Errors in Using Punctuation Marks in Selected Scientific Writing Committed By Non- Native Postgraduate

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Abstract: This study aims to show the quantity of errors in using punctuation marks in selected scientific written texts were written by non-native postgraduate. The selected pieces of scientific writing in biology field, are contain (5) theses and (5) dissertations. These selected scientific will examine, identify the errors in using punctuations marks (full stop, semi-colon, and comma), and analysis them according to Coder's theory of errors analysis. The results reveal that, there are errors in using punctuation marks made by non-native postgraduates, with variation percentage in chapters of theses and dissertation. No significant difference in punctuation marks errors in the theses can be observed among the chapters of each thesis in spite of errors committed. But there is significant difference among the five theses. This means that M.Sc. students have individual differences and they have poor ability to write correct punctuation marks in their theses. It is not only M.Sc. students who have a defect in using correct punctuation marks, but also Ph.D. students committed errors in punctuation marks.

Index Terms: Punctuation marks, scientific writing, errors analysis

Introduction

Punctuation marks are symbols that are used to aid the clarity and comprehension of written language. Many linguists try to define punctuation marks and its relationship with grammar and syntax. Quirk defined them (Words are delimited as orthographic units by being preceded and followed either by a space or by one or more punctuation marks (Quirk et al., 1985:1610). Punctuation plays a critical role in the modern writing system, yet its significance is regularly underestimated (Crystal, 2003b:278). Also Harmer (2004:34) considers punctuations as one of the important feature of writing and using punctuation correctly is an important skill many people judge the quality of what is written not just on the content, the language but also on their use of punctuation, if capital letters, commas, full stops, sentence and paragraph boundaries, etc., are not used correctly, this can not only make a negative impression but also make a text difficult to understand (ibid: 49). Harmer (2004:5) states that "teaching punctuation; it is about to helping students to communicate real messages in an appropriate manner". McLaren (2003:166) emphasis on the idea of the important using punctuation by his statement “that the poor punctuation can completely change meaning”. Punctuation has very four important functions that can be distinguished. Crystal’s view (2003b:279) about the functions serve by punctuation marks are four as follows:

First: Its primary purpose is that they are enable stretches of written language to be read coherently, by displaying their grammatical structure. Important features in this point include the use of sentence -ending points, clause-dividing commas, and paragraph- marking indication (ibid).

Second: It gives the reader clues about the prosody with which a piece of writing can be read aloud, through such features as question marks, exclamation marks and parentheses.

Third: It may highlight semantic units or contrasts present in the text but not directly related to its grammatical structure. Examples include the choice of colons vs semi-colons to show the rhetorical structure of a complex sentence, and the use of line divisions.

Fourth: It may add a semantic dimension, unique to the graphic medium, which would be difficult or impossible to read aloud. Examples include the use of scare quotes to show that a word has a special sense. In Merriam Webster (2004) dictionary punctuation marks defined as (any one of the marks (such as a period, comma, or question mark) used to divide a piece of writing into sentences, clauses, etc. Truss (2003) said that in written communication, punctuation marks such as commas, dashes, colons, and semicolons, provide most of these interpretation clues. They are signals to the reader that indicate a pause, place emphasis, alter the function or show the relationship between elements of the text. It can be concluded from the previous definitions that punctuation marks
associated with writing and almost it’s one of writing features and help writing in communicate the clues to the reader. Punctuation marks help in sentence structure and represents the intonation in speech language.

