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A crash course to improve punctuation skills of undergraduate students

Cüneyt Demir [1]

Abstract: Punctuation has always been a consideration in writing. In spite of its importance, it does not hold up a secure place in courses. Courses neither on grammar nor vocabulary allocate a place for the teaching of punctuation, and learning of it is expected to occur implicitly. This study aims to increase students and instructors' awareness towards the importance of punctuation and teaching of it explicitly. In line with that, twenty students studying at the department of written translation, where punctuation is of great importance, were chosen, and the most problematic three punctuation marks were detected. Having detected them, the researcher applied a 3-weeks crash course programme in order to eliminate punctuation errors in students' writing. The results showed that there is a statistically significant difference between pre-tests and post-tests in terms of lowering erroneous use of punctuation. Accordingly, this study suggests that explicit teaching of punctuation increases students' awareness regarding the correct use of punctuation and the importance of it in writing. Therefore, instructors at translation departments should allocate a place in their course schedules. At the very end, this study submitted its own 5-days long crash course programme on the most problematic punctuation marks that had been found from the data through analyses.

Keywords: Punctuation, marks, improve, learning, translation

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Lisans Öğrencilerinin İngiliz Dilinde Yazarken Noktalama İşaretleri Kullanımlarını Geliştirmesi Üzerine Bir Çalışma

Özet: Noktalama İşaretleri, yazma sürecinde daima önemli olmuştur. Fakat önemine rağmen, İngiliz dili eğitimi tabanlı bölümlerin derslerinde üzerine durulmamaktadır. İster dilbilgisi isterse kelime öğretimi üzerine olsun, noktalama işaretleri hiçbir derste kendisine yer bulamamıştır ve bilinçaltı bir şekilde öğrenilmesi beklenilmiştir. Bu çalışma öğrencilerin ve üniversite hocalarının noktalama işaretlerine olan farkındalığını arttırmayı ve doğrudan öğretiminin önemini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu doğrultuda, noktalama işaretlerinin kendileri için çok önemli olan Mütercim-Tercümanlık bölümünden 20 öğrenci seçildi ve kendilerinin en çok problem yaşadığı üç noktalama işareti belirlendi. En sorunlu üç noktalama işaretlerinin belirlenmesinden sonra öğrenciler üç haftalık bir eğitim sürecine tabi tutuldular. Uygulanan öntest ve sontest sonuçlarına göre öğrencilere verilen açık eğitim öğrencilerin yazımlarında yanlış kullandıkları noktalama işaret sayısını azaltmıştır. Bu doğrultuda, mevcut çalışma noktalama işaretlerinin öğrencilerin dolaylı olarak öğrenemeyecekleri ve açık bir şekilde ders içerinde öğretilmesi gerektiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma aynı zamanda beş günlük bir eğitim programını ekler bölümünde sunmuştur. Bu ekin, üniversitelerin dil eğitimi bölümü hocaları tarafından kullanılması tavsiye edilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Noktalama, işaretleri, geliştirme, öğrenme, çeviri

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INTRODUCTION

Once, elaborate writing was thought to be a superior style throughout a time in which no place was available for vernacular or plain writing in academe. The then purpose was to be seen intellectual rather than be understood or to reach audience. Writing was not for ordinary but for an elite group of people. However, it did not last long to notice that it was on writer's advantage to have an impact on the community through his/her works, which necessitates a writing that is legible for everyone. Soon enough, the literature was crammed with studies indicating the significance of plain writing, through which writers would use more frequent words and less complicated grammar in their works no matter what they wrote for. Since then, plain writing has taken its place in scholarly writing, and had a considerable number of supporters.

While plain writing is welcomed by many writers and readers, oversimplified writing may prevent readers from getting the main point that the writer aims to tell. One of the ways that is thought to simplify a text is to lessen the number of punctuation marks (PM); however, a too simplified text with insufficient or no punctuation attention at all may result in unwelcome ramifications. The thought that filling a text with a lot of punctuation marks would make it more intricate is not accountable because punctuation marks do not complicate a text, but render it more readable.

In spite of its importance, punctuation is a surprisingly underexplored area of second language writing and learning, and it is not a topic that generates much passion in and outside the classroom (Hirvela, Nussbaum, & Pierson, 2012)**.**. There is also the lack of scholarly attention it receives; therefore, only a handful of books and journal articles have examined punctuation as a stand-alone subject. As McCourt (2003) summarized that lack of attention, and called punctuation as a "poor stepchild of grammar" (p. xi), which proves that punctuation has not got the attention that it deserves. But why is the reason?

Placing punctuation in language learning has been an ambiguous issue; some put it in grammar while some tried to teach it as if it was a lexical issue. Therefore, the invisibility of punctuation may be partly because of confusion over where it fits in the realm of language teaching. What about inserting it into a place where grammar and vocabulary meet? It sounds that punctuation is neither a grammatical nor a lexical issue, but an issue that should be regarded distinctively because both grammar and vocabulary in language learning develop through the time, which refers to a long process; however, acquiring punctuation rules does not happen as a result of a process but instantly, and also it does not take much time to acquire. In brief, learning how to use punctuation accurately does not necessitate a long learning process as grammar and vocabulary do. It is like learning how to ride a bicycle; once you learn you do not forget easily and you do not need to follow any updates robustly. Even after placing it into somewhere suitable, another question arises: who should teach it? It is well-established fact that punctuation has a significant relation with writing, but some researchers

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(e.g. Araman & Wiggin, 1997) stated its effect on reading comprehension, and accordingly suggested a requisite to address it in reading instruction. In concise, where should punctuation be taught: a general English course, in a grammar course, in a reading course, or in a writing course? Which instructional domain is its natural or best home (Hirvela, Nussbaum, & Pierson, 2012)?

It seems that punctuation has been associated neither with grammar not lexical issues, and overlooked or forgotten while emphasizing so-called other lingual aspects that are deemed crucial. The situation is not different at universities. When the courses contents given at the universities are examined, it will be concluded that no place is spared for punctuation skill, even in writing classes. Although students need to learn how to punctuate correctly in English, and they frequently have difficulty in doing so, and instructors need to allocate at least a little time teaching it, punctuation somehow manages to fly below the radar screen. This lack of attention and interest is elusory, especially given the importance of punctuation in the correct and effective expression of meaning and information (Hirvela, Nussbaum, & Pierson, 2012).

