

A STUDY ON THE USE OF PUNCTUATION IN GUIDED AND ESSAY WRITING

A Thesis Submitted to the Department of English Education
in Partial Fulfillment for the Master of Education in English

Submitted by
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2010

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that to the best of my knowledge that this thesis is original; no part of it was earlier submitted for the candidature of research degree to any university.

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.....
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RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCEPTANCE

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ABSTRACT

In the present study entitled **A study on the use of punctuation in guided and essay writing**; the main objective was to find out punctuation marks used by the students while writing an essay. The researcher collected the data by distributing test items to 80 students from four different government aided schools of Pokhara valley. The data were analyzed in order to find out the items of punctuation marks used in essay writing. The major finding is that out of eleven items of punctuation marks, eight items are found incorrectly used in essay writing.

The study consists of four chapters. Chapter one is introduction and includes general background, literature review, objectives and significance of the study. Chapter two deals with the methodology applied to conduct the research. This chapter consists of sources of data, sampling procedure, tools of data collection, process of data collection and limitations of the study. The judgmental sampling procedure and random sampling procedure were used for choosing sample population. Test items were the major tools of data collection. Chapter three consists of analysis and interpretation of the collected data. The responses provided by the students were analyzed with the help of tables and figures. Finally, chapter four deals with the findings and recommendations of the study. References and Appendices have been included in the final section of thesis.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

USA	- United States of America
UK	- United Kingdom
UN	- United Nation
ibid	- in the same place, from the same work
No.	- Number
T.Sa	- total sample
T.A	- total average
i.e	- that is,
S.N.	- serial number
SLC	- School Living Certificate
n.d	- no date of publication
ed.	- edition
T.U.	-Tribhuban University
C.U.P	- Cambridge University Press
M.Ed.	- Master in Education

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 General Background

Language is a means of communication through which we can express our ideas, emotions and feelings to others. It is an important means of communication by which we can perform communication, maintain, group solidarity, resolve inter linguistic conflict and so on. It is a versatile tool that people use to fulfill their needs. It is also a carrier of civilization and culture as human thoughts and philosophy are conveyed from one generation to the other through the medium of language. No human civilization is believed to exist without language. According to Derbyshire (1967), "Language is undoubtedly a means of communication among human beings. It consists primarily of vocal sounds. It is articulatory, systematic, symbolic and arbitrary" (as cited in Syal and Jindal 2008, p. 5). It points out that language is a system of human communication which consists primarily of vocal sounds. It is articulatory, systematic, symbolic and arbitrary in nature.

Bloch and Trager (1942, p. 5) define language as "A system of arbitrary vocal symbols by means of which a social group co-operates." It means language is a system through which a social group interacts and co-operates. Similarly, Sapir (1921) defines language as "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions and desires by means of voluntarily produced symbols" (as cited in Swann et al. 2004, p. 162). From this definition, one can say that language is species specific and species uniform. In Wardhaugh's (1986, p.1) words, "A Language is what the members of a particular society speak". This definition points out that a language is a code through which the members of a particular society interact. It means a society

has the same language for communication. According to Hall (1968), "Language is the institution whereby humans communicate and interact with each other by means of habitually used oral-auditory arbitrary symbols" (as cited in Yadava, 2004 p. 2).

These definitions point out that language is a system of human communication, which is purely human and helps to share the ideas, thoughts and desires. It also points out that it is a voluntary vocal system of human communication. It is a system of human communication because all humans are blessed with language and it is the specific property of humans alone. Language is, thus, species specific and species uniform.

There are many languages in the world. Among them English is globally used one. It is spoken as native language in Canada, Australia, the USA and the UK. It is used as an official language in some countries such as India and Singapore. It is used as a foreign language in most of the countries in the world. Although it is not the language with the largest native speakers, it has become the international language. It is the language of international politics, commerce, media, education, technology, communication and diplomacy. More than half of the scientific and technical periodicals and radio stations use English as the medium of communication. More than half of the international standard books and magazines are written in English.

English has gained a status of link language. It is the most dominant language in the world. It is an international lingua franca. It has the largest vocabulary, perhaps as many as two millions. It is one of the five official languages of the United Nations (UN). Because of the growing global use of English, it is prescribed as a compulsory subject ranging from the beginning to bachelor level in our country's education system. It is taught and learned as a foreign language in Nepal.

1.1.1 Language Skills

Language is a versatile tool that people use to fulfil their needs. It is an important means of communication. Our choice of language may depend upon the channel of communication. People who use language have a number of different abilities. They are able to listen to radio, to speak on the telephone, read books and write letters. It means they possess the four basic language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. These four language skills are related to each other by two parameters.

- i. The mode of communication: oral or written
- ii. The direction of communication: receiving or producing the message

Speech and writing are two modes of communication. People employ a combination of skills at the same time. Speaking and listening usually happen simultaneously. Language users may well read and write well at the same time. They can write on the basis of what they read. Speech is primary language skill; whereas writing is secondary language skill because writing makes use of graphic symbols to represent the spoken language.

The direction of communication includes receiving and producing the message. Listening and reading involve receiving the message and are, therefore, often referred to as receptive skills. Speaking and writing, on the other hand, involve production and are, therefore, often referred to as productive skills.

1.1.1.1 Writing Skill

Writing is the productive skill in written mode of communication.

According to Byrne (1979, p.1), "Writing involves the encoding of a message of some kind: that is, we translate our thought into language." According to Widdowson (1978), Writing is the use of the visual medium to manifest the graphological and grammatical system of the language (as cited in Khaniya 2005, p. 147). It is the act of making up correct sentences and transmitting

them through the visual medium as marks on paper. He further considers writing is an activity of developing a discussion as transferring information of the various kinds from the writer's world knowledge to that of the reader's and that linguistic rules facilitate the transference, though mere linguistic rules are not sufficient to do this, knowledge of use is needed.

