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(25)

The Necessity of Punctuation in Establishing a Close Relationship between Written and Spoken Forms of English

ضرورة علامات الترقيم في ترسيخ العلاقة الوثيقة بين الشكلين المكتوب والمنطوق للغة الإنجليزية

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Abstract

This study investigates the role of punctuation in establishing and maintaining a close relationship between the written and spoken forms of English. It is based on the premise that effective communication requires more than grammatical accuracy and that punctuation constitutes an important linguistic resource for connecting written discourse with features of spoken language. The study employed a descriptive-analytical research design incorporating a pre-test/post-test procedure and a questionnaire. The participants comprised 50 English language students from the Faculty of Arts, University of Kordofan, and 50 English-language specialists from the El Obeid area. Data were collected through a punctuation test administered before and after a targeted instructional intervention and a questionnaire consisting of 30 items. The research instruments were validated by specialists, and the collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and a dependent-samples t-test through the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The findings indicate substantial improvement in students' punctuation performance following the instructional intervention. The questionnaire findings further revealed a high level of agreement concerning the communicative functions of punctuation. Specifically, 100% of respondents indicated that punctuation helps readers maintain the organization of written texts and understand intended meaning. Moreover, 95.5% agreed that punctuation contributes to textual fluency, while 93.4% confirmed that punctuation symbols can represent specific intonation patterns. The findings also indicate that appropriate punctuation plays an important role in clarifying meaning, organizing textual structures, and strengthening the relationship between written and spoken communication. The study concludes that punctuation should be regarded not merely as a set of mechanical conventions but as an important linguistic resource that facilitates comprehension and reflects aspects of spoken discourse in written form. The study recommends that English language curricula and teacher-training programmes provide systematic instruction and practical activities on punctuation, particularly its relationship with pronunciation, intonation, meaning, and the four language skills.

Keywords: punctuation, written language, spoken language, language skills, intonation, meaning, communication, English language teaching

الملخص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى بحث الدور المحوري لعلامات الترقيم في ترسيخ العلاقة الوثيقة والمحافظة عليها بين الشكلين المكتوب والمنطوق للغة الإنجليزية. وتنطلق الدراسة من أن التواصل الفعّال يتطلب أكثر من مجرد الدقة النحوية، إذ

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تؤدي علامات الترقيم وظيفة أساسية بوصفها جسراً يربط بين الخطاب الشفهي والخطاب المكتوب. وقد استخدمت الدراسة المنهج الوصفي التحليلي، مستعينةً بتصميم الاختبار القبلي والبعدي والاستبانة. وجُمعت البيانات من ٥٠ طالباً من طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية و٥٠ متخصصاً في مجال اللغة الإنجليزية. وأظهرت النتائج تحسناً ملحوظاً في كفاءة الطلاب في استخدام علامات الترقيم بعد تطبيق برنامج تعليمي موجه، حيث أكد ١٠٠٪ من المستجيبين أن علامات الترقيم تساعد في متابعة تنظيم الكتابة وتساعد القراء والمستمعين على فهم المعنى. كما كشفت الدراسة أن علامات الترقيم تُستخدم لتمثيل أنماط معينة من التنغيم بنسبة بلغت ٩٣,٤٪، وأن الاستخدام المناسب لعلامات الترقيم يعزز انسيابية النصوص بنسبة بلغت ٩٥,٥٪. وتؤكد هذه النتائج الوظيفة الأساسية لعلامات الترقيم في تعزيز الصلة بين التواصل المنطوق والمكتوب، وما يترتب على ذلك من دلالات مهمة لتدريس اللغة الإنجليزية وتصميم المناهج الدراسية. وتخلص الدراسة إلى أن علامات الترقيم لا ينبغي النظر إليها باعتبارها قواعد شكلية فحسب، وإنما بوصفها مورداً لغوياً مهماً يسهم في تنظيم النص، وتوضيح المعنى، وتيسير الفهم، وتقوية العلاقة بين اللغة المكتوبة واللغة المنطوقة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: علامات الترقيم، اللغة المكتوبة، اللغة المنطوقة، المهارات اللغوية، التنغيم، المعنى، التواصل، تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية.