Concisely, sloppy punctuation may lead to ineffectual writing; therefore, aware of the importance of punctuation, this study aims to develop correctness in student writing through raising students and instructors' awareness of punctuation. Undergraduate students of some departments, as in translation department, must be much more informed about its importance because correctness in writing is not optional but a core issue for them. Furthermore, the present study provides welcome addition regarding the importance of punctuation for instructors at departments in which writing accuracy is of utmost significance.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In a digital world, written language needs to be used to represent spoken language (Houghton, Upadhyay, & Klin, 2018). However, spoken language, different from its written representation, has different parameters of expression. Among them are hand gestures, facial expressions, intonation, pauses, and the like. The deficiency of these expressions in writing is by degrees made up for by PM (Bar-Aba, 2003). Therefore, any lack of punctuation marks may prevent the true message from being delivered, which is why they are of utmost importance to convey the message to the receiver correctly.

Punctuation is not a new addition to writing, but a long lasting feature and an essential part of Indo-European languages (Ausloos, 2010). While even the simplest writing forms with no actual information requites correct use of punctuation, other types of writing in which the amount of information is enormous and the accuracy of conveying the message content much the same necessitates the use of punctuation painstakingly, or else the desired effect cannot be achieved. Punctuation marks (PM) were not occurred at once on its own by a certain group but through time and by different researchers from all over the world (McDermott, 2016). An example for this kind of

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writing is academic writing. The term of academic writing ranges from articles to reports, but one thing that is largely overlooked as academic writing is the exam papers.

Exam papers should not be taught as informal way of writing because they are written according to the strict rules. Instructors pay attention on the language used in exam papers, where is a perfect place to see whether students are able to use punctuation marks accurately or not. Although they are not aware of its importance, punctuation is an issue that undergraduate students should not overlook. In spite of its welcome addition, both instructors and students do not pay close attention on punctuation. Instructors largely underestimate possible positive contribution of it on students' writing while students are not informed about how adversely their writing can be affected without proper use of punctuation.

Accordingly punctuation marks are not arbitrarily scattered throughout the paper, but placed properly not to prompt a misunderstanding. Accordingly, punctuation related problems within a text may be caused of lack or excessive use punctuation marks, or simply insufficient knowledge of how to use them. Therefore, contrary to common views it is not only because of frugal use of PM that bring about understanding problems of a text, but also excessive usage of them that reduces the readability of the text (Chen, Huang, & Ye, 2018). Therefore, any instructors planning to add punctuation into his/her lesson schedule should be ensured that s/he has taught how to strike a balance concerning punctuation marks in students' writing.

Although it causes semantic problems, punctuation errors are considered to be syntactic errors, under which it is a common problem for novice writers like undergraduate students. Of all syntactic errors, punctuation is the second most common for them following spelling errors (Ngangbam, 2016). Responding to student writing is a significant instruction method because students benefit a lot from feedback. Of feedbacks, peer correction is an ascending issue in error correction, but it is not a common behaviour among students when it comes to punctuation correction (c.f. Rula, 2005). I have examined course schedules of twenty universities in Turkey, and found that none of these universities included any instruction on punctuation in any course schedules, which shows that students do not receive any formal instruction on PM. Similarly, students do not seem to have any feedbacks on punctuation from instructors in the wake of a writing assessment, which may be because instructors largely focus on mechanical errors like spelling, semantic errors like wrong use of a word, or just because they do not like (Dowden, Pittaway, Yost, & McCarthy, 2013). However, feedback is crucial in decreasing the number of punctuation errors whether you provide it direct or indirect (Erel & Bulut, 2007) and fortunately, incorrect punctuation does not necessitate an enormous effort to acquire (Trask, 2019).

In brief, punctuation is a requisite in writing; otherwise it might be ambiguous for readers to grasp some expressions (Kulig, Kwapien, Stanisz, & Drozdz, 2017). Accordingly, punctuation in

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undergraduates' writing is troublesome, yet instructors do not seem concerned about this because they do not bother in providing feedback on writing assessments or they do not spare a secure place for the instruction of punctuation in course schedules. Furthermore, peer correction does not sound to be working on this issue due to insufficient awareness regarding the importance of punctuation. Amidst so many negative feedbacks, undergraduate students either use punctuation incorrectly, or overlook them because they regard it unnecessary; however, this absence of punctuation may disrupt reading fluency or prevent the meaning from reaching to the readers in no uncertain times. Orthographic control of a piece of writing includes the accuracy in punctuation (Thewissen, 2013). This is particularly important for undergraduate students who study in departments where writing is of capital importance because any mistakes with punctuation can lead to misinterpretation of the reader. As a predictors of writing success (Daffern, Mackenzie, & Hemmings, 2017), students indispensably need learning punctuation for a more native-appearance in English writing. Aware of this importance, the present study was conducted in the department of written translation where punctuation is vital for students.

Research aim and questions

The present study has four-fold purposes: to increase lecturers' awareness regarding the importance of punctuation, to put forth a reason for lecturers to spare a place for explicit punctuation teaching in their course schedules; to detect three punctuation marks commonly misused by undergraduate students; and finally to provide some suggestions concerning how to use the three misused punctuation marks accurately in prospective writing manuscripts. More specifically research questions are these:

1. Which punctuation marks are the most problematic for undergraduate students of translation department?

2. Is there a statistically significant difference before and after explicit instruction?

METHODOLOGY

Context, research sites, and participants

The present study took place in 2018-19 academic years. The research site was the University of Siirt, the department of translation. Twenty undergraduate students studying at the department were participants of this study. They were not selected based on grade levels, but on three criteria: willingness, score, and gender. To speak more detailed, although the department has more than a hundred and fifty students, only those who are willing to take part in the study were kindly accepted. The other elimination was done based on the criterion of the score that they had in the University Entrance Exam because the department of translation accepted students from a range of scores between 254 and 414. Students who have a score between 320 and 350 were invited to take part in the

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present study. Those who have very high or low scores were excluded because students need to had similar background knowledge so that the progress with them could be followed more readily. The last criterion was gender. In the wake of a literature review, it was revealed that whether gender has an importance in using punctuation marks is unknown because there seems no available study on that issue. Yet, participants were congregated from a group of ten female and ten male students because further studies could possibly detect the effect of gender on punctuation use. Finally, it was ensured that none of the students in the study had any instruction on punctuation beforehand.