In Khaniya's (2005, p. 148) words: "Writing is not seen just as one of the language skills to be learned, but as an effective way for a learner to generate words, sentences and even chunks to discourse." Writing refers to the expression of ideas in a consecutive way according to graphic convention of the language. Writing is productive and secondary language skill, so we arrange the symbols to form the words. Words are arranged to form sentence and sentences are arranged in a particular order and linked together to form a text.

Writing is regarded as the most difficult of the language abilities to acquire. It is difficult to learn in the mother tongue also. Bryne (1979, pp. 4-5) says: 'Writing requires some conscious mental effort: we 'think out' our sentences and consider various ways of combining and arranging them.' He also mentioned that we shall look at the problems which are caused by writing under three headings: Psychological, linguistic and cognitive. He also mentioned that writing is a task which is imposed on us, perhaps by circumstances. This not only has a psychological effect, it may also cause a problem in terms of content- what to say. Being at a loss for ideas, is a familiar experience to most of us when we are obliged to write (pp.4-5). He further says (ibid) that writing is learnt through a process of instruction: We have to master the written form of the language and to learn certain structures which are less used in speech, or perhaps not used at all, but which are important for effective communication in writing. We also have to learn how to organize our ideas in such a way that they can be understood by any reader who happens to see them.

Munby (1979 as cited in Sharma and Phyak p. 473) emphasizes the productive aspect of language and says that writing is a productive skill which involves manipulating, structuring and communicating functions. This can be further looked at in terms of sub-skills of writing. The sub-skills of writing are:

- i. Manipulating the script of a language
 - forming the shapes of letters
 - using the spelling system
 - using punctuation
- ii. Expressing information explicitly
- iii. Expressing information explicitly through
 - inference and
 - figurative language
- iv. Expressing the communicative value of sentences and utterances
- v. Expressing relations within a sentence using
 - elements of sentence structure
 - modal auxiliaries
 - intra-sentential connectors
- vi. Expressing relations between parts of a text through lexical cohesion devices.
- vii. Expressing relations between parts of a text through grammatical cohesion devices.
- viii. Using indicators in discourse for
 - introducing an idea
 - developing an idea
 - changing idea from one to another
 - concluding an idea
 - emphasizing a point
 - explaining of point already made
 - anticipating an objection
- ix. Reducing the text through avoiding irrelevant information.

1.1.1.2 Components of Writing

Writing makes use of graphic symbols to represent the speech sound. It consists of a number of components. They are:

i. Mechanism (Graphological system)

The mechanism is also known as graphological system. It mainly includes spelling and punctuation. Abbreviation, number format and layout of writing, citation and reference in formal writing also come under mechanism of writing.

ii. Cohesion

Cohesion refers to the lexical or grammatical relationship between lexical items and sentences or different elements of a text.

Cohesion includes different link devices such as personal, comparative, demonstrative, references, logical connectors and so on. It includes addition, comparison, contrast, enumeration, inferences, exemplification, replacement and reformulation of ideas. According to the occurrence of cohesion, it can be divided into two types. They are: sentential cohesion and textual cohesion. Sentential cohesion occurs within a sentence whereas textual cohesion occurs across sentences.

iii. Coherence

Coherence refers to the semantic relationship between sentences in a text or it refers to the relationship between an utterance and meaning it conveys. In written text, it refers to the semantic relationship between topic sentence and its supporting detail of a paragraph.

iv. Orthographic and Para-orthographic texts

The orthographic system refers to spelling, words, phrases, clauses and sentences. It means it refers to the text in general. On the other hand, paraorthographic text refers to the use of diagram, figure, symbols and so on. It deals with converting a text into chart, interpreting charts, diagrams, tables, writing from maps, graphs, and writing something in the form of table, chart and diagram.

1.1.1.3 Characteristics of Good Writing

Writing is an art of using language. It is a productive skill in which we produce a sequence of sentences arranged in a particular order or linked together in certain ways. A piece of good writing needs some properties. They are: economy, clarity, coherence, simplicity, continuity, accuracy, completeness etc.

A good writing should be economic in nature. Simply, economy refers to the expression of ideas in short but in an effective way, without losing the meaning. A good writing should be simple and clear. It should reduce the complexities and it should avoid exaggeration and contradictory statements of a text.

There should be continuity of thoughts from one to another word, from one phrase to phrases that follow; one sentence to sentences that follow and from one paragraph to another paragraphs that follow. There should be semantic and grammatical linkage between the texts.

A good writing must be accurate and complete. It should deal with one topic at a time and all the sentences are closely related to the central idea. It must have examples and illustrations to explain difficult and abstract ideas. It should avoid exaggeration, hyperbole and self contradictory statements.

1.1.1.4 Stages of Writing

Writing is a productive language skill in written mode. It is a systematic process, so it follows five different stages of development. They are:

i. Copying

Copying is the first stage of writing which helps to teach spelling or reinforce sentence structure. It is essential and useful for improving handwriting and for fixing the words and sentences firmly in students' memory. According to Bryne (1979 p. 38), Copying can be presented to the learners as a meaningful activity, particularly if

we can get them to see it as a way of recording something which is not otherwise available to them or is not available to them in which they have copied it (i.e. they have brought together certain data which is distributed in various lessons in their text book). This stage of writing is very fruitful for beginners to teach alphabets, words and simple sentences.

ii. Reproduction

This stage of writing is more challenging than copying because at this stage, students attempt to write sentences that they have mastered only from their memory without seeing a model. This stage helps students improve their memory. In this stage, the students should give attention to the use of punctuation, size of letters, spacing and so on.

iii. Recombination

In this stage, students have partial freedom of expression because students write sentences that they have learnt previously with changes. Completing sentences, using pictures or alternative words given, producing drilled patterns with slight changes on some parts of them, transforming sentences on the basis of given clues are some examples of recombination. Producing sentences from a substitution table, expanding sentences to include the given words or information are also the examples of recombination. This stage of writing is particularly useful to train the students in manipulating language forms and to develop their ability to write correct sentences.

iv. Guided Writing

Guided writing is the fourth stage of writing development. It stands as a bridge between recombination and free writing. The students are made to do writing on the basis of given hints. It includes any

writing for which students are given assistance such as a model to follow. The guided writing starts from completion exercises and it ends in transformation exercises. The main exercise types are: completion, reproduction, compression and transformation. Some of the suggestions that follow are closer to controlled writing, some are almost free. The activities for teaching guided writing include: paraphrasing, parallel writing and developing skeleton into fuller text.