1. Introduction

Language is fundamentally a means of communication through which individuals express ideas, convey information, establish relationships, and interpret the meanings produced by others. Communication takes place through both spoken and written forms, which share many linguistic features but also differ in important ways. Spoken language is normally accompanied by prosodic and paralinguistic features such as stress, rhythm, intonation, pauses, facial expressions, and body language. Written language, by contrast, lacks most of these immediate resources and therefore depends heavily on graphic and orthographic conventions to communicate meaning effectively. The relationship between written and spoken language has consequently attracted considerable attention in linguistics and language education. Although speaking is acquired naturally by most individuals, writing generally requires conscious learning, systematic instruction, and considerable practice. One of the major challenges in writing is the representation of meanings and communicative intentions that are more readily conveyed through prosody and other features of speech. Punctuation is particularly important in this regard. It provides readers with visual signals that help them identify boundaries between words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. It can also indicate relationships among ideas, signal emphasis, distinguish different sen-

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tence types, and contribute to the interpretation of meaning. In some contexts, punctuation functions as a written representation of features that occur naturally in spoken language, particularly pauses and certain patterns of intonation.

Khidir (2000) emphasizes the importance of careful punctuation in separating words and groups of words and in enabling writers to emphasize particular elements for communicative and rhetorical purposes. Thus, punctuation should not be regarded merely as a collection of mechanical rules. Rather, it constitutes an important resource for organizing written discourse and facilitating communication between writers and readers.

The present study, entitled "The Necessity of Punctuation in Establishing a Close Relationship between Written and Spoken Forms of English," investigates the role of punctuation in connecting written and spoken language. It particularly examines students' punctuation performance before and after instructional intervention and explores specialists' perceptions of the communicative and linguistic functions of punctuation.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Effective communication requires clarity, coherence, accuracy, and appropriate organization of linguistic forms. However, many writers and speakers focus primarily on expressing ideas without paying sufficient attention to the linguistic and orthographic resources that facilitate successful communication. In written communication, inappropriate use, omission, or misplacement of punctuation marks can make texts ambiguous, difficult to follow, or open to unintended interpretations. The problem becomes particularly important for learners of English as a foreign or additional language because punctuation is closely related to sentence structure, meaning, reading fluency, and aspects of spoken language such as pauses and intonation. Learners who lack adequate knowledge of punctuation may experience difficulties in both producing and interpreting written texts. Furthermore, insufficient attention to punctuation in English language teaching may weaken the connection between productive and receptive language skills. If learners do not understand how punctuation contributes to meaning, they may encounter difficulties when reading aloud, interpreting written discourse, composing texts, or connecting written structures with spoken patterns. Therefore, this study investigates the role of punctuation in facilitating effective communication and examines its contribution to establishing a close relationship between written and spoken forms of English.

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1.2 Research Objectives

The study aims to:

1. Investigate the role of appropriate punctuation in communicating meaning effectively in written and spoken forms of English.
2. Examine how writers' choices of form, structure, and punctuation contribute to the construction and interpretation of meaning.
3. Investigate learners' ability to apply punctuation conventions accurately in written English.
4. Examine the contribution of punctuation to establishing a close relationship among the four language skills.
5. Investigate the role of punctuation in promoting mutual understanding between writers and readers and between speakers and listeners.

1.3 Research Questions

The study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. How do punctuation marks work together to convey and clarify meaning in written discourse?
2. How does the correct use of punctuation contribute to textual clarity, coherence, and effectiveness?
3. What strategies do fluent readers employ when interpreting punctuation while reading?
4. Why do some written and spoken forms of discourse present difficulties in comprehension?

1.4 Research Hypotheses

The study tests the following hypotheses:

1. Proper use of punctuation helps reduce difficulties in understanding written and spoken discourse.

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2. Punctuation contributes to establishing a close relationship between writing and speaking.
3. Punctuation marks that appear similar in function may differ in their communicative and grammatical uses.
4. Misuse or inappropriate placement of punctuation marks can change or obscure meaning.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Punctuation as a Linguistic System

Punctuation can be viewed as a system of conventional graphic signs and typographical devices used to organize written language and facilitate its interpretation. It helps readers identify boundaries, relationships, emphasis, and structural patterns within written discourse.

From a linguistic perspective, punctuation interacts with several levels of language, including phonology, syntax, semantics, discourse, and pragmatics. Although punctuation cannot reproduce all the characteristics of spoken language, it provides visual indications that may correspond to certain features of speech, including pauses, sentence boundaries, emphasis, and some patterns of intonation.