Data and analyses

The data were collected from three tasks that were asked students to complete. The first task was translation of a text from Turkish to English. The students were kindly asked to translate a full page of excerpt (appendix 1), but they were not noticed about being careful of punctuation marks. Then students were given three writing prompts to write a 500 words passage about the one they may choose freely (1.school and career, 2. social life, 3. environment and earth). The final task requested students to fill the blanks with appropriate punctuation mark (appendix 2). The data obtained from the three tasks constituted the data for the pre-test. After a period of three week of education on punctuation, the same data collection methods were repeated for post-test. This time students were informed about being careful with punctuation rules. Concisely, each student completed each task two times. The collected data was analysed through Independent t-test (an SPSS test programme).

Reliability of analyses

The researcher analysed all the data manually, and categorized the errors of the students. To validate the researcher's reliability of analyse, a fifth of the whole data were scanned by a second analyser with a PhD in ELT. To maintain scoring consistency and to minimize analysers' bias, each analyser independently categorized the data in terms of categorization of punctuation missing, confusion, and redundancy (c.f. the title of *identification of error*). Inter-rater test results proved a harmony between analysers; 0.80 inter-rater reliability.

Identification of error

Error correction practically involves a threefold process of identification, evaluation and correction, and the majority of studies have focused on the latter two areas (Hyland & Anan, 2006) while this study focused on identification and evaluation in terms of three categories:

- Punctuation missing: This refers to not using a PM while it had to be. For example, in the sentence of *to become fluent speaker you need to practise* the writer misses the comma after introductory phrase of *to become fluent speaker*.

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- Confusion: Under this category, the important thing is whether the student used the punctuation mark correctly or not: *Before my astonished eyes, the house sank into the tarn.* This sentence needs to be ended with an exclamation mark but not a full stop.
- Redundancy: Unnecessarily used punctuation marks were categorized under that title. For example, the use of comma is redundant in the sentence of *You, and I should work together*.

Procedure

This is a 6 weeks long study. In the first week the participants were delivered the tasks to complete. All three tasks were not delivered in the same day not to get the students bored, but on separate days (table 1).

Table 1. Schedule of Week 1

Task	Day	Duration
Translation from Turkish to English	1st week, Day 1 (Monday)	60 Minutes
Free writing on one of the topics	1st week, Day 2 (Tuesday)	60 Minutes
Activity of 'fill with correct punctuation mark'	1st week, Day 3 (Wednesday)	20 Minutes

In order to identify the error stated in 3.3., the data obtained in the wake of week 1 tasks were analysed and categorized. Three most misused punctuation marks under each category (punctuation missing, confusion, and redundancy) were detected. In the week 2 an instruction programme was designed. The programme was implemented through the weeks 3, 4, and 5 (table 2)

Table 2. Instruction programme

Error type	Problematic punctuation mark	Day	Duration
Punctuation missing	Punctuation mark 1	3rd week, Day 1 (Monday)	40 minutes
	Punctuation mark 2	3rd week, Day 2 (Tuesday)	40 minutes
	Punctuation mark 3	3rd week, Day 3 (Wednesday)	40 minutes
Confusion	Punctuation mark 1	4th week, Day 1 (Monday)	40 minutes
	Punctuation mark 2	4th week, Day 2 (Tuesday)	40 minutes
	Punctuation mark 3	4th week, Day 3 (Wednesday)	40 minutes
Redundancy	Punctuation mark 1	5th week, Day 1 (Monday)	40 minutes
	Punctuation mark 2	5th week, Day 2 (Tuesday)	40 minutes
	Punctuation mark 3	5th week, Day 3 (Wednesday)	40 minutes

In the last week of the study (6th week), similar tasks that were completed in the first week of the study were repeated. Then, the collected data were analysed and categorized. In other words, the data of the first and the last week were analysed through independent t-test to see whether there was a statistically significant difference between pre- and post-tests.

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RESULTS

The results were submitted under three main titles: Punctuation missing, Confusion and Redundancy. Each title has sub-headings constituted as to the results of analyses.

Punctuation missing

Comma was found to be the most missed PM while semi-colon and then inverted commas followed. Following explicit instruction, students' number of punctuation missing of comma fell from 119 to 34; semi-colon from 19 to 7, and inverted commas from 10 to 4 as the figure 1 shows.

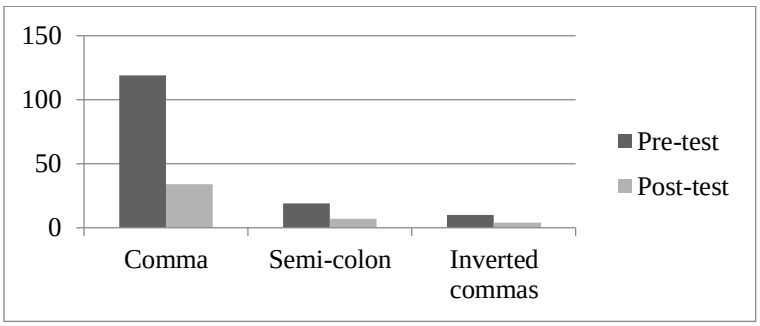

Figure 1. Numbers of punctuation missing before and after explicit instruction.

Table 3 shows each student's pre- and post-test results together with independent-t test results. As seen, a statistically significant difference was found between the two tests.

Table 3. Each student's pre- and post-test results in the category of punctuation missing

Student	Comma		Semi-colon		Inverted commas	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1	4	0	0	0	1	0
2	7	4	1	0	0	0
3	5	1	2	0	0	0
4	6	2	2	0	0	0
5	7	6	1	0	0	0
6	6	1	0	0	1	1
7	4	0	1	1	0	0
8	1	0	2	2	0	0
9	9	2	1	1	1	0
10	6	1	0	0	2	1
11	9	2	0	0	0	0
12	5	0	0	0	0	0
13	3	0	1	1	0	0
14	10	2	2	0	1	1
15	3	3	2	0	1	0
16	8	1	0	0	2	1
17	7	2	2	0	0	0
18	9	3	1	1	0	0
19	6	4	1	1	0	0
20	4	0	0	0	1	0
Σ	119	34	19	7	10	4
x̄	5.95	1.7	0.95	0.35	0.5	0.2
P	.001		.001		.05	

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Comma

Students largely missed commas where they should be used between modifiers [1], after a dependent clause [2], and in sentences with coordination conjunctions [3]. In the first example, the adjectives *useful* and *lovely* are separated adjectives; therefore, a comma is needed between them not to cause confusion with the reader.