Guided writing stands as a bridge between controlled writing free writing, so it is semi-controlled writing activity. Guided writing exercises take various forms. They can be transforming information from a chart, table, graph etc. into orthographic texts or may involve developing notes into a coherent text or can be exercises based on the texts that students have dealt with as part of their reading lesson. It includes any writing for which students are given assistance such as model to follow a plan or outline to expand form, a partly-written version with indications of how to complete it or pictures that show a new subject to write about in the same way as something that has been read. Other form of guided writing exercises would be a series of questions, the answers that can be developed into the form of a text, a dialogue for the students to report. Reproduction by copying is also a form of guided writing; it includes punctuation and listening comprehension. Thus, supplying the punctuation marks in unpunctuated passage also comes under guided writing. The activities for teaching guided writing include punctuation and listening comprehension. The activities for teaching guided writing also include paraphrasing, parallel writing and developing skeleton into a fuller text.

a. Paraphrasing

It is the text of producing alternative version of a sentence or a paragraph. Paraphrasing exercises may extend from very simple transformation exercises to more advanced one. They can sometimes be related to involve grammatical transformation.

b. Parallel writing

Parallel writing is a way of learning by imitating a model or reproducing a new piece of writing. In direct imitation, the teacher presents a model and then provides the new words, sentences or paragraphs that are to be substituted for some of those given in the model.

c. Developing skeleton into a fuller text

In these activities, students complete the text on the basis of its skeleton. Students are given basic outlines with the aim of assisting the writing exercise. Such outlines work as hints to develop into a fuller text. It generally includes the task of writing a story, an essay and completing the broken dialogue.

v. Free composition writing

It is the last stage in the development of writing skill. The main goal of teaching writing is: to make the students write freely and independently. This ability is gained through stepwise development of writing. This stage involves individual selection of vocabulary and structure for the expression of personal meaning. In classroom writing, students need to be assisted in getting started and in organizing their ideas because it is not the normal free writing of everyday life. While writing, students should consider content and form of writing. For the production of a good piece of writing, students should follow these stages: brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising and rewriting.

1.1.1.5 Capitalization

Appropriate capitalization is a matter of convention. Many of the conventions e.g. capitalization of the first letter of the first word of sentence, the pronoun I, the first letter in the first word of quotation and so on. There are certain rules for capitalization. For example: it is used in all proper nouns, proper adjectives, historical events, periods, documents, days of the week, names of months, names of political and social groups, etc.

1.1.1.6 Punctuation Marks

Punctuation comes under mechanism of writing. Punctuation plays a vital role to disambiguate the meaning of sentence. In Caskill's (1998 p.44) words, "Punctuation is placed in text to make reading easier." The proper uses of punctuation marks help the writer to organize written language and clarify relation between words, phrases and clauses. According to Caskill (ibid), the various punctuation marks perform four functions: they (a) Separate (a period separates sentences), (b) Group or enclose (parentheses enclose extraneous information), (c) Connect (a hyphen connects a unit of modifier), and (d) Impart meaning (a question mark may make an otherwise declarative sentence interrogative) (as cited in <http://www.StInasagov/publish/sp7084pdf>).

The function of a punctuation mark is the basis for determining whether or not it is needed. The modern tendency is to punctuate to prevent misreading (open style) rather than to use all punctuations that the grammatical structure will allow (close style). Although the open style results in a more inviting product, it does allow subjectivity, perhaps arbitrariness, in the use of some marks, for example, the comma and hyphen.

Similarly, Jovanovich and Whitehall (1956) have neatly summarized the four main functions of graphic punctuation:

-) For linking parts of sentences and words.
- Semicolon (;)

- Colon (:)
 - Dash (–)
 - Hyphen (–) (for words only)
-) For separating sentences and parts of sentences.
- Period (.)
 - Question mark (?)
 - Exclamation point (!)
 - Comma (,)
-) For enclosing parts of sentences.
- Pair of commas (,)
 - Pair of dashes (– ... –)
 - Pair of parentheses (....)
 - Pair of brackets [.....]
 - Pair of quotation marks (" ... ")
-) For indicating omissions
- Apostrophe (e.g. don't, we'll, it's, we've)
 - Period (e.g. abbreviations, Mrs., U.S., A.H. Robinson)
 - Dash (e.g. John R–, D–n!)
 - Triple periods (... to indicate omitted words in quotation)
- (as cited in Corbett 1980, pp. 101-102)

Corbett (ibid) raises a question as to the uniformity of punctuation marks. While defining punctuation, he says, "Punctuation is strictly a convention." He also mentioned that styles of punctuation have changed somewhat from century to century and even from country to country. The punctuation marks which are used in writing are as follows:

i. Comma (,)

Comma is a punctuation mark (,) which is used to indicate a separation of elements or ideas within a structure of a sentence and in front of the coordinating conjunction that joins the independent clauses of compound sentences. It is also used in letter writing after the salutation and closing.

ii. Colon (:)

