

# Punctuation Errors made by the Learners of Intermediate Level at Punjab Group of Colleges; An Error Analysis

Abdul Bari Khan, Muhammad Yasir Khan

Department of English Language and Literature, Chenab College of Advance Studies, Mianwali

**Abstract:** When a speaker speaks, he pauses at many points, raises his voice to emphasize a particular point, adopt a questioning tone to show that he is asking a question, which makes his speech clear. But when a writer writes he cannot do all such things, he just uses some signs and symbols to show whether he is pausing, whether the sentence has ended, whether there is a short pause, whether he is introducing someone and other such things. In The English language, these symbols and signs are known as Punctuation Marks. Just like other skills of English language, it is very necessary for a writer to learn about these Punctuation Marks for creative writing. This research is very important for those students who are poor at punctuation marks. Beside this, it is very beneficial for teachers to make their students master of Punctuation Marks because it is very tough for a writer to deliver his ideas to his readers without using correct signs and symbols in the sentences.

**Key words:** Punctuation Marks, Writing, Reading, English language, Error.

## 1. Introduction

This research is about Error Analysis, done by students at the intermediate level while using punctuation marks. Listening skill is incomplete without good speaking skill, because when a speaker is not using pauses at correct points then it is very hard for a listener to grasp the thoughts of the speaker. Same is the case with writing skill, reading skill is incomplete without good writing skill because when a writer is not using correct signs and symbols at correct points then it is very difficult for a reader to catch the point of view of the writer.

There are four skills of English Language and out of these four skills, writing is an important skill. It was observed by the researcher that students of intermediate level commit many errors while using punctuation marks. In English language Punctuation marks is very soul of writing skill, even in many other great languages like Urdu, Italian, and French, punctuation marks has great importance. Each and every field of life is linked with writing skill, either we are writing a letter, a short story, an essay, a drama, a novel, an application, a paragraph or any other product, Punctuation Marks are very important and without these signs and symbols we can't understand the message of writer.

At intermediate level essay writing, application writing, letter writing, and paragraph writing are major questions in the paper and cover almost 60% of marks. But due poor practice of Punctuation Marks students can't get a good grade. This research is very useful for students to get good marks in the exam and to make them a good writer. When we discuss the role of teachers at the intermediate level then we come to know that they have many doubts while using these signs and symbols. So this research is also very important for teachers as well.

### 1.1 Objectives:

- To locate the common errors committed by the students while using Comma, Colon and Semi-Colon.
- To help the teachers to make students able about the proper use of Punctuation Marks.
- To improve writing skills of the students

### 1.2 Study Questions:

- What are common errors in using Comma, Colon, and Semi-Colon?
- How do Punctuation marks help to enrich Writing skill?
- How to minimize the error in using Comma, Colon, and Semi-Colon?

## 2. Review Literature

“The benefits of learning good grammar are many and varied, from ability to express spoken thoughts effectively to improved understanding of the written word and better writing skills.” (Mary Gretchen Iorio, Charles E. Beyer, 2001)

“The very word, grammar, probably calls up bad memories of being the last person in your 6th grade class to understand what subordinate clause means. But the truth is the basic terminology and concepts of grammar aren't all that hard to master and understanding them is the surest route to eliminating common grammatical errors from your speech.” (BATKO, 2004)

“All the writing requires complete mastery of punctuation because it is punctuation which removes ambiguities and makes prose clear and easily comprehensible.” (Rehman, 2005)

“Punctuation is a device used by a writer to help his readers understand the meaning of his words.” (Rehman, 2005)

“Punctuation clarifies the meaning of the written sentence.” (Mary Gretchen Iorio, Charles E. Beyer, 2001)

“Speakers divide their messages into chunks called information units..... Readers of a written text, however, interpret what they read by mentally assigning information units to the text, helped by punctuation and the grammar.” (Downing, 2015)

### 3. Research Methodology

This research is related to Punctuation Marks. Limited by the way of Error Analysis; the researchers have used the steps of error analysis as were proposed by Rod Ellis in 1994. The population of this research was students of Punjab College Mianwali. A random sample size of sixty students of 1st year and 2nd year was selected; 10 students from 1st year Pre Engineering, 10 students from 1st year Pre Medical, 10 students from 1st year ICS, 10 students from 2nd year Pre Engineering, 10 students from 2nd year Pre Medical and 10 students from 2nd year ICS group. The researchers identified the errors from the data acquired from different sources. Then, as has been mentioned above, the errors were described according to their type i.e. whether the error lies in the wrong use of comma, colon or semi-colon. The researchers have explained the errors and tried to evaluate and rectify them by citing usage from various authentic references of English punctuation marks. Only those errors were brought under discussion in the findings here which represent perfectly the type of usage. Since this study dealt with the students of just intermediate level (Grade 11 and 12), the errors discussed in this study, is intermediate level. The students under observation were neither capable nor were they supposed to be adept at the use of English as masterfully as to avoid errors at advanced level

### 4. Findings

The Research is carried out and the researchers have observed few mistakes in using Comma, Colon, and Semi-Colon which are explained under one by one with examples.