[1] Birds are useful lovely animals.

[1 corrected] Birds are useful, lovely animals.

If you start a sentence with a dependent clause, a comma should be inserted after it; however, students generally miss it.

[2] When you are determined to do something you will do it.

[2 corrected] When you are determined to do something, you will do it.

Coordinating conjunctions need a comma if the sentence is followed by a full sentence. It was observed that students miss to insert a comma before them.

[3] It may seem enough but there are still things to do.

[3 corrected] It may seem enough, but there are still things to do.

Semi-colon

The results showed that semi-colons are missed before the connectors. If you do not end a sentence with a full period but go on with a connector instead, a semi-colon must be used before it. An authentic sample from the data is provided in the example [4].

[4] Nature studies the phenomena that may be occur at any time *in other words,* it studies the laws of the nature by examining the cause and effect relationship.

[4 corrected] Nature studies the phenomena that may be occur at any time; *in other words,* it studies the laws of the nature by examining the cause and effect relationship.

Inverted commas

Inverted commas are not frequent in students' writing. Yet, they miss the places where they should use them. In *use–mention distinction,* we use either quotation marks or italics to emphasize that an instance of a word refers to the word itself, rather than its associated concept.

[5] Nature is a Turkish-originated word.

[5 corrected] "Nature" is a Turkish-originated word or *Nature* is a Turkish-originated word.

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Confusion

Similar to the category of punctuation missing, comma takes up the first place in students' writing when it comes to confusing PM. Then, capitalization and colon follow. As seen from the figure 2, the number of PM that was erroneously used in pre-test is 37 for comma, 24 for capitalization, and 22 for colon. They respectively fell to 10, 8, and 7 according to the post-test results.

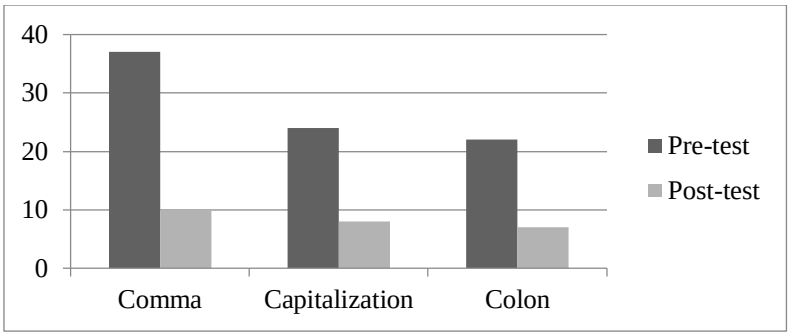

Figure 2. Numbers of punctuation errors before and after explicit instruction.

Table 4 shows that with 1.85 comma has the highest error mean while colon has the least; 1.1. Furthermore, all PM under this category prove a statistically significant difference between the tests.

Table 4. Each student's pre- and post-test results in the category of confusion

Student	Comma		Capitalization		Colon	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1	0	0	0	0	0	1
2	4	1	2	1	1	0
3	3	1	1	1	1	0
4	4	0	0	0	1	0
5	1	1	1	0	0	1
6	2	1	2	0	0	0
7	2	0	1	1	2	0
8	3	0	0	1	2	1
9	0	0	1	0	0	0
10	1	2	2	1	1	0
11	2	0	1	0	2	0
12	1	0	2	2	1	0
13	0	0	1	1	1	0
14	2	0	0	0	1	0
15	2	1	0	0	2	2
16	3	1	1	0	1	0
17	1	1	5	0	4	0
18	3	1	1	0	0	0
19	1	0	1	0	1	2
20	2	0	2	0	1	0
Σ	37	10	24	8	22	7
x̄	1.85	0.5	1.2	0.4	1.1	0.35
p	.001		.001		.001	

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Comma

According to the analysis results, comma turns out as the most erroneously used punctuation mark. Students used inaccurate PM -a full period- in order to separate the day of the month from the year [6]; however, commas are used for dates. Coordinating conjunctions need inserting a comma before them if the sentence does not end [7], but students largely used a full period (and they did not use a comma after coordinating conjunctions though they started with it).

[6] I graduated from high school in July *01.2016*

[6 corrected] I graduated from high school in July *01, 2016*

[7] Snow is enjoyable. *But* if it is not too much.

[7 corrected] Snow is enjoyable, *but* if it is not too much.

Capitalization

Although the correct use of upper and lower cases seems to be easy by the majority of undergraduate students, the results showed that there are still things to be learnt. The analysis showed that they do not use capitalization with days or months [8] and man-made structures [9], which they should have used.

[8] The last time I picked up an apple on a tree was last *july*.

[8 corrected] The last time I picked up an apple on a tree was last *July*.

[9] I would like to translate the writing on *pyramids*.

[9 corrected] I would like to translate the writing on *Pyramids*.

Colon

It was found that colons are not common in students' writing, yet a number of erroneous uses of them were detected. Amidst a few other erroneous usages, students mostly used colons before connectors such as *on the contrary, however, as a result etc*.[10] while they should have used a semi-colon.

[10] Critical thinking is important to find a *solution: however*, being a volunteer is much more important.

[10 corrected] Critical thinking is important to find a *solution; however*, being a volunteer is much more important.

Redundancy

Comma, as in all other categories, holds up the first rank under the category of redundancy. Students at most used commas while they should not have had. Then, semi-colon and finally colon

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comes as the second and the third most redundant PM. Data showed 34 redundant commas, 14 semi-colon and 12 colon in pre-test while the post-test result provided a figure of 9, 6, and 5, respectively. Figure 3 summarizes the results.

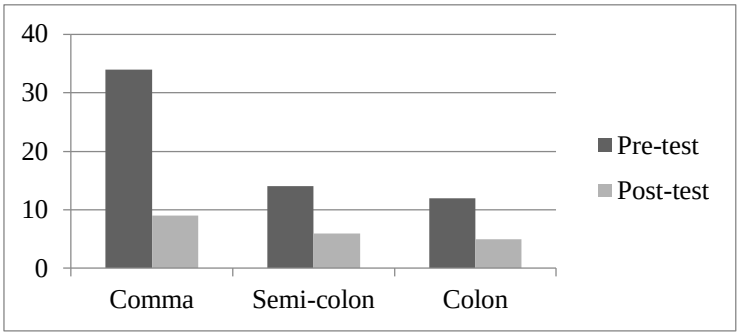

Figure 3. Numbers of redundant PM before and after explicit instruction

As seen in the table 5, with 1.7 commas has the highest average while it is followed by semi-colon (0.7) and colon (0.25). The order was stable in post-test result as well.