Colon is a punctuation mark (:) which informs the reader that what follows proves and explains, or simply provides elements of, what is referred to before. According to (orbett1980, p. 127),"A colon signals that what follows it is specification of what was formally announced in the clause on the left-hand side of the colon."

iii. Apostrophe (')

Apostrophe is a punctuation mark (') which serves two main purposes: (i) It indicates possessive case: (dog's tail) and (ii) It indicates omission of one or more letters: 'don't' for 'do not').

iv. Dash (–)

Dash is a punctuation mark (–) which indicates break in the thought or structure of sentence. It is used when the word or group of words that follow it constitutes a summation, and amplification, or a reversal of what went before it.

v. Slash (/)

Slash is also known as stroke. It is used to represent the concept. It is also used to indicate a line break from a poem, play or headline.

vi. Brackets (), { }, < > and

The brackets are the punctuation marks which are used to amplify or explain in word, a phrase or a sentence inserted in a passage. The brackets are also known as parenthesis. There are five types of brackets. They are:

- a. Round brackets ()
- b. Square Brackets []
- c. Braces { }
- d. Angle brackets < >
- e. Tuples .: .:|

vii. Semicolon (;)

Semicolon is a punctuation mark (;) which is used to connect independent clauses and indicate a closer relationship between the clauses than the period does.

viii. Hyphen (-)

Hyphen is a punctuation mark (-) which is used to join words and to separate syllables. The use of hyphen is called hyphenation. The hyphen is smaller than a minus sign and a dash. Mostly compound words are hyphenated.

ix. Full stop (.)

Full stop is also known as period which is usually placed at the end of sentences. It is also used after abbreviation. It is also used before closing quotation marks.

x. Question mark (?)

The question mark is also known as an interrogation point, interrogation mark, question point and query. It is a punctuation mark that replaces the full stop at the end of an interrogative sentence. It can also be used in mid sentence to make a merely interrogative phrase, when it functions similar to a comma, such as in the single sentence.

xi. Ellipsis (...)

Ellipsis (plural ellipses) is a mark or series of marks that usually indicate an international omission of a word or a phrase from the original text. An ellipsis can also be used to indicate a pause in speech, unfinished thoughts or at the end of a sentence, a trailing off into silence (as cited in <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ellipsis>).

xii. Quotation marks (" " or ")

Quotation marks are a pair of punctuation marks (" " or ") which are chiefly used to indicate the beginning and the end of a quotation in which the exact phraseology or another person, or of a text is directly cited.

xiii. Exclamation mark(!)

Exclamation mark is also known as exclamation point. It is usually used after an interjection or exclamation to indicate strong feeling, or high volume, and often marks the end of a sentence. Sometimes it is also used in the middle of the sentence.

xiv. Insertion mark (^)

It is used in writing to show what is left in writing.

1.1.1.7 Essay Writing

An essay comes under free writing composition. It is a piece of composition on a theme or subject.

An essay is a short piece of writing that discusses, describes or analyses a topic. An essay is quite often written from an author's personal point of view. It can discuss a subject directly or indirectly, seriously or humorously. It can describe personal opinion or just report information. Essays can consist of a number of elements including: literary criticisms, learned arguments, observations of daily life and reflections of the author. The definition of an essay is vague, overlapping with those of an article and short story. Learned arguments, observations of daily life and reflections of the author (as cited in <http://essayinfor.ocm/essys/s>).

From the structural point of view, an essay has a beginning, middle and an end. The beginning is an introductory part, it usually introduces the subject in general terms. The middle part of the essay is a body where a writer presents his thoughts on his topic and analyses them. The end part of an essay is a body where a writer summarizes his thoughts on his topic. The end part of an essay is also known as conclusion where a writer concludes his or her ideas. An essay, thus, consists of the following three main parts:

i. The introduction

It provides a clear introduction to the content of the essay. In fact, it is an introduction to the content of the essay. It introduces the central idea or main purpose of writing. It serves as a focus and stimulus to readers, encouraging them to continue reading. It mainly consists of key ideas, and issues are taken up to discuss them in greater detail.

ii. The body

In this part a writer develops ideas in a logical and coherent manner. In this part of writing, an author must be clear about his key concepts and ideas and the reader must be able to follow its development without any problem. It means the relationship between parts of the writing should be easily recognizable. Main points should be presented to separate paragraphs and should be pertinent to the main purpose of the essay.

iii. The conclusion

It is the final part of essay writing which signals the readers that the author has finished his or her writing and it leaves them with the clear impression that the purposes of the essay have been achieved. A summary of the points made in the main body and recommendations of action to be taken are the most common types of conclusion.

a. Characteristics of good essay

An essay is a written composition containing an expression of author's personal opinions or ideas on a subject. The subject is generally given to school level students, and they are left to select and arrange the related materials. An essay consists of a number of paragraphs. It is a type of free writing composition, so it follows that there are some characteristics of such a writing. They are discussed below:

i. Unity

An essay is a piece of writing in which a central or controlling idea is developed by means of supporting details. Every sentence in the paragraph must be closely connected with the topic of the essay. The central idea should be fully developed; details should be directly related to the central idea.

ii. Coherence

The thoughts in an essay should be connected and developed in a logical order to maintain coherence. Every paragraph should be so constructed that one sentence leads on naturally to the next and there should be logical progression of thought. The logical sense relation between lexical items in a text is simply referred to as coherence. The sentences or the lexical items are ordered in many ways. Simply interlinking the ideas in a paragraph provides coherence in the text.

iii. Style

According to Pandey (2065 p.14), "If the essay is descriptive or argumentative, its style is usually formal. Complete sentences are used and the vocabulary is rich, making use of words which sound learned." A writer chooses words to unite and express his ideas according to the types of essays.