Researchers define scientific writing as a type of formal writing that characterizes the language of science and technology. Errors According to the Webster's 11th (2004: 425) the word "error" means ": a) an act or condition of ignorant or imprudent deviation from a code of behavior b): an act involving an unintentional deviation from truth or accuracy, made an error in adding up the bill, an act that through ignorance, deficiency, or accident departs from or fails to achieve what should be done an error in judgment”. Thomas Scovel (1998, 125) refers to errors as " the production of incorrect forms in speech or writing by non-native speakers of a second language, the result of incomplete knowledge of the rules of that target language. Also he emphasizes that errors are committed only by non-native speakers Scovel (1998, 126). Corder also defines errors as “breaches of the code” and refers to them as “those features of the learner's utterances which differ from those of any native speaker”. On Chomsky's (1965) differentiation between 'competence' and 'performance.' Mistakes are “errors of performance” or performance errors that have varying degrees of seriousness (Bell, 1981) and are either a random guess or a “slip,” in that they are due to a “failure to utilize a known system correctly” (Brown, 1994, p. 205). They are considered performance related deviances which can occur as a result of factors external to the competence of the speaker, such as tiredness or lack of concentration (Corder, 1967, 1971). Mistakes are neither systematic and nor significant to the process of language learning. Like Corder, Norrish (1983, p. 7), defined “an error” as a systematic deviation that happens when a learner has not learnt something and consistently “get(s) it wrong.” Edge (1989) defined errors as forms that language users cannot correct by themselves even though they have been taught. James (1998, p.1) also identified a language error as an unsuccessful bit of language. He adds that language learners cannot correct their errors until they have additional knowledge on the topic. It should be mention Swales here and his analysis, Scientific writing as communicative genre (Swales 1990). It can be collected all definitions by one “it is a type of formal writing that characterizes the language of science and technology.

(Barrass1983).

Types of Punctuation Marks

It can be depends on many sources of explaining the uses of punctuation marks and its rules and give examples of correct and wrong uses , mentioned in bibliography . There are specific punctuation marks that can be involved in writing biological theses / dissertations or scientific writing in general: They are as follows:

1. Full Stop

   Full stop (.) in American English its period instead of full stop. The full stop has functions which are used in the following places.
   a) **Sentence division**: full stop is used to close sentences. After one of these, a new sentence has a capital letter.(Swan,2003:473, Straus2008:52).
      
      e.g., they have no right to be in our country. They must be leave at once.
      
      However, sometimes, it can be use it to emphasis a clause.
   b) **Abbreviations**: Full stops can be used after abbreviations and this is more common in American English than in British English. e.g. Dr. Andrew.

2-Semi-colons

   Semi –colons are "half a full stop" because it can always be replaced by each other, sometimes it is better to use a semi-colon than a full stop; this can join two related thoughts in one sentence and establish a link, as illustrated; means where sentences are grammatically independent but the meaning is closely connected (Swan, 2003, 476, Maclaren, 2003:168).For example:

   *Some people work best in the morning; others do better in the evenings.*

   Other function to the semicolons is to separate items in a list, particularly when these are grammatically complex, for example:

   *He may use the sports facilities on condition that his subscription is paid regularly; that he arranges for all necessary cleaning to be carried out; that he undertakes to make good any damage;* ....

3-Comma
Of all the marks of punctuation, the comma requires the most judgment. To punctuate with commas requires not only compliance with a set of rules but also thorough understanding of the material being punctuated. Commas can change meaning! The main purpose is to separate items. It is not a kind of full stop, nor had to be inserted every few words just to give the reader a breather. It does not use it instead of full stop. (Maclaren, 2003:169). For example:

Incorrect: The coming lecture, talks about......
Correct: The coming lecture talks about......

Another function of the comma is to enclose elements of a sentence. The function of a particular comma is important: when it separates, it stands alone, but when it encloses, it needs a partner. For example:

The power spectral density is integrated over some finite bandwidth, such as a one-third octave.

Commas That Separate

Many separating uses of the comma are optional in an open style. If commas are used whenever possible, they chop up the text and can even render it difficult to read, contrary to the purpose of punctuation.

Independent Clauses

Independent clauses joined by coordinate conjunctions may be separated by a comma:

The mixing noise dominates the spectrum, but the background noise peaks at a high frequency.