Table 5. Each student's pre- and post-test results in the category of redundancy

Student	Comma		Semi-colon		Colon	
	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
1	1	0	0	0	0	0
2	2	1	1	1	0	0
3	2	0	1	0	0	0
4	1	1	1	0	0	1
5	3	0	0	0	0	0
6	1	0	2	2	0	0
7	1	0	2	0	0	0
8	2	1	2	1	2	0
9	2	1	1	0	1	1
10	2	0	1	1	1	0
11	3	0	0	0	2	1
12	1	0	0	1	1	0
13	1	0	0	0	1	1
14	4	1	0	0	0	0
15	1	0	0	0	1	0
16	2	0	0	0	1	1
17	2	2	1	0	1	0
18	1	2	1	0	1	0
19	0	0	0	0	0	0
20	2	0	1	0	0	0
Σ	34	9	14	6	12	5
x̄	1.7	0.45	0.7	0.3	0.6	0.25
p	.001		.001		.001	

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Comma

The results showed that students used comma between adjectives, which might be because they regarded them as modifiers [11]. Furthermore, they used comma before a dependent clause while they should have not used it [12].

[11] It was a *big, green* leaf standing lonely on the bridge.

[11 corrected] It was a *big green* leaf standing lonely on the bridge.

[12] You spontaneously come across street *flowers, when* you deal with plants.

[12 corrected] You come across street *flowers when* you deal with plants.

Semi-colon

Semi-colons are used to separate two independent clauses. It was detected that some students had used semi-colon before a relative clause postmodifying a noun [13]; however there is no need for such use.

[13] I plan to make many *things; which* are exciting.

[13 corrected] I plan to make many *things which* are exciting.

Colon

Amidst a few other erroneous usages, students mostly used colons after "are, such as, and include" [11] while they should not have had.

[11] What we should do to protect the environment *includes: education*, awareness, and desire.

[11 corrected] What we should do to protect the environment *includes education*, awareness, and desire.

DISCUSSIONS

This study investigated punctuation marks (PM) that undergraduate students at the department of translation used erroneously. The study also aimed at putting forward the importance of explicit instruction of PM in classes. The results showed that students mostly confuse with commas, colon and semicolon, which is in line with the study of Ghabool, Mariadass, and Kashef (2012). However, different from their study, this study analysed the data under three categories: punctuation missing, confusion, and redundancy. In all categories, the use of commas and colons were found to be problematic by students while capitalization was also problematic for student, but only under the category of confusion.

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A small scale of investigation into course schedules on internet would prove that courses in translation departments of Turkish Universities did not include any instruction on punctuation, which creates an unfortunate opportunity for the students in learning PM accurately. After this study had found the most problematic PM, the students were explicitly instructed on how to use PM correctly in their prospective writing throughout 3 weeks. The analysis results before and after explicit instructions indicated a statistically significant difference at all sub-categories that had been studied. In concise, an explicit instruction may decrease errors of punctuation missing, confusion, and redundant use of PM. On the contrary, punctuation is neither a lexical or grammatical concern for instructors, which may be why they do not spare a place for it in their course schedules.

The erroneous use of PM may stem from various reasons such as L1 transfer. The punctuation rules of mother tongue may be transferred to the source language in translation as was observed in data. This is obviously the case for commas as students, in some parts, should have used commas in English writing where they would not in Turkish writing. A similar study (Elkilic, Han, & Aydin, 2009) that investigated the evidence of L1 interference in Turkish EFL students' punctuation use provided similar results. Accordingly, Kesmez (2015) mentioned interference errors of Turkish ELF students while writing in English.

Apart from inter-lingual interference, some studies (e.g. Alamin & Ahmed, 2012) claim that punctuation errors may emanate from the effect of intra-lingual interference. To speak more specifically, overgeneralization of a leant rule may occasionally prompt errors in nature. For example, commas are used before conjunctions such as *but, and, yet,* etc. while semi-colons are used before coordinating conjunctions such as *however, therefore*, etc. The factors that cause intra-lingual errors are largely false analogy and incomplete rule application, and they may be due to lack of knowledge. Therefore, explicit instructions of PM may minimize intra-lingual errors by preventing students from making false analogies or incomplete rule applications if they make up for their incomplete knowledge over the issue.

Conclusion

Punctuation is a mechanical issue in linguistics, and it should not be expected to be learnt implicitly. Therefore, explicit instruction is needed if learning is aimed. Punctuation is important for all kinds of writing, but it is particularly important for those whose whole work is with writing; for example, translators. This study absolutely suggests instructors in the departments of translation to save a secure place for the explicit instruction of PM as the effect of it has been proven through applied activities and analyses. Given that learning punctuation is not difficult, even a crash course on punctuation for a few days may be enough to increase students' awareness towards the issue as well as their knowledge.

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Pedagogical implications

1. Although this study found comma, semi-colon, colon, capitalization, and inverted commas as the most problematic PM for its participants, it is recommended for instructors lecturing Turkish students at translation or any other language-based departments to make their own testing in order to detect their students' own troubled PM. Accordingly, appendices 1 and 2 may be of help. This study scheduled its own 5-days long crash course programme (appendix 3), and the implementation of it by instructors with similar problems is kindly suggested.

2. Rewriting the whole paper or only the erroneous part may help students avoid making that error again (Leki, 1991); therefore, instructors may ask their students to rewrite the text in the wake of explicit explanation regarding their errors because they are important source of information for students.

3. Writing classes largely focuses on delivering lectures in a theoretical way; however, students need more practical implementations in order to improve their flair for punctuation. Accordingly, instructors are advised to engage some practical in-class activities such as copy and dictation, jumbled words exercise and peer editing prior to actual writing (Ghabool, Mariadass, & Kashef, 2012).

4. Students should be informed about the importance of correct use of punctuation marks, and should be aware of that punctuation marks are not optional or extra-additions in academic writing but obligatory formations to convey the information accurately. It seems that syntactic and semantic variations in writing are the primary concern for students while punctuation does not become more of an issue for them, which may bring about infelicities in terms of writing quality.