iv. Length

Although, there is no rigid rule about the length of a paragraph, it is always safe to avoid long paragraphs. As a rule one idea should be kept within a paragraph.

v. Balance

The point that is included in the essay must be given the treatment they deserve by their importance. There should be balance between the parts of the essay.

b. Steps of writing an essay

An essay is a piece of writing in which one's thought and the central idea or controlling idea is developed by means of supporting details which can be examples, reasons, comparative statements or other related facts. It has three parts: beginning, middle and ending. The steps which are generally followed in writing essay are as follows:

i. Brainstorming

In this stage, a writer chooses a topic, identifies a reason or purpose for writing, finds an appropriate form in which to write, develops a topic, works out a plot and develops the organization of ideas. In this stage, forming the ideas and discovering all the relevant materials are accomplished.

ii. Making notes

Making notes is a long process. In this stage, a writer is concerned with generating ideas and organizing them; he is also concerned with correctness and precision of language. Getting the ideas can be completed by reading, observation and conversation.

iii. Structuring

In this stage of writing, a writer places information in an order. For example: introduction, paragraph-1, paragraph-2, paragraph-3, paragraph-4 and conclusion.

iv. Drafting

In this stage, a writer goes through a cycle of writing 'write-revise-rewrite'. In this stage, a writer makes three drafts. They are: 1st draft, 2nd draft and final draft.

v. Evaluating

In this stage, a teacher evaluates students' writing and gives some suggestions. Self-correction and pair-correction technique is also used in this stage. It is helpful to have feedback from other people to improve writing.

vi. Re-viewing

A writer goes through different processes while writing. He shapes his ideas through various processes of focusing, structuring, drafting and evaluating. In this stage, a writer's texts gradually evolve into form which is more or less final. In this stage, a writer simply decides that he has reached the point where we must abandon his text to its fate. This process requires a sense of judgment awareness that all is not quite right with text-the actual amending process requires adequate linguistic tools to work with.

vii. Editing

It is the final step in the process of completing the final draft which the writer will submit to the reader. It is carried out by the writer himself.

c. Types of essays

There are different types of essays that can be differentiated according to the subject matter they contain. In general, essays are written in prose. It is a formal way of writing. According to the style of writing, they are classified in the following ways:

i. Descriptive essays

Descriptive essays are the accurate description of some places and things such as countries, islands, mountains, seas, rivers, aspects and phenomena of nature, towns, buildings, schools and so on. So these types of essays can be said to provide an accurate account of 'Something' which conveys the factual pieces of information to the readers. The writers of the descriptive essays do not make room for their own imagination. The information to be included in these kinds of essays is what is heard and observed by the writers themselves.

ii. Narrative essays

Narrative essays are those that consist of narration of some past events. The events can be historical or legendary occurrences, stories and either true or imaginary, programmes, accidents and biographies of the well-known personalities. Narrative essays are generally written in the first person, that is, using the pronoun 'I'. However, third person (he, she, or it) can also be used. Narrative essays rely on concrete, sensory details to convey their point. These details should create a unified and forceful effect or a dominant impression.

iii. Expository essays

The purpose of an expository essay is to present completely and fairly, one's views or to report about an event or a situation. Expository writing, or exposition presents a subject in detail, apart from criticism, argument, or development, i.e. the writer elucidates a subject by analyzing it. Argumentative essays seem to be simply literary. Expository essays are the account of thoughts of the essayist on a proposition or saying.

iv. Reflective essays

Reflective essays are the reflection of the people which can be abstract in nature. The language style used in the reflective essay may be subjective and informal.

v. Definition essays

Definition essays define a word, a term or a concept in depth by providing a personal commentary on what the specific subject means. Definition essays also describe about the physical properties of the objects in general.

vi. Exemplification essays

The word exemplification means to provide examples about something. An exemplification essay is characterized by a generalization. Writers need to consider their subject, determine their purpose, consider their audience, decide on specific examples and arrange all the parts together when writing an exemplification essay.

vii. Research essay

Research essay is also known as thesis or dissertation. This is a type of detailed study which focuses on the subject matter. According to Wallace (1998, p. 98), "A long piece of work for higher degrees is called a dissertation or thesis." It is systematic in nature. It needs a long time for organizing and presenting.

1.2 Review of the Related Literature

There are several researches carried out in the field of writing skills. Some of them are:

Giri (1981), carried out a study on "A comparative study of English language proficiency of the students in grade ten in secondary school of Doti and

Kathmandu." The result of the study was that students out of the valley were poorer in English language proficiency than those inside the valley.

Poudyal (1999), carried out a study on "A comparative study of English language writing proficiency in higher secondary school of Gulmi and Kathmandu." He found that the students of Kathmandu had better English language writing proficiency than the students of Gulmi. They committed less errors in constructing sentences than the students of rural areas.

Bhattarai (2001), carried out a study on "The use of punctuation in free writing." He found that eleven items among the thirteen punctuation items were erroneous. The study has not covered special study of single punctuation marks but all.

Sah (2003), carried out a study on "Writing proficiency of grade nine students." He found that the students committed mistakes in the use of comma than in the use of other specific punctuation marks i.e. capital letter, full stop, apostrophe, question mark and so on.

K.C. (2009), carried out a study on "writing proficiency of primary English teachers." He found that writing proficiency of primary English teachers seem relatively better in essay type questions than short answer questions.

Shah (2009), carried out a study on "Proficiency in guided writing" and found that the writing proficiency of the girls in each selected school was better than the proficiency of the boys.

Dahal (2009), carried out a study on "The effectiveness of process writing." He found that the process writing is very much essential in developing coherence and cohesion in free composition.

Regmi (2009), carried out a study on "Achievement of coherence in writing" and found that the overall ability of students' command over maintaining coherence in controlled writing was found more satisfactory than the free writing and guided writing.