When the independent clauses are short and closely related, the comma may be omitted:

Each performance of an experiment is called a trial and its result is called an outcome.

The comma is usually retained between clauses joined by the coordinate conjunctions but and for, in order to emphasize the contrast. When the independent clauses are complicated and contain internal commas, a semicolon may be used to separate them. Do not use a comma to separate independent clauses without a coordinate conjunction:

Incorrect: The differences were generally about 11 percent, however, larger differences occurred at = 15 °. Either, the differences were generally about 11 percent, but larger differences occurred at = 15 °. Or the differences were generally about 11 percent; however larger differences occurred at = 15 °.

Correct: The differences were generally about 11 percent, however, larger differences occurred at = 15 °. Either, the differences were generally about 11 percent, but larger differences occurred at = 15 °. Or the differences were generally about 11 percent; however larger differences occurred at = 15 °.

It would be not separate compound predicates with a comma unless they are long and require a comma for clarity. e.g., Poor Viewing through the atmosphere increases the apparent reflectance for low-reflectance objects (e.g., p = 0.1), and decreases the apparent reflectance for high-reflectance objects (e.g., p = 0.7).

Correct: Viewing through the atmosphere increases the apparent reflectance for low-reflectance objects (e.g., p = 0.1) and decreases the apparent reflectance for high-reflectance objects (e.g., p = 0.7).

When compound predicates are so long that a comma seems appropriate, they are perhaps too long. A comma to separate them may not sufficiently clarify them.

Elements of series

Commas at least are required to separate series of three or more elements:

The flight navigation system also provides altitude, roll, pitch, yaw, and ground speed. The following example illustrates...

Pressures at the bulkhead, in the cove, and at the seal were measured.

Wind speed is obtained from antenna brightness temperature, rain rate is obtained from the brightness temperature difference at two frequencies, and wind vector is obtained from radar cross section. It will be more acceptable that a comma before the conjunction in a series. This serial comma is often necessary to prevent misreading.

Introductory phrases and clauses

A comma may be used to separate an introductory phrase or clause from the main clause:
Example: If the variable $t$ is actually time, then $a$ is a frequency.

It is standard practice to put the comma after all introductory clauses and all introductory phrases containing a verb form (Ebbitt and Ebbitt, 1982). Clause, although some mathematicians are not comfortable with this intuitive definition, it is widely used. **Participial phrase** Celled mean **square calculus**, this theory is based on the concept of mean square convergence. Gerund phrase in analyzing the experiment, we try to statistically describe the whole random process. Infinitive phrase, to understand this concept; note that periodic functions may be expanded. The comma is optional after a short introductory adverbial phrase unless the comma is required for clarity:

*Either in recent years, the delta function has been rigorously defined.*

*Or In recent years the delta function has been rigorously defined.*

**Incorrect:** Better soon after the photon density becomes steady as gains and losses balance each other.

**Correct:** Better soon after, the photon density becomes steady as gains and losses balance each other.

It would be better to place a comma after an introductory phrase that immediately precedes the verb it modifies:

**Incorrect:** Only in recent years, has the delta function been rigorously defined.

**Correct:** Only in recent years has the delta function been rigorously defined.

It should be remembered that after introductory clauses and phrases the comma is separating, not enclosing. A comma is appropriate after an internal phrase or clause, but it is not appropriate before unless the phrase or clause is non-restrictive. A comma follows, but does not precede, restrictive introductory elements:

**Incorrect:** Recombination rate is larger than quenching rate, and, after lasing is achieved, both are smaller than photo-break dissociation rate.