5. An obvious mishap in student writing is L1 transfer, which is the transfer of rules from Turkish grammar to English. There are some parameters and principles in languages concerning PM. For example, the use of question marks is the same as in Turkish and English while commas show variance in use depending on the language that you write; therefore, students should be informed about this fact so that they would not generalize the rules of PM.

6. Some students tended to use unnecessary PM; however, superfluous use of PM may prompt abruptness in readers. Therefore, students need to be alerted against redundant use of PM and its setbacks for academic writing.

7. This study proves the efficiency of explicit teaching of PM, but there are still other ways to improve students' skills of punctuation, one of which is teaching punctuation with literature (Sawyer, 2018). According to this study, reading may help student to gain skill on punctuation thanks to the true examples they will encounter on the course of reading. The caveat in this type of learning is that students should be aware of the fact that they need to pay attention on PM while reading because there

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is a correlation between learning and awareness (Marton & Shirley, 2013); otherwise, they might simply overlook PM, and might not acquire the skill as a result of reading.

Further research & limitations

This is an original research article based on to detect erroneous use of punctuation by undergraduate students; therefore, it did not search the reasons of why students misused PM in their writing, but lack of explicit instruction of punctuation was reasoned primarily. Further studies may directly test the effect of explicit instructions. Furthermore, it seems that intra- and inter-lingual interferences are crucial factors affecting the use of punctuations. This study did not take the L1 interference into account, but the effect of mother tongue or in other words L1 transfer deserves to be investigated because analyses in the present study showed that some errors stemmed from L1 transfer because students used punctuation marks in English similar to the use in Turkish. Furthermore, only the three most common punctuation marks were analysed in this study; however, the other punctuation marks are also crucial to have a complete flair for academic writing. Therefore, this study encourages researchers to extend their scope of investigation and study errors in all punctuation marks rather than focussing on a certain number. Finally, those who aim to carry out an investigation on punctuation errors are advised to expand their corpus through triangulation because parsimonious data may not provide enough supplies for punctuation marks that are used rarely like exclamation marks and dashes.

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Appendix 1. The text to translate to English **(for pre-test)**

Doğa Nedir

Doğa, Tükçe kökenli bir kelimedir; kendini sürekli olarak yenileyen ve değiştiren, canlı ve cansız maddelerden oluşan varlıkların hepsini kapsar.İnsani faktörler etkin değildir. Madde ve enerji unsurlarından oluştuğu kabul edilir. İnsan etkinliğinin dışında kendi kendini sürekli olarak yeniden yaratan ve değiştiren güç; canlı ve cansız maddelerden oluşan varlığın tümü, tabiat. İnsan eliyle büyük değişikliğe uğramamış doğal güzelliklerini koruyan, genellikle kent dışı kesim. Yaradılış ve yapı özelliklerinin tümü.

Aynı zamanda insanın yaşaması bakımından önemli bin mekandır.Aslında bir hayal olarak görülen doğada yaşama fikri gerçekleştirilebilir.Doğanın bize kucak açması için;onun içinde kendimizede bir yer bulmamız için ve onun bizi kabul etmesi için kendimizi ona affettirmemeiz gerekir.

Doğa Bilimleri Nedir - Doğa Bilimleri Nelerdir

Doğa ve doğa olayları ile ilgilenen bilimdir. Konusu doğal gerçekliktir (realite). İnsan düşüncesinden bağımsız olarak var olan her şey doğal gerçekliktir. Fizik başta olmak üzere, maddeyi inceleyen kimya, canlıyı inceleyen biyoloji, gök cisimlerini inceleyen astronomi ve yerbilim doğa bilimlerinin altdallarıdır.

Bilimde, doğa bilimler rasyonalist çalışma ya da yasaların doğal kurallarından oluşur. Terim, doğa bilim sosyal bilimler ile bilimsel metodun insan davranışları üzerine uygulanması, ve formal bilimlerbilimsel metodlarla doğayı çalışan farklı metodları kullanmasıyla ayrılır.

Doğa bilimleri olgusaldır. Doğada her an varolabilen olaylar zincirlerini, olguları inceler. Diğer bir deyişle, olgular arasındaki neden-sonuç ilişkisini inceleyerek doğanın yasalarına ulaşır. Olgusallık, deney ve gözlem yolu ile ulaşılan yasaları yine deney ve gözlem ile doğrulatmaktır. Ayrıca determinist olmalıdır.

Doğa bilimleri tüme varım yöntemini kullanır. Tek tek olaylardan ve olgulardan hareket edilerek genel doğa yasalarına ulaşılır.

Doğa bilimleri açıklayıcıdır. Amacı sadece anlamak değil, ayrıca açıklamaktır. Açıklama; bir olgu veya varlığı meydana getiren temel öğeleri, anlaşılır bir biçimde ortaya koymaktır. Doğa bilimleri anladığı her realiteyi tanım, yasa veya formül ile açıklamalıdır.

Doğa bilimleri geliştirilmiş bilimlerin temelidir. Bununla beraber, doğa ve geliştirilmiş bilimler, sosyal bilimleri ve insanlığı bir elde, teoloji ve de sanatları diğer elde tutarak gelişmişlerdir. Matematik, istatistik ve bilgisayar bilimleri doğa bilimlerinden değildir, fakat doğa bilimleri olmadan temel hatlarını karşıyalabilirler.

Bu kullanımın yanında, kelime daha eskilerde, günlük anlamıyla, doğal tarihi karşılamak için kullanılmıştır. Bu anlamıyla, "doğa bilimleri" biyolojik bilimlerin yerine kullanılabilmiştir.

Source: http://www.defineyeri.net/bcanlilar-dunyasib/doga-nedir/#ixzz2EkBl19W8

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Apendix 1 (continuing). The text to translate to English **(for post-test)**

Doğa Nedir?

Doğa ile ilişkinizi keşfetmek bazen tuhaf bir duygu yaratır ve heyecanlandırır. Duyularınızın egzotik, büyüleyici ve tamamen yeni bir dünyayı gösterdiği anlar olabilir. Öteki zamanlarda, bu süreçte tanıdık ve alışılmış şeyler hissedilir, sabah yataktan kalkmak, eski arkadaşlarla takılmak gibi. Neden olmasın? Çoktan doğal dünyanın içerisinde sarıp sarmalanmışsınız; doğumunuz öncesinden beri böyleydi. Yaşamınızın her günü ağaçlara, bitkilere, bulutlara ve güneş ışığına baktınız, zaten onların ne olduğunu biliyorsunuz ve uzun zaman önce onlarla bağ kurmanın yollarını buldunuz.