This study will be a new effort and different from other studies in the sense that it measured the use of punctuation in essay writing of grade nine students. It also compared between the use of punctuation marks in guided writing and essay writing.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were as follows;

- a. To find out the punctuation marks used by the students while writing an essay.
- b. To compare between the use of punctuation marks in guided writing and essay writing.
- c. To suggest some pedagogical implications.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study will be beneficial to subject experts, curriculum designers, policy-makers, textbook writers, language trainers, methodologists, and all the people who are directly and indirectly involved in English language teaching and learning. Similarly, it will also be useful for the future researchers who may want to conduct a study in similar areas.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

The following methodology was adopted to fulfill the objectives of the study;

2.1 Sources of Data

The researcher used both primary and secondary sources for collecting data. The primary source was used for collecting data and the secondary sources were used for facilitating research.

2.1.1 Primary Sources of Data

The eighty students of grade nine of four different government aided schools of Pokhara city were the primary source of data for this research.

2.1.2 Secondary Sources of Data

The researcher studied books, theses, articles and journals related to the present research to facilitate the study. Some of them were as follows: (Bryne 1979), Yadava (2004), and Khaniya (2005). She also visited different websites.

2.2 Population of the Study

The total population of this study was the students of grade nine of the following schools of Pokhara valley:

- a. Shree Amar Singh Model Higher Secondary School.
- b. Shree Chhorepatan Higher Secondary School.
- c. Shree Janapriya Higher Secondary School.
- d. Shree Tal Barahi Higher Secondary School.

2.3 Sampling Procedure

The researcher selected four different schools of Pokhara valley by using judgmental sampling procedure. Then she selected 10 girls and 10 boys from each school using simple random sampling procedure. She selected 10 girls and 10 boys using fishbowl draw method.

2.4 Tools for Data Collection

The main tools for the collection of data from the students were the test items. The researcher selected essays and unpunctuated paragraph (See Appendix-I).

2.5 Procedure of Data Collection

The researcher collected the data from the primary sources by using the essay and guided writing. The essays are prepared on the basis of old question papers of SLC examination and guided writing is prepared from the text book of grade nine. For this she adopted the following processes:

- i. At first, the researcher visited the selected schools with an official letter from the Department of English Education, Prithvi Narayan Campus, Pokhara and talked to the authority (Head Master) to get permission and explained to him/her the purpose of the visit.
- ii. After getting permission, the researcher talked to the English teacher and went to the classroom and gave necessary information to the students for each part of the test they are going to be tested.
- iii. Then she distributed the test papers. While administering the test, she checked the class and helped the students where necessary.
- iv. After finishing the allotted time, she collected the answer sheets.
- v. After collecting the answer sheets, she checked them.

2.6 Limitations of the Study

The study was conducted within the following limitations:

- i. The study was limited to four public Higher Secondary Schools of Pokhara Valley.
- ii. The population of the study was selected only from Grade nine.
- iii. Only 80 students, 20 from each school were taken for the study.
- iv. Only the punctuation use and essay writing skill were measured.
- v. The primary data were collected only from written test consisting of five questions for essay writing and one question for guided writing.

CHAPTER THREE

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

This chapter is the core part of this research report which deals with the analysis of the data. Tabulation and interpretation of data is done in this chapter. Data were collected with the help of the test items consisting of one paragraph for supplying punctuation marks and five essay topics for writing an essay. The analysis and interpretation of data is done on the basis of the following heading.

3.1 Analysis of Punctuation and Capitalization

The analysis of punctuation and capitalization refers to the use of punctuation marks in item n. 1 (guided writing) and item no. 2 (essay writing).

Table No. 1

Capital Letters and Punctuation Marks Used by Students in Item No.1

Punctuation marks	Total used	Correct response	Percentage	Incorrect response	Percentage
Capital Letter	1040	977	93.94	63	6.06
Quotation mark	400	321	80.25	79	19.75
Comma	560	352	62.86	208	37.14
Full stop	320	159	49.69	161	50.31
Question mark	240	150	62.50	90	37.50
Apostrophe	240	160	66.67	80	33.33

The above table displays the use of punctuation marks in item no.1. It shows that students feel difficulty to use full stop although it is a common punctuation mark. The students make less mistakes in the use of capital letters. The correct response of the students in the use of capital letters is 93.94%. Similarly, correct responses of quotation marks, comma, full stop, question mark and apostrophe are: 80.25%, 62.86%, 49.69%, 62.50% and 66.67% respectively. The students were asked to supply punctuation marks in an unpunctuated passage. The students had to supply only five types of punctuation marks. They are quotation marks, comma, full stop, question mark and apostrophe.

Table No. 2
Use of Punctuation Marks and Capitalization in Item no. 2

Punctuation marks	Total used	Correct response	Percentage	Incorrect response	Percentage
Full stop	38044	25067	65.89	12977	34.11
Comma	581	319	54.91	262	45.69
Question mark	57	48	84.21	9	15.79
Insertion mark	33	33	100	-	-
Colon	32	29	90.63	3	9.37
Semicolon	20	20	100	-	-
Hyphen	70	63	90	7	10
Apostrophe	155	146	94.19	9	5.81
Quotation marks	55	47	85.45	8	14.55
Brackets	67	61	91.04	6	8.96
Slash	71	71	100	-	-
Capital letters	38061	18579	48.82	19482	51.18

The above table shows the total use of punctuation marks and capital letters in essay writing. Students have used eleven punctuation marks. Among them

insertion mark, semicolon and slash have been used least but correctly. Most of the students used capital letters, comma and full stop incorrectly although they are common in essay writing.