**Correct:** Recombination rate is larger than quenching rate, and after lasing is achieved, both are smaller than photo-break dissociation rate. A comma both precedes and follows non-restrictive introductory elements:

**Coordinate Adjectives**

Adjectives are coordinate if (1) they can be linked by, and (2) they independently modify the substantive (Linton, 1962). Separate by commas only those consecutive adjectives that are coordinate. Deciding whether adjectives are coordinate can be tricky; two tests might help. First try inserting *and* between the adjectives: The delta function has a long controversial history. **Long and controversial:** A comma is appropriate between *long* and *controversial*. It is a linear shift-invariant system. **Linear and shift-invariant:** it can be tried reversing the adjectives (if they independently modify the noun, order makes no difference):

It can be considered a shift-invariant linear system. The adjectives *shift-invariant* and *linear* are probably coordinate, but the final decision requires someone who understands the technical meaning of the adjectives. When in doubt, do not insert the comma between adjectives. The current tendency is to omit the comma between two coordinate adjectives anyway (Ebbitt and Ebbitt 1982). The comma adds emphasis though to the adjectives as separate modifiers.

**Elliptical Constructions**

When clauses in a sentence contain repeated elements for example, *the verb*, the omission of these elements is indicated by a comma:

**Without comma:** Wind speed is obtained from antenna brightness temperature; rain rate, from brightness temperature difference at two frequencies; and wind vector, from radar cross section. The comma may be omitted if the clauses are short:

**With comma:** Wind speed is obtained from antenna brightness temperature, and wind vector from radar cross section.

**Direct Quotations and Questions**
Direct quotations and questions are separated from the rest of the sentence with either commas or colons. A colon is used to introduce a long or formal quotation. Separate a direct quotation or question from the rest of the sentence with a comma for example:

**Incorrect:** In reference 6 he states "Thermal neutron fluxes up to 1020 might be required

**Correct:** In reference 6, he states, "Thermal neutron fluxes up to 1020 might be required"

**Incorrect:** The obvious question is how good is this estimate?

**Correct:** The obvious question is, how good is this estimate?

**Commas uses**

A comma that encloses requires a partner, which may be another comma or a colon, semicolon, period, question mark, or exclamation mark. For example:

*The record need not be continuous but may, in fact, be digital data.*

**Non-restrictive modifiers**

A non-restrictive modifier does not affect the meaning of the basic sentence; it could be removed from the sentence without altering meaning. Non-restrictive modifiers must be enclosed by commas (at least). The important point to remember is that an enclosing comma requires a partner, which can be another comma or another mark of punctuation. The non-restrictive prepositional and verbal phrases are enclosed with commas in the following examples:

*Theoreticians prefer to work in terms of radian frequency, defined for both positive and negative frequencies.*

The power spectral density is integrated over some finite bandwidth, *such as a one-third octave.* The second integral, *being the integral of an odd function over even limits, is zero.*

A random process is stationary if for all *n*, its *n*th density function is independent of time. The coefficient could be placed elsewhere because, *though preferred*, the placement shown is arbitrary. Non-restrictive relative clauses are enclosed with commas:

*Restrictive:* The most common panel methods are the codes *which Hess and Smith designed for non-lifting bodies.*

*Non-restrictive:* The most common panel methods are the codes of Hess and Smith which were developed for non-lifting bodies.

**4. Apostrophe**

The functions of the apostrophe are to indicate possession; to form the plurals of abbreviations, characters, and signs; and to indicate omitted characters in contractions. The rules for forming the possessive case of nouns are presented in section possessive. An apostrophe is never used to form the possessive of a personal pronoun, use the (‘s) to form the plural of symbols, abbreviations, acronyms, use the (’s) to form the plural of symbols, abbreviations, acronyms, designations, signs, numbers, and years. Examples are:

*x’s s C-130’s
PMT’s M.A.’s 4’s
+’s 1970’s 60’s

Constructions are only used when necessary to avoid confusion. An ’s is used to form the plural of a word referred to as the word itself, but the apostrophe is not necessary when the word retains its meaning:

There can be no ands, ifs, and buts (meaning no conditions). There can be no and’s, if’s, and but’s (meaning the words cannot appear).

The apostrophe indicates letters left out of contractions, for example, *it’s (it is), Gov’t, and nat’l.* Since contractions are rare in formal writing, such use of the apostrophe is also rare.