Birçoğumuz doğayı oldukça benzeşen yollarla tanımlarız: İnsanları kapsayan ve insan eylemleri ve uygarlığından bağımsız, var olan maddesel dünya; doğal dünyanın unsurları olan dağlar, ağaçlar, hayvanlar, nehirler vb. Bu, galiba birçoğumuzun üzerinde anlaşabildiği geçerli bir tanımdır. Yaygın kullanımda, doğa insanlıktan ayrı yaşayan her şey, kurduğumuz uygarlığın arasında ve çevresindeki her şeydir.

Şimdi biraz daha yakından bakalım. İlk önce bizim yaygın tanımımızın insanlık ve geri kalan dünya arasında ne kadar temel bir ayrımı içerdiğine dikkat edin. Kumun üzerine bir çeşit çizgi çekip "bizim" tarafımızdaki her şey insan, öteki taraftaki her şey "doğa"dır demeyi önermeye benziyor. Fakat gerçekten bunu yapabilir miyiz? Çizgiyi tam olarak nerede çizdik? Eğer bahçeniz varsa doğanın parçası mıdır? Doğanın parçası olan aynı bahçeyle birkaç ay ilgilenmediğiniz zaman, bütün bu yerel bitkiler sokak aralarından mı çıkıvermeye başlıyor? Issız bir kumsala ne dersiniz? Biri bir ucunda küçük bir kulübe yaparsa kumsal nasıl değişir? Ya kulübe yüksek katlı bir otel olursa? Kumsal hala doğanın parçası mıdır?

Bitkilere ve hayvanlara baktığımızda aynı türde sorularla karşılaşıyoruz. Evcil hayvan olarak baktığımız kediler ve köpekler doğanın parçası mıdır? Ya başıboş gezen sığırlar? Çitle çevrilmiş otlaklardaki antilop ve bizonlara ne demeli? Doğa kentteki bütün güvercinleri içine alır mı? Balinaları? Filleri? Boz ayıları? Bütün bu organizmalar yaşamaları için gittikçe artan bir biçimde insan korumasına bağımlı oluyorlar. Onlar hala doğanın parçası mıdır? Şimdi de kendi bedeninize göz atın. Sağlıklı ve canlı kalmak için olağanüstü sayıdaki diğer türlere bağımlısınız. Doğrudan yiyecek sağlayarak sizi besleyen bitkilerin ve hayvanların ötesinde, onları da besleyen diğer organizmaları düşünün. Bitkileri yaşatacak toprağı korumak için milyonlarca küçücük varlığa gereksinimiz var ve kendi sindirim sisteminizde yediğiniz her şeyi öğütmeye yardımcı olan milyonlarca daha fazlası var. Sizin temiz su sağlamanız, bitkilerin havadaki oksijeni alması, böceklerin yediğiniz ürünleri tozlaştırması ve organizmaların bedenimizin atıklarını yeniden işlemesi için, doğal sistemlere gereksinimiz vardır.

Source: http://www.ruhsalyasam.com/doga-nedir/

Appendix 2. Activity of placing punctuation marks if necessary ***(for pre-test)***

Please insert a punctuation mark where it is necessary or omit.

Scientists and philosophers of science tend to speak as if "scientific language" were intrinsically precise as if those who use it must understand/ one another's meaning even if they disagree / but in fact scientific language is not as different from ordinary language as is commonly believed / it too is subject to imprecision and ambiguity and hence to imperfect understanding / moreover new theories or arguments are rarely if ever constructed by way of clear-cut steps of induction deduction and verification or falsification / neither are they defended rejected or accepted in so straightforward a

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manner / in practice scientists combine the rules of scientific methodology with a generous admixture of intuition aesthetics and/ philosophical commitment / the importance of what are sometimes called extra-rational or extra-logical components of thought in the discovery of a new principle or law is generally acknowledged / …but the role of these extra-logical components in persuasion and acceptance in making an argument convincing is less frequently discussed partly because they are less visible / the ways in which the credibility or effectiveness of an argument depends on the realm of common experiences on extensive practice in communicating/ those experiences in a common language are hard to see precisely because such commonalities are taken for granted / only when we step out of such a "consensual domain" when we can stand out on the periphery of a community with a common language do we begin to become aware of the unarticulated premises mutual understandings and assumed practices of the group even in those subjects that/ lend themselves most readily to quantification / discourse depends heavily on conventions and interpretation conventions that are acquired over years of practice and participation in a community/

Source: https://www.lib.sfu.ca/system/files/28965/style_and_editing-advanced.pdf

(for post-test)

Please insert a punctuation mark where it is necessary or omit.

According to the Global Slavery Index 2018/ over 40 million people are victims of modern slavery/ and of these/ 15 million are in forced marriage/ Slavery involves violence/ physical or psychological/ and control – often in the form of threats in order to generate profit/ To quote Kevin Bales/ /Slavery is when one person controls another/ uses violence to maintain that control and exploits them economically// This violence may be physical and psychological/ and the control may be verbal threats/ but at the heart of slavery is exploitation and 'ownership' of another human being for profit/ Forms of modern slavery are/ forced labour/ human trafficking/ commercial sexual exploitation/ domestic servitude and forced marriage/

You might be surprised to see forced marriage included above/ Sadly/ forced marriage involves the same lack of choice/ power imbalance/ coercion and labour exploitation as other forms of slavery/ This also includes forced child marriage – usually of girls/ of 17 years or younger.

What is another form of slavery/ is it domestic servitude/ The answer is yes/ Across the globe, domestic workers, mostly women, migrate abroad to support their families back home. Employment agents in their country of origin promise a generous salary and good working conditions with a caring host family/ however/ may be far from reality/ Domestic workers are sometimes forced to work long hours and their passports and mobile phones are taken away/ In extreme cases/ behind closed doors of private homes, they are locked up/ starved/ deprived of sleep and often physically and sexually abused/ says Mr Logan. They are trapped/ scared and unfamiliar with their new surroundings. Domestic servitude happens globally/ including in the UK.