The table also presents the total use of the punctuation marks in item no. 2. The students used capital letters frequently. Total use of capital letters is 38061, among these 18579 capital letters were used correctly and 19482 capital letters were used incorrectly. Among 11 punctuation marks, the students used full stop frequently. Total use of full stops 38044, among these 25067 full stops were used correctly and 12977 were used incorrectly. The use of comma comes in the third position with 581 times; among them 319 were used correctly and rest of them 262 incorrectly. The total use of question mark, insertion mark, colon, semi-colon, hyphen, apostrophe, quotation marks, brackets and slash were used the least with 57, 33, 32, 20, 70, 155, 55, 67 and 7 times respectively. Among them insertion mark, semi-colon and slash were used correctly. The above table also forwards the correct response percentage and incorrect response percentage of the students.

Among eleven punctuation marks, insertion mark, semicolon and slash are used correctly by all the students who have used those marks. So, those marks were used 100% correctly. Apostrophe is used 94.19 % correctly. Colon brackets, hyphen are used 90.63%, 91.04% and 90% correctly respectively. Question marks quotation marks and full stop were used 84.21%, 85.45% and 65.89% correctly respectively. Comma and capital letters were used 54.91% and 52.85% correctly. The table also proves that the students used unusual types of punctuation marks correctly.

Table No. 3

Comparison between Item No. 1 and Item No. 2

Punctuation marks	Correct response %		Incorrect response %	
	Item 1	Item 2	Item 1	Item 2
Capital letter	93.94	48.82	6.06	51.18
Quotation mark	80.25	85.45	19.75	14.55
Comma	62.86	54.91	37.14	45.69
Full stop	49.69	65.89	50.31	34.11
Question mark	62.50	84.21	37.50	15.79
Apostrophe	66.67	94.19	33.33	5.81
Total	69.31	72.24	30.69	27.86

The above table shows the comparison between punctuation marks in item no. 1 (guided writing) and item no. 2 (essay writing). The correct responses of capital letters were 93.94% and 48.82, in item no. 1 and item no. 2 respectively. The correct responses of quotation marks used in item no. 1 and item no. 2 were 80.25 and 85.45 respectively. Similarly the correct responses of comma were 62.86% and 54.91% in item no. 1 and in item no. 2 respectively. It shows the students correct responses in comma are 62.86% and 54.91% respectively. It also shows the correct responses of question marks in both items in item no. 1 and item no. 2, 62.50% and 84.21% respectively. The correct responses of apostrophe are 66.67% and 94.19% in item no. 1 and item no. 2 respectively.

The above table also shows that the students feel difficulty in the use of comma and full stops in both items. The incorrect use of comma in both items (in item no. 1 and item no 2) was 37.14% and 45.69% and 50.31% and 34.11% respectively. The students make fewer mistakes in the use of apostrophe in item no. 15.81% and in capital letters in item no. 16.06%.

3.1.1 Analysis of Capital Letters

Capital letters used by students have been analyzed in the following way:

Table No. 4
Capital Letters Used by Students

Items	Total used	Correct response	Percent age	Incorrect response	Percent age	Difference in percentage
Item No. 1	1040	977	93.94	63	6.06	87.88
Item No. 2	38061	18579	48.82	19482	51.18	-2.36

The above table shows that the students' correct response was 93.94% in item no. 1 (guided writing). It shows that students were better in the use of capital letter in guided writing. But the students' incorrect responses were more in item no.2 (Essays writing). The difference in percentage was (-2.36%).

For example, Shova Poudel wrote about the value of time as follows: "time is our life. We can not live without time. it is important in our Life."

In this example student did not use capital letter properly.

3.1.2 Analysis of Full stops

Full stops used by students have been analyzed in the following way:

Table No.5
Full stops Used by Students

Items	Total used	Correct response	Percentage	Incorrect response	Percentage	Difference in percentage
Item No. 1	320	159	49.69	161	50.31	-0.62
Item No. 2	38044	25067	65.89	12977	34.11	31.78

The above table shows that students' incorrect responses were greater in item no.1 than in the item no.2 (guided and essay writing). The difference in percentage was - 0.62% in item no. 1 and 31.78% in item no.2 respectively.

For example, Kamala Sapkota wrote in guided paragraph as: " I plan to go to India with my aunt we want to see the Taj Mahal which is in Agra."

Similarly, Jivan Poudel wrote about the student life as follows: "We learn many important things in student life. and student life is the time for learn good things when we learn good things our manner will be good in life in the must learning time."

In the above example: Kamala Sapkota did not put full stop but Jivan Poudel put full stop without completing sentence.

3.1.3 Analysis of Comma.

Commas used by the students have been analyzed in the following way:

Table No.6
Comma Used by Students

Items	Total used	Correct response	Percent age	Incorrect response	Percent age	Difference in percentage
Item No. 1	560	352	62.86	208	37.14	25.72
Item No. 2	581	319	54.91	262	45.69	9.22

The above table displays students did better in the use of comma in item no.1 (guided writing) than the item no.2 essay writing). The difference in percentage in item no.1 as 25.72% and in item no.2 9.22% respectively.

For example, Sushila Sapkota supplied punctuation marks in guided paragraph as: " Whats a wonderful place isnt it?"

Similarly, Devi Dahal wrote about my school as follows: "In my school there is facilities of drinking water toilet playing ground library."

In both examples the students did not put comma.

3.1.4 Analysis of Question Marks

Question marks used by students in both items item no. 1 and item no. 2

(guided writing and essay writing) have been analyzed in the following ways:

Table No. 7
Question Marks Used by Students

Items	Total used	Correct response	Percent age	Incorrect response	Percent age	Difference in percentage
Item No. 1	240	150	62.50	90	37.50	25
Item No. 2	57	48	84.21	9	15.79	68.42

The above table displays that students used question marks 57 times while writing an essay and incorrect responses were only 9 times. It also displays that the students gave 150 correct responses while punctuating the paragraph. The difference in percent is 25% in item no.1 and 68.42% in item no. 2 respectively.