**5. Colon**

The function of the colon is to separate and introduce lists, clauses, and quotations, along with several conventional uses. Authorities disagree on the usage of the colon and capitalization after a colon. The following guidelines generally correspond to *Words Into Type* (Skillin et al. 1974, Harmer, 2004, Maclaren, 2006).
A colon has the same separating force as a full stop or (period). It thus brings a sentence almost to a halt (Bernstein, 1993:45). Because of its strong separating function, an introductory colon should generally be used only after a complete sentence. In particular, do not use a colon between a verb or preposition and its direct object:

**Incorrect:** The components of the rack-mounted electronics are: power supplies, the gimbals controller.

**Correct:** The components of the rack-mounted electronics are power supplies, the gimbals controller...

**Incorrect:** The scatter meter is separated into: a gimbals, a transmitter receiver assembly, and rack-mounted electronics.

**Correct:** The scatter meter is separated into gimbals, a transmitter receiver assembly, and rack-mounted electronics. Nor should a colon be used after such introductory phases as that is, for example, and such as (the colon replaces them):

**Incorrect:** Microwave instruments are used for remote sensing of environmental variables such as: sea ice, soil moisture, and surface wind speed.

**Correct:** Either: Microwave instruments are used for remote sensing of environmental variables, such as sea ice, soil moisture, and surface wind speed.

Or: Microwave instruments are used for remote sensing of environmental variables: sea ice, soil moisture, and surface wind speed.

When items of a list are numbered, the numbers do not affect the punctuation:

The quantities calculated from microwave instruments are (1) radiometer wind speed, (2) radiometer rain rate, and (3) scatter meter wind vector.

Remember that the colon has strong separating force; do not use it where separation is not grammatically desirable. When using a colon incorrectly, an author probably wants to emphasize the material that follows. The writer should consider a correction that preserves this emphasis, for example, *itemization*.

**Lists**

A colon is an elegant way of introducing a list and at the same time emphasizing the elements of the list (by separating them from the rest of the sentence). Such lists might consist of words, phrases (prepositional, infinitive, or noun), or even clauses. Use a colon to introduce a list in opposition to a noun:

The scatter meter is separated into three assemblies: gimbals, a transmitter-receiver assembly, and rack-mounted electronics. Use a colon to introduce a list whose introductory statement contains the words as follows or the following:

*The rack-mounted electronics consist of the following: power supplies, the gimbals controller...*

Using a colon to introduce a list that amplifies an introductory sentence:

The purpose of this report is twofold: to evaluate the performance of the instruments and to expand the data base. One very effective way to emphasize a list, and at the same time make a long list easy to read, is to number and display the list:

**Example:** The scatterometer is separated into three assemblies:

**Rack-mounted electronics 3.**

When the introduction to a displayed list is not a complete sentence (the items of the list complete it), no colon is used (Chicago Press 1982; and Skillin et al. 1974): The purposes of this report are:

To evaluate the performance of the instruments 1. To expands the data base

2. There is a trend towards using a colon after a verb preceding a displayed list (*are* in the above example). Such use of the colon is grammatically suspect and unnecessary.

**Clauses**
A colon may be used between two clauses when the second amplifies or restates the first, for example, *the toughness of pseudo-maraging steel degrades at cryogenic temperatures: at -320 deg F, its Charpy impact energy is 6 ft-lb.*

The dash (−) and semicolon (;) may also be used in this situation. The colon is more formal than the dash and has more introductory force than the semicolon. A colon is particularly useful for introducing displayed equations (which can be considered clauses), particularly when the equation symbolically restates the preceding sentence:

*The out-of-plane deflection that can be approximated by a truncated kinematically admissible series:*

\[ 2k-1 - \cos \{(2k -1) \} \]

**Quotations**

A colon may be used to introduce a direct quotation, particularly if the quote is long (more than one sentence) or not built closely into the sentence (Ebbitt and Ebbitt 1982): they state this conclusion: "Thermal neutron fluxes up to 1020 might be required." However, a comma is usually sufficient for direct quotations. Neither a colon nor a comma should be used before an indirect quotation: They conclude that thermal neutron fluxes up to 1020 might be required.