Punctuation therefore performs both organizational and interpretive functions. It organizes written material while simultaneously assisting readers in constructing the intended meaning of a text.

2.2 Classification of Punctuation Marks

Following Khidir (2000), punctuation may broadly be classified into conventional signs and typographical devices.

2.2.1 Conventional Signs

A. Terminal Punctuation

These marks normally occur at the end of sentences:

- Full stop/period (.)
- Question mark (?)
- Exclamation mark (!)

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B. Pausing and Linking Marks

These include:

- Comma (,)
- Semicolon (;)
- Colon (:)

C. Hyphens and Dashes

These include:

- Hyphen (–)
- En dash (–)
- Em dash (—)

D. Quotation and Parenthetical Marks

These include:

- Quotation marks (“ ” or ‘ ’)
- Ellipsis (…)
- Brackets [ ]
- Parentheses ( )
- Apostrophe (’)

2.2.2 Typographical Devices

Other graphic conventions that contribute to the organization and interpretation of written texts include:

- Slash (/)
- Ampersand (&)

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- Capitalization
- Underlining
- Italics
- Asterisk (*)

The use and functions of these devices vary according to genre, context, and established writing conventions.

2.3 Linguistic Functions of Punctuation

2.3.1 Punctuation, Phonetics, and Phonology

Punctuation has an indirect but important relationship with features of spoken language, particularly pauses, rhythm, stress, and intonation. When written language is read aloud, punctuation can provide visual cues that assist readers in determining where to pause and how to structure the delivery of a sentence.

Roach (2000) demonstrates the importance of stress in distinguishing certain English words. For example:

- ‘**conduct** (noun) versus **con**’**duct** (verb)
- ‘**present** (noun/adjective) versus **pre**’**sent** (verb)

Although word stress is not normally represented by conventional punctuation marks, the examples illustrate the broader relationship between written representation and spoken language. Punctuation similarly provides written cues that can assist readers in interpreting the prosodic organization of sentences.

2.3.2 Punctuation and Meaning

Punctuation can significantly influence the interpretation of written discourse. A comma, for example, may change the relationship between clauses and consequently affect the meaning assigned to a sentence.

Consider the following examples:

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- **I didn't do it because it was difficult.**
- **I didn't do it, because it was difficult.**

The punctuation in the second sentence provides a different structural and interpretive relationship between the two clauses. Such examples demonstrate that punctuation can contribute to disambiguating written messages.

Wray et al. (1998) similarly demonstrate how punctuation can assist readers in interpreting structurally complex and potentially ambiguous sentences. Punctuation therefore constitutes an important resource for guiding readers toward intended interpretations.

2.3.3 Punctuation, Grammar, and Syntax

Punctuation is closely associated with grammatical and syntactic organization. It helps readers identify sentence boundaries and relationships between clauses and phrases.

Werner and Spaventa (2000) identify major sentence types, including statements, questions, exclamations, and commands. These sentence types are commonly associated with different punctuation conventions:

- Questions generally end with question marks.
- Statements generally end with full stops.
- Exclamations generally end with exclamation marks.
- Commands may end with full stops or, depending on their force, exclamation marks.

In compound and complex sentences, commas, semicolons, colons, and dashes may indicate relationships between clauses and phrases. Correct punctuation consequently contributes to syntactic clarity and facilitates comprehension.

2.4 Punctuation in Different Literary Genres

2.4.1 Fiction

In fiction, punctuation contributes to narrative style, rhythm, characterization, and the representation of dialogue. In E. M. Forster's A Passage to India, for example, punctuation contributes to the organization of narrative discourse and dialogue. Quotation marks dis-

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tinguish spoken dialogue, commas may indicate pauses, and dashes can represent interruption or a change in thought. Thus, punctuation in literary texts can serve purposes that extend beyond grammatical correctness to include stylistic and expressive functions.

2.4.2 Poetry

Punctuation in poetry may perform both conventional and artistic functions. Croft and Cross (2000) explain that poetic language often makes creative use of punctuation, pauses, line breaks, and other graphic devices. Caesura and enjambment, for example, influence the rhythm and interpretation of poetic lines. Punctuation can also contribute to the representation of rhythm and emphasis when poetry is performed orally.

2.4.3 Drama

Punctuation has a particularly significant role in drama because dramatic texts are intended for oral performance. Punctuation may indicate pauses, emphasis, emotional force, and relationships between utterances.