For example, Kanchan Giri wrote in paragraph as follows: ("What's a wonderful place, isn't it. I think "It's a monument, isn't it.")

In item no.2 Smriti Khadka wrote about value of the time as: 'What is time? can any body define it'.

Kanchan Giri put full stop instead of question mark in item no.1. Similarly, in item no. 2 Smriti Khadka has used question mark correctly in first sentence and incorrectly in sentence 2.

3.1.4 Analysis of Apostrophe

Apostrophe used by students in both item in item no. 1 and item no.2 (guided and essay writing) have been analyzed in the following ways:

Table No.8
Apostrophe Used by Students

Items	Total used	Correct response	Percent age	Incorrect response	Percent age	Difference in percentage
Item No. 1	240	160	66.67	80	33.33	33.34
Item No. 2	155.	146	94.19	9	5.81	88.38

The above table shows that students used apostrophe correctly with 66.67% in item no.1 and 94.19% in item no.2 respectively. The difference of percentage shows that the students feel comfortable to use apostrophe freely in their writing.

For example, Sushila Sapkota supplied punctuation marks in guided paragraph as: "Whats a wonderful place isnt it?"

Similarly, Sanita Gurung wrote about my school as: My school name is Shree Janapriya Higher Secondary School'."

In the both examples, students did not put apostrophe.

3.1.5 Analysis of Quotation Marks

Quotation marks used by students in both items in item no.1 (guided writing) and in item no.2. (Essay writing) have been analyzed in the following ways.

Table No. 9
Quotation Marks Used by Students

Items	Total used	Correct response	Percent age	Incorrect response	Percent age	Difference in percentage
Item No. 1	400	321	80.25	79	19.75	60.5
Item No. 2	55	47	85.45	8	14.55	70.9

The above table displays difference in percentage in item no.1 (guided writing) 60.5% and item no.2 (essay writing) 70.9%. The correct responses in item no.2 better than item no.1.

For example, Sarita Ale punctuated the paragraph as follows. ("I think it is a monument it isn't it?)

Similarly, Rasmi Gurung wrote about Dashain as follows: "The first day is Ghatsthapana. On this day, people scatter the seeds of maize and barley for 'Jamara.'

Sarita Ale did mistake to close inverted comma and Rasmi Gurung used inverted comma correctly.

3.1.6 Analysis of Colon, Hyphen and Brackets

Use of colon, hyphen and brackets by students in item no.2. (Essay writing) were analyzed in the following ways:

Table No. 10
Colon, Hyphen and Brackets Used by Students

Punctuation marks	Total used	Correct response	Percent age	Incorrect response	Percent age	Difference in percentage
Colon	32	29	90.63	3	9.37	81.26
Hyphen	70	63	90	7	10	80
Brackets	67	61	91.04	6	8.96	82.08

The above table displays that the students made least mistakes in the use of colon, hyphen and brackets. The difference in percentages were: 81.26%, 80% and 82.08% in colon, hyphen and brackets respectively.

For example, Anu K.C. wrote about Dashain as follow: "Different people of different religion celebrate different festivals in different country. Likewise the people who follow Hindu religion celebrate many festivals in a year. Some of them are: Janaipurnima, Teej, Dashain and Tihar."

She further wrote " The first day of Dashain is known as 'Ghatasthapana'. In this day people sow the seed of barley and maize. People bring mud from bank of river especially in village).

Dibya Baniya wrote about My aim in life as follow." when the hospital is well -established I shall have some beds for indoor patients."

Anu K.C. used colon correctly but brackets incorrectly. Dibya Baniya used hyphen correctly.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of the study was to find out the items of punctuation marks used by the nine grade students in guided and essay writing of Pokhara valley. The students were selected from the four government aided schools of Pokhara valley. The data were taken from 80 students, equal number of boys and girls from each selected school. Many techniques were applied to analyze the ability of the students in using punctuation marks in guided and essay writing. This chapter consists of two conclusion parts of research work, findings and recommendations.

4.1 Findings

On the basis of the study, and interpretation, the following findings have been established:

- a. Eleven items of punctuation marks were used in essay writing. Among them insertion mark, semi colon and slash have been used least but correctly.
- b. Out of eleven items of punctuation marks, eight items are used incorrectly in essay writing.
- c. The students have used capital letters and full stops frequently in essay writing.
- d. The total correct responses in the use of punctuation marks and capital letters which are found in both items (in item no. 1 and in item no.2) are: 69.31% and 72.4% respectively.
- e. The students have been found better in the use of punctuation marks in essay writing than the guided writing.
- f. The total correct response in the use of comma and full stops are: 62.86% and 49.69% in item no.1 and 54.91% and 69.89% in item no. 2 respectively.

- g. The total correct response in the use of comma and full stops have been found less than the other punctuation marks although they are common items of punctuation marks.
- h. The total correct responses in the use of quotation marks have been found better than the other punctuation marks with 80.25% and 85.45% in item no.1 and item no. 2 respectively.

4.2 Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of the present research work, the following recommendations have been made.

- a. The writing activities should be practised with regular correction.
- b. More exercises of writing practice should be included in the text book.
- c. The schools should have extra books on writing practice of guided exercises and essay in their libraries.
- d. The teachers should correct immediately and advise the students frequently to use punctuation marks correctly.
- e. The number of students should be limited in a section for proper correction and good guidelines.
- f. The teachers who are teaching in schools, should be trained from nursery level to secondary level. So, they should be given regular training on how to teach writing skill effectively.
- g. The teacher should use appropriate teaching materials as far as possible.
- h. School supervisors should also visit school frequently and help them with teaching problems.
- i. Use of punctuation marks should not be neglected in teaching writing. It is one of the important components of teaching writing. Because even a single mistake can bring a change in meaning.

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