**Conventional Uses of the Colon**

The colon is used by convention as follows:

a) After the salutation in formal letters: *Dear Sir:*

b) Between hours and minutes in time: *11:30 a.m.*

c) In reference citations: *Slater, Philip N.: Remote Sensing . . .*

d) To express ratios: *2:1 mixture.*

**Methodology**

The methods and Procedures which are followed in order to achieve the aim of this study, ten theses and dissertations in the biological field , different colleges will examined, identified, and analyzed carefully according to Corder's method , of analyzing errors committed by postgraduates in their scientific writing.

**Data Analysis**

The punctuation marks errors (comma, full stop, semi colon); inverted comma is excluded because it is rarely used in those theses/dissertations. Therefore this study focuses on the most effective punctuation marks in the writing. Punctuation marks will be discussed together in theses and dissertations. Diagram (1) shows incorrect punctuation marks percentage frequency in the theses and dissertations.
It is identified that the comma, full stop, and semi colon are commonly used in this type of scientific writing of course with differences between each other. Semi colon records the minimum percentages in three punctuation marks under investigation; most of the M.Sc. students and Ph.D. do not know how to use semi colon properly, and as it is found they do not make any difference with semi colon and comma on the contrast with Maclarn (2003) and Swan (2003) in which they refer to semi colon as a half full stop, and sometimes it is better to use a semi colon than a full stop (ibid: 476,168) for example:

**Incorrect**- Such includes a mild degradation of intestinal mucosa, atypical cells and hyperplasia of mucosa; this may lead to form a polyps in either Rats (that fed basic diet and dietary iron) groups were ingestion orally both $10^9$ and $10^{12}$ C.F.U. *E. faecalis*.

**Correct**- Such includes a mild degradation of intestinal mucosa, atypical cells and hyperplasia of mucosa; this may lead to form a polyps in either Rats (that fed basic diet and dietary iron) groups were ingestion orally both $10^9$ and $10^{12}$ C.F.U. *E. faecalis*.

**Incorrect**- It is sensitive for detecting DNA damage. The virtually any eukaryotic cell population are amenable to analysis (Morris et al.,1999; Dhwan et al., 2001).

**Correct**- It is sensitive for detecting DNA damage. The virtually any eukaryotic cell population are amenable to analysis (Morris et al.,1999; Dhwan et al., 2001).

Many professors in biology, supervising M.Sc. and Ph.D. students, emphasize that the semi colon is rarely used in theses / dissertations. This may be as it was said that most of the M.Sc. and Ph.D. students ignore the rules of using semi colon in their writing. The reason behind such poor usage of semi colon in M.Sc. and Ph.D. students may be due to the defect in learning or knowing little about semi colon Mclaren (2003:166).

There is no significant difference in punctuation marks errors in the theses can be observed among the chapters of each thesis in spite of errors committed. But there is significant difference among the five theses. This means that M.Sc. students suffer from individual
differences and they have poor ability to write correct punctuation marks in their theses. It is not only M.Sc. students who have a defect in using correct punctuation marks, but also Ph.D. students committed errors in punctuation marks more than M.Sc. students. It is supposed to be that Ph.D. students are more professional in using punctuation marks because of having experience in writing theses but the contrary.

Chapter four (results and discussion), the errors of punctuation marks, committed in this chapter, are detected significantly with P value (≤ 0.001). This reflects the situation of correct English writing in Ph.D. dissertations in this study, as well as, it reflects that postgraduates do not pay attention to punctuation marks. While punctuation marks are considered to be a serious factor in writing. To fix sentence structure punctuation errors, it must first need to understand the importance of the clause in English sentences (Turner, 2009). Therefore, it seems that most students still do not know well the meaning of clause in English sentences, hence significant punctuation marks errors are noticed in their writings.