#### 4.1 Error Analysis in the use of Comma:

The comma is the most used punctuation mark in writing. It can be used in thirteen different ways which are;

1. To separate the parts of a compound sentence.
2. To set off an introductory clause or phrases or words.
3. Between 3 or more words in a series when no conjunctions have been used.
4. To set off words such as yes, no, well, and however at the beginning of a sentence.
5. To set off parenthetical words and phrases which interrupt the sentence with information that is nonessential.
6. To set off a noun of direct address.

7. To set off appositives.

8. To set off the items in an address.

9. To set off the items on a date.

10. To separate modifiers.

11. To set off a nonrestrictive clause.

12. To set off a “tag” question.

13. with direct quotations.

Students have made five major mistakes in the use of Comma which are explained under.

#### Error Direct Quotation:

It is essential to use Comma while direct quotation or direct speech but many students have made an error and used Colon. This means there is a confusion among the students at this point either they use a Comma or a Colon.

**Correct:** The student said, “I must study these comma rules.”

**Wrong:** The student said: “I must study these comma rules.”

#### Error To Set off the Address:

Correct address leads a person to a correct location but while writing address it is important not to use a comma between state name and zip code. Many students have put a comma between state name and zip code.

**Correct:** A new store opened at 300 North Road, San Jose, California 73002.

**Wrong:** A new store opened at 300 North Road, San Jose, California, 73002.

#### Error to set off Parenthetical Words and Phrases:

Many students have used parentheses to give extra information about a person, place or thing which is wrong. To give extra information about a person, place or thing we have to use a comma. Parentheses are used when we are enclosing a complete sentence within another complete sentence.

**Correct:** Akram, my brother, is very intelligent.

**Wrong:** Akram (my brother) is very intelligent.

#### Error to set off a "Tag" Questions:

In statements which contain tag questions, it is necessary to use a comma but many students have made an error and put a full-stop there.

**Correct:** He's coming, isn't he?

**Wrong:** He's coming. Isn't he?

#### Error to separate modifiers:

To separate the modifiers, usually adjectives, we use a comma, but many students considered such statements as simple statements and didn't use any punctuation mark.

**Correct:** The intelligent, young man was wearing a bright orange vest.

**Wrong:** The intelligent young man was wearing a bright orange vest.

#### 4.2 Error analysis in the use of Colon:

Colon can be used in seven different ways which are;

1. Before a list that is introduced by a complete sentence.

2. To introduce the effect or logical consequence of an action.
3. Before a quotation.
4. After the salutation in a business letter or memo.
5. To separate chapter and verse in scripture.
6. To separates hours from minutes.
7. To show ratios.

Students have made three major mistakes in the use of Colon which are explained under.

#### *Error Before a Quotation:*

It is necessary to use a colon before quoting the words of any author, but students have made a mistake while using a colon at this point rather they have used a comma at that point.

**Correct:** The soldier shouted the following before leaving to war: "We shall return victorious!"

**Wrong:** The soldier shouted the following before leaving to war, "We shall return victorious!"

#### *Error to introduce the effect:*

Colon is used to divide a sentence where the second half is an explanation of the first half. The students have made a mistake by putting full-stop and considered them two separate sentences.

**Correct:** There was only one way he could win: he had to cheat.

**Wrong:** There was only one way he could win. he had to cheat.

#### *Error To separate chapter and verse in scripture:*

To separate chapter and verse in any scripture colon is used but students have put full-stop.

**Correct:** The Sunday school class studied James 4:10

**Wrong:** The Sunday school class studied James 4.10

#### *4.3 Error Analysis in the use of Semi-Colon:*

Semi-Colon can be used in four different ways;

1. When the item in the list is long clauses.
2. When the writer wants the reader to pause slightly longer than a comma.
3. When a sentence has two balanced but separate statements.
4. Before conjunctive adverbs.

Students have made two major mistakes while using Semi-Colon which is discussed under.

#### *Error Before Conjunctive Adverbs:*

In addition, thus, nevertheless, therefore, still, however, indeed, furthermore and then are few of conjunctive adverbs. Students did not know that in a sentence Semi-Colon is used before conjunctive adverbs, they have used Comma instead Semi-Colon.

**Correct:** I am wearing a sweater and a jacket; still I am cold.

**Wrong:** I am wearing a sweater and a jacket, still I am cold.

#### *Error When a Sentence has two Balanced but Separate Statements:*

When in a sentence there are two balanced but separate statements then to connect the statements we use Semi-Colon but students have used comma instead of Semi-Colon.

**Correct:** I want to wear the red shirt; my favorite color is red.

**Wrong:** I want to wear the red shirt, my favorite color is red.

#### **5. Conclusion**

These are few of the error committed by the students of the intermediate level while using Comma, Colon, and Semi-Colon. It can be clearly judged that these errors are just due to ignorance. In our schools and colleges, Punctuation Marks is not a topic being taught with great interest. Many students learned these signs and symbols at their own due to which they make mistakes while using these signs and symbols. It is suggested by the researchers that there will be at least five to six class in each session to guide the students about the importance of Punctuation Marks. Just like other skills of English language learning Punctuation Marks is also a skill. So, if a writer wants success in his field and a student wants a good grade in the exam, he has to learn the rules of Punctuation Marks.

#### **6. Delimitations of the Study:**

There are fifteen Punctuation Marks but due to the shortage of time and expenses, the researchers have bounded the study to find the common error done by the students while using Comma, Colon, and Semi-Colon.

#### **7. Conclusion:**

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