M.	65	85
23	I.D.N.	60	85
	Mean	54.13	76.73

The data presented in the table highlights a notable improvement in student performance between the pre-test and the post-test. Specifically, the average score for the pre-

test stands at 54.13%, suggesting that students had a foundational understanding of the material before any instructional intervention. In stark contrast, the post-test average score rises significantly to 76.73%. This increase of over 22 percentage points indicates a substantial enhancement in student knowledge and skills after the educational process. Such a dramatic shift in scores reflects the effectiveness of the teaching methods or learning strategies employed during the instructional period, showcasing the positive impact on student learning outcomes.

Errors Punctuation in Writing

a) Period

Incorrect Sentences by Students	Corrected Sentences	Explanation
a) However the warning only made arya more corius	a) However, the warning only made Arya more curious.	Added a comma after "However" (introductory word), corrected spelling ("Arya" and "curious"), and added a period at the end.
b) Arya and Runa tried to open it but failed	b) Arya and Runa tried to open it but failed.	Add a period at the end of the sentence.

c) Deep in the forest, they discovered a hidden cave	c) Deep in the forest, they discovered a hidden cave.	Add a period at the end of the sentence.
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In this revised sentence, the punctuation error has been thoughtfully addressed by adding a period at the end, clearly signaling the conclusion of a complete thought. Periods are crucial in writing, as they help delineate the end of a declarative sentence, ultimately providing much-needed clarity and structure to the text.

The student's initial oversight in neglecting to include the period might have arisen from a fleeting moment of distraction or a misunderstanding of sentence structure, showcasing how easily one can overlook such details in the rush to express an idea. Additionally, the misspelling of "curious" as "corius" suggests a further lapse in concentration during the writing process, emphasizing the vital importance of meticulous proofreading. This practice catches not only punctuation errors but also spelling mistakes, ensuring that the writer's message is communicated effectively and accurately.

b) Comma

Incorrect Sentences by Students	Corrected Sentences	Explanation
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a) Together with the deer who introduced herself as Runa.	a) Together with the deer, who introduced herself as Runa.	In this sentence, the clause "who introduced herself as Runa" is non-restrictive (additional information that does not limit the meaning of the previous word). Clauses like this should be separated by commas. Without commas, it seems as if there is only one deer who introduced herself as Runa, even though this is only additional information.
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b) From that day on Arya no longer feared the Forbidden Forest.	b) From that day on, Arya no longer feared the Forbidden Forest.	“From that day on” is an adverb of time placed at the beginning of a sentence. In English, this should be followed by a comma to separate the introductory part from the body of the sentence. This helps the reader understand the sentence structure more easily.	c) At first, his grandfather was angry but after hearing arya’s story he felt proud	c) At first, his grandfather was angry, but after hearing Arya’s story, he felt proud.	In this sentence, two places need commas: After “At first,” because it is a time statement at the beginning of the sentence. Before “but,” because “but” connects two independent clauses (two complete sentences that can stand alone). After “after hearing Arya’s story,” because this phrase is an
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		additional description before the main body of the second clause.
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The careful use of commas plays a crucial role in the clarity and flow of written communication. By effectively separating clauses, adverbial phrases, and supplementary information within a sentence, commas guide the reader through the intended meaning. When employed correctly, these small punctuation marks can transform a complex sentence into a clear, easily digestible piece of text. Consequently, the reader can follow the writer's thoughts more seamlessly, enhancing comprehension and preventing confusion. Thus, mastering comma usage is essential for anyone looking to elevate their writing and improve the overall clarity of their message.

c. Quotation Mark

Incorrect Sentences by Students	Corrected Sentences	Explanation
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The forest is full of wild creatures and unpredictable magic	" The forest is full of wild creatures and unpredictable magic."	There is no grammatical error in the sentence itself; however, if you intended to include quotation marks, the placement of the closing quotation mark should be after the period, like this: "The forest is full of wild creatures and unpredictable magic."
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In American English, periods are placed inside quotation marks to enhance clarity and readability, making it clear that the punctuation belongs to the quoted material. This convention helps prevent confusion about whether the quote finishes the sentence. Historically, this practice has simplified the typesetting process and contributes to a clean presentation in written text.