Source: https://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/magazine/modern-day-slavery

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Appendix 3. A 5-days long crash course schedule for the instruction of comma, semi-colon, colon, inverted commas, and capitalization.*

Day	Punctuation	Rule	Examples
Day 1	Comma	Commas between modifiers	*She is a clever, thoughtful woman*
		Months and years: A comma is used to separate the day of the month from the year	*I met him on July 4, 2004, in Istanbul, Turkey*
		Use commas when you refer to a person directly. The commas come before or surrounding the title or the name.	*Can you, Yasmin, help me?* *Yes, Sir, sure.*
		Commas and sentence flow: Use commas to set off expressions that interrupt sentence flow Alternative to comma in such sentences would be dashes.	*You know, as everything is so obvious, that she is the faulty one.* *You know -as everything is so obvious- that she is the faulty one.*
		Commas and dependent clauses: Use a comma after the sentence if you start with a dependent clause. Conversely, do not use.	*When you come, we may start.* *We may start when you come.*
		Commas and non-restrictive postmodifiers: If you provide additional information or knowledge about something inside a sentence, place it between two commas	*He, the one who spoilt the night, insists to come again.*
		Commas and coordinating conjunctions: Use a comma to separate two main clauses joined by one of the coordinating conjunctions such as or, and, for, but, so, yet, and nor: But if the sentences are short and understandable, you may not use a comma if the clauses have the same subject, you should not use a comma	*I did my best, but it was not enough to get the promotion.* I did my best and I won. I did my best but still did not get the promotion.
		Commas and question tags: Before a question tag, use a comma	*You are responsible for all this mess, aren't you?*
		Commas and contrasting phrases: Contrasting phrases inside a sentence should be separated with a comma	*It is your fault, not mine.*
		Commas and introductory phrases:	

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		If there is a probability of disturbing sentence flow, use a comma after the introductory phrase. If there is not, you may not use.	*Barking insistently, the dog did not allow anyone to sleep.*
		Commas and introductory words: Use comma (or semi-colon) before an introductory word such as for example, i.e., e.g., that is, namely, etc…	*Camping is not an easy activity, that is, you may need lots of stuff to carry with yourself.*
Day 2	Semi-colon	Semi-colon and related sentences: You may use a semi-colon in order to separate two sentences with related theme or content.	*I have completed the documents; you may have them.*
		Semi-colon and connectors: You can use a semi-colon before the connectors such as "also, anyway, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, incidentally, indeed, moreover, nevertheless, next, nonetheless, otherwise, similarly, still, then, therefore, and thus" Or before connecting phrases such as "such as all, as a matter of fact, as a result, at the same time, even so, for example, for instance, in addition, in conclusion, in fact, in other words, in the first place, of course, on the contrary, and on the other hand"	*Speaking is a hard skill to get; however, it is the funniest.* *Critical thinking is essential at university; at the same time, it is difficult to teach.*
		Semi-colon and listing: You can use semi-colonsto separate complicated items in a list.	*There are many faculties at a university: Arts; Behavioural, Cognitive and Social Sciences; Humanities; Law; Education; and Rural Medicine and Health.*
		Semi-colon and items in a list: Use semi-colons to separate two or more items in a list that already has commas.	*Punctuation is important for academic writing (Smith and Jones, 2008; Allan, 2007)* *London, England; New York, U.S.A.; and Tokyo, Japan are some of the largest cities in the world.*
Day 3	Colon	Colon and introducing a list: Colons are used when items in a list are provided. Be careful! We do not use a colon after "are, include, such as".	*This study had two purposes: to decrease punctuation errors and to raise awareness towards it.* *The purposes of this study are to decrease punctuation errors and to raise awareness towards it.*
		Colon and illustration:	

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		Use a colon in order to explain the previous statement.	*Education policy of Finland is perfect: teachers are well-qualified, education environment is prepared, and directors are open-minded.*
		Colon and emphasis: Use a colon in order to highlight a single word. Use a colon in order for an emphatic assertion.	 *The show can be summed up in one word: perfect.* *You want to hear my words for the proposal: I totally reject it.*
		Colon and titles: Use a colon in order to separate a title from the subtitle.	 *Punctuation in Academic Writing: what to know and how to use.*
Day 4	Inverted Commas	Inverted commas and emphasis Use inverted commas to emphasize a word or phrase that's being discussed or directly quoted from somewhere else	 *She called today "the day of salvation."*
		Inverted commas and irony Use inverted commas in order to make irony of something.	 *He shared his "knowledge" with me.*
		Inverted commas and citation Use inverted commas to show that the word or phrase directly quoted from somewhere else	 *I will use the new technique "mixed interference."*
		Inverted commas and unusual usage of a word Use inverted commas in order to indicate that you realize that a word is not used commonly in this way.	 *Corals somehow "know" the animals swimming around.*
		Inverted commas and use-mention distinction Use inverted commas to emphasize that the word refers to the word itself, rather than its associated concept.	*Yogurt is a healthy food.* *"Yogurt" is a borrowed word from Turkish.*
		Inverted commas and titles Use inverted commas for titles	 *David Bowie's "Space Oddity"*
		Inverted commas and full period Depending on your audience you can use period inside inverted commas (American English) or inside/outside inverted commas (British English).	 *She called today "the day of salvation." (AmE / BrE)* *She called today "the day of salvation". (BrE)*
		Inverted commas and nicknames Use inverted commas for false titles and nicknames	 *John "Hannibal" Smith.* *Clark Kent "Superman" is the headliner in the movie.*
Day 5	Capitalization	The first word after full stop and of every sentence.	*The problem is not simple to solve. You need to work hard*
		Days of the week and months of the year).	*Come on Tuesday* *My favourite month is April.*

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		The first letter (only) of the names of people and places	*Where is Miss. Helen?* *The Azores deserves to visit.*
		The main words of a title, but not articles [a, an, the) or prepositions (words like to, of, for) or conjunctions [and, but), unless they are the first word in the title	*Punctuation of a Manuscript* *A manuscript and Punctuation*
		Special occasions	*The Winter Olympic Games*
		Races, nationalities, and tribes	*West İndian* *African -American*
		Organizations	*The Ministry of Health*
		Manmade structures	*The Titanic*
		Institutions	*Middle East Technical University*
		Historical episodes and eras	*the Great Depression*
		Streets and roads	*Roadway*
		Religions	*Muslim, Christian*
		Holidays	*Easter, Ramadan*

**Imposed on https://awelu.srv.lu.se/grammar-and-words/punctuation/comma/*

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