The second punctuation mark, which is interested to be investigated in this study, is the comma; it is common to use and record the highest percentages of errors with the third mark (full stop) with no significant difference between both of them. The frequencies of the errors are found in commas and full stops, as well as percentages of the total results.

A comma is appropriate after an internal phrase or clause, but it is not appropriate before unless the phrase or clause is non-restrictive. A comma follows, but does not precede, restrictive introductory elements. The results, show that postgraduates use commas without attention to their functions but they use them according to the context. However, there are functions to the punctuation marks serves the writing generally and scientific writing specifically (McCaskill, 1998:44, Sousa, 2001:1).

From the results, it can be clearly seen that punctuation errors in all the chapters of the M.Sc. theses reveal significant difference. That means there is no chapter in every thesis is found with no significant difference in occurrence of punctuation errors (table 5). Below are examples about the errors in using comma.

Incorrect - This study was applied to samples of stool and tissue taken from 98 individual 21 were healthy and 77 were suffering from both colonic cancer and CRC, of those (52) were males and (46) were females.

Correct - This study was applied to samples of stool and tissue taken from 98 individual 21 were healthy and 77 were suffering from both colonic cancer and CRC, of those (52) were males and (46) were females.

Incorrect - The histopathological study showed no toxic abnormal changes in all studying organs were treated with low doses while abnormal toxic changes were seen in all organs at the higher doses, in both extracts.

Correct - The histopathological study showed no toxic abnormal changes in all studying organs were treated with low doses while abnormal toxic changes were seen in all organs at the higher doses in both extracts.

Incorrect - Mutations in DNA after born are these mistakes, according to Weinberg, (1996) and Yaseen, (1999) the mutation is the main cause of cancer.

Correct - Mutations in DNA after born are these mistakes according to Weinberg (1996) and Yaseen (1999) the mutation is the main cause of cancer.

In addition, the main error in punctuation marks is the misusing of comma and full stop, effects on the length of sentences in some cases. Therefore, the sentences may contain several lines without full stop, for example:


Incorrect: The use of wild herbs in folk medicine is old as man himself and the using of medical plants is flourished especially when the researchers have proven the activity of some plants that when used Vinca rosa in treatment of acute myeloid leukemia’s due to the plant alkaloid contains such as vincristin and vinblastin and also when used (Mistletoe) Viscum album in treatment of melanoma because of it's contain of many active compounds such as lectines (Thies et al., 2005), that there are two types of lectines were diagnosed (Galactose and N-acetyl D-gulactosamine specific lectine) which give activity against other types of cancer (Lyu et al., 2004).

Correct: The use of wild herbs in folk medicine is old as man himself, and the using of medical plants is flourished especially when the researchers have proven the activity of some plants that when used Vinca rosa in treatment of acute myeloid leukemia’s due to the plant alkaloid contains such as vincristin and vinblastin. Also when they used (Mistletoe) Viscum album in treatment of melanoma because of it contains of many active compounds such as lectines (Thies et al., 2005). There are two types of lectines were diagnosed (Galactose and N-acetyl D-gulactosamine specific lectine) which give activity against other types of cancer (Lyu et al., 2004).

Although the length of the sentence might be involved in the aims of this study, but this study is designed to concentrate on punctuation marks only. Therefore the length of sentences should be studied and analysed through another research project. In case of the full stop, the errors are different, although the students know the general rules of using it, but they commit errors in their usage. Full stop should be followed by a capital letter, but in many sentences no capital letters are found. Also, when they write the parenthetical references between brackets they forget the full stop at the end of sentences. For example:

Incorrect: Helicobacter pylori produce copious amounts of cell surface associated urease as a catalytically active enzyme it is estimated that urease comprises more than 5% of bacterial protein. (MCNulty and Dent., 1987; Marshall et al., 1987)

Correct: Helicobacter pylori produce copious amounts of cell surface associated urease as a catalytically active enzyme. It is estimated that urease comprises more than 5% of bacterial protein (MCNulty and Dent., 1987; Marshall et al., 1987).