These rules are specific to American English; British English typically places punctuation marks outside the quotation unless they are part of the quote itself.

d. Dash

Incorrect Sentences by Students	Correct Sentences	Explanation
Arya was stunned he had never imagined being able to talk to animals.	Arya was stunned—he had never imagined being able to talk to animals.	A sentence with a dash makes it clearer that the second part is an explanation or reason for the first part, whereas without a dash the sentence feels like two clauses stuck together without adequate separation.

The dash in the sentence acts like a momentary pause, drawing attention and creating a sense of emphasis that underscores the connection between the two parts of the statement. When a dash is utilized, it provides clarity and enhances the overall impact of the message, deliberately guiding the reader's focus. Without this powerful punctuation mark, the sentence tends to lose its clarity, diminishing the emphasis and making it more challenging for readers to grasp the full meaning. This lack of distinction can lead to confusion, ultimately reducing the overall readability and comprehension of the text.

When indicating ranges, such as numbers, dates, or times, a dash serves as a clear and concise way to replace the word "to" or "through." For example, stating "The event runs from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m." provides a neat

visual representation of the time range. In the context of connecting related elements or equal partnerships, an en dash is used to link two distinct words, effectively replacing terms like "versus" or "and." For instance, you might see "New York – Boston rivalry," emphasizing a connection between the two cities. When it comes to complex compound adjectives, a dash is particularly useful for clarifying relationships, especially when one of the elements is an open compound (two words) or when both parts feature hyphens. This helps avoid confusion in phrases such as "post–World War II era." Additionally, in sports scores or directional contexts, an end dash can succinctly indicate results or movements, such as "The final score was 3 – 2" or "Travel from Boston – Chicago." It's important to note that typically no spaces are placed before or after the end dash in these usages, ensuring a polished and professional appearance in any written text.

The data presents a comparison between pre-test and post-test scores of a group of individuals. In the pre-test, the scores range from a low of 20 to a high of 75, with a mean score of approximately 54.13%. This suggests that the participants had varying levels of knowledge or skill before the intervention, with some performing significantly better than others. In contrast, the post-test scores show a notable improvement, ranging from 40 to 95, and an increased average score of around 76.73%. This change indicates that the participants generally benefited from the intervention or training provided between the pre-test and post-test.

A closer examination reveals that many individuals improved their scores significantly:

- For example, scores increased from 55 to 75 for one individual and from 60 to 80 for another, showcasing gains of 20 points in both cases.

- Even those who started with lower pre-test scores, such as 20 and 30, also improved substantially to 40 and 50, respectively.

Overall, the data reflect a positive trend in learning or performance outcomes, with most participants showing improvement in their post-test scores, highlighting the effectiveness of the intervention. The range of scores in the post-test suggests that while some individuals still faced challenges, the majority made considerable progress, moving towards higher levels of achievement.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has investigated the punctuation proficiency of sophomore students in the English Education Study Program at UPG 1945 NTT for the academic year 2024/2025. The findings reveal that while some students possess a basic understanding of punctuation rules, there are significant challenges in their consistent application across different writing situations. Factors such as limited exposure to diverse writing styles, insufficient practice, and confusion around specific punctuation rules have contributed to their difficulties. The study underscores the importance of punctuation in effective communication and academic success. Therefore, students need to focus on improving their punctuation skills to enhance their overall writing proficiency

This thesis has investigated the punctuation proficiency of sophomore students in the English Education Study Program at UPG 1945 NTT for the academic year 2024/2025. The findings reunderstanding of punctuation rules, there are

SUGGESTIONS

To address the challenges identified in this study, several measures can be implemented to

improve punctuation proficiency among students. It is essential to incorporate focused workshops into the curriculum that emphasize the rules and application of punctuation marks. Regular writing exercises across different genres will help students apply what they learn in practical contexts, reinforcing their understanding of punctuation. Utilizing technology can enhance the learning experience by providing interactive exercises and immediate feedback on punctuation use. Peer review programs should be established to facilitate collaborative learning and critique, allowing students to learn from each other's strengths and weaknesses in punctuation. Moreover, continuous assessment and constructive feedback are crucial for tracking students' progress and motivating them to focus on their punctuation skills. Encouraging reading can also play a significant role, as exposure to well-structured texts can serve as a valuable model for proper punctuation. In conclusion, enhancing punctuation proficiency requires a dedicated effort from both educators and students. By implementing these strategies, the learning environment can be enriched, ultimately leading to improved writing skills and more effective communication among students. Developing strong punctuation skills is vital for academic success and for conveying ideas clearly and confidently in their future endeavours.

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