Incorrect: H. pylori is also found in ABH non-secretors the immune response against H. pylori appears to be lower and H. pylori appears to attach with higher aggressiveness and cause more inflammation (Rad et al., 2002)

Correct: H. pylori is also found in ABH non-secretors. The immune response against H. pylori appears to be lower and H. pylori appears to attach with higher aggressiveness and cause more inflammation (Rad et al., 2002).

Incorrect: The gastric mucosa is well protected against bacterial infections; H. pylori is highly adapted to this ecologic niche, with a unique array of features that permit entry into the mucous, swimming and spatial orientation in the mucus, attachment to epithelial cells, evasion of the immune response, and as a result, persistent colonization and transmission. (Surebaum and Michetti, 2002)

Correct: The gastric mucosa is well protected against bacterial infections. H. pylori is highly adapted to this ecologic niche with a unique array of features that permit entry into the mucous, swimming and spatial orientation in the mucus, attachment to epithelial cells, evasion of the immune response, and as a result persistent colonization and transmission (Surebaum and Michetti, 2002).

In the universities, the students are bright and clever but are deprived because their teachers have neglected to instruct them in the elements of literary expression (Rivet, 1976).

Finally, from these results and after asking some postgraduates, three reasons are revealed, one of them is lack of knowledge or learning the rules of punctuation marks. The second one; many postgraduates consider semi colon as a decoration with no function. And the last one, many postgraduates regard English language as Arabic, i.e. they transfer from Arabic to English with no punctuation marks although Arabic language possesses punctuation marks very close to English. In other words they imitate when they write English, it is called mimic.
It can be observed that all punctuation marks under investigation have no function to do or serve, and the meaning of sentences is unclear. On the contrary with what McCaskill (1998: 44) reports in which he explains that the punctuation marks functions in a brief way, and mentions that "punctuation marks are placed in text to make meaning clear and make reading easier.

However, why writers must write whether the writer is scientist or student of M.Sc., Ph.D., it is a need for communication to transfer their opinion to others. Communication is so important to show their thoughts, opinions, ideas, and plans (Barrass, 1983:1). The communication process should convey or satisfy the listener or the reader. Thus, writing correctly makes the communication process easy, clear, and useful.

Woods (1989) writes ‘The purpose of any writing other than lecture notes or pieces that start with “Dear Diary” is to influence your reader. If you are writing great fiction you may move your reader to tears. This can also happen with scientific writing, but generally you do not want to make your reader weep.’ Therefore, it can be concluded that the results in both Ph.D. dissertations and M.Sc. theses reveal a marked variation in the percentage of incorrect punctuation marks use, and incorrect passive voice forms.

**Conclusion**

It can be observed from the results, that postgraduate (non-native speakers of English) needs to focus on how to write English correctly, and stick to following rules, this thing should be a goal for them. Professors and supervisors which the researcher met them tend to go with opinion of developing the postgraduates abilities in English language especially writing correct English by the giving special and specified course in writing correct English as well as materials developers or material preparation and instruction. They should be aware of the errors the postgraduates are likely to make and thus put an emphasis on the areas that can be problematic for the students. *(The Antioch Review, 1990)*.

**Further Studies**

In the light of the findings, the following studies are suggested:

1- A similar study to analyze the errors committed by the Msc. Postgraduates and compare with PhD. Postgraduates.
2- Linguistic errors committed by M.Sc. Postgraduates from different universities in Iraq.
3- Linguistic errors committed by PhD. Postgraduates from different universities in Iraq.
4- The difference between male and female postgraduates in scientific writing and committing linguistic errors.

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