George Bernard Shaw's Arms and the Man, for instance, demonstrates how dialogue and stage directions work together to communicate characters' intentions and emotional states. Punctuation therefore contributes to the transformation of written dramatic discourse into spoken performance.

2.5 Punctuation in Academic Writing

Punctuation is also essential in academic writing because it contributes to clarity, organization, citation, and accurate attribution of sources.

Al-Samawi (2000) distinguishes between direct and indirect forms of quotation. Direct quotations generally require quotation marks and appropriate citation information, whereas indirect quotations involve paraphrasing and therefore follow different punctuation conventions.

Heffernan and Lincoln (1986) also emphasize the importance of punctuation in academic documentation and citation practices. Correct punctuation contributes to the clarity of academic prose and assists readers in identifying quotations, references, and relationships among textual units.

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2.6 Previous Studies

2.6.1 Birci (2018)

Birci investigated students' ability to use punctuation marks in descriptive paragraph writing. The study reported weaknesses in students' punctuation proficiency, with the majority of participants demonstrating a low level of performance. Only one student, representing approximately 2%, achieved an excellent rating. The findings indicate the need for systematic instruction in punctuation.

2.6.2 Wati (2021)

Wati examined the impact of punctuation usage on students' writing skills. The study found that learners experienced difficulties in using punctuation correctly and that instructional practices did not always provide sufficient activities for developing punctuation competence. The study emphasized the importance of incorporating varied instructional activities into punctuation teaching.

2.6.3 Adhikary (2020)

Adhikary investigated students' use of punctuation marks in English writing in Nepal. The findings indicated that the full stop occurred most frequently, accounting for 34.42% of the punctuation marks examined, whereas the slash occurred least frequently, at 1.02%. The study also reported differences in the accuracy of punctuation use between male and female participants.

2.6.4 Alabidi (2019)

Alabidi examined the impact of English punctuation marks on meaning. The study found that learners experienced considerable difficulties in using punctuation appropriately and that such difficulties affected their ability to understand sentences and construct intended meanings.

Research Gap

The previous studies reviewed above primarily focus on learners' punctuation errors, punctuation proficiency, writing performance, and the relationship between punctuation and meaning. However, comparatively less attention has been given to punctuation as

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a mechanism connecting written language with spoken language, particularly in relation to intonation, fluency, comprehension, and the four language skills within the Sudanese English-language teaching context. The present study addresses this gap by combining a pre-test/post-test investigation of students' punctuation performance with specialists' perceptions of the communicative functions of punctuation.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

The study employed a descriptive-analytical research design incorporating a pre-test/post-test procedure and a questionnaire. The pre-test/post-test component was used to investigate changes in students' punctuation performance following a targeted instructional programme. The questionnaire was used to obtain specialists' perceptions concerning the functions and importance of punctuation in written and spoken communication.

3.2 Participants

The study involved two groups of participants.

The first group consisted of **50 third-semester English language students** from the Faculty of Arts, University of Kordofan. The students were randomly selected from a population of 87 students.

The second group consisted of **50 English-language specialists from the El Obeid area**, who participated in the questionnaire component of the study.

3.3 Research Instruments

Two principal instruments were employed:

3.3.1 Punctuation Test

The test consisted of five questions designed to assess students' knowledge and application of punctuation. The questions examined:

1. Appropriate placement of punctuation marks.
2. Punctuation of an unpunctuated passage.

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3. Recognition and identification of punctuation symbols.
4. Distinction between possessive apostrophes and contracted forms and identification of quotations.
5. Correction of inappropriate punctuation in written texts.

3.3.2 Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 30 statements with three response options:

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely

The statements examined participants' views concerning the role of punctuation in textual organization, comprehension, fluency, intonation, teaching, curriculum development, and the four language skills.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

The research instruments were reviewed and validated by three Ph.D. holders specializing in English language. Their comments and recommendations were considered in the preparation of the final instruments. The questionnaire used in the study reported a reliability coefficient of **0.85** and a validity coefficient of **0.92**, indicating satisfactory levels of reliability and validity for the research purposes.

3.5 Data Collection Procedures

The research procedures were conducted in the following sequence:

1. The test was submitted to specialists for validation.
2. The selected students completed the pre-test.
3. A targeted instructional programme on punctuation was delivered.
4. The students completed the post-test.

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5. The questionnaire was distributed to the selected English-language specialists.

6. The collected data were coded and analyzed statistically.

3.6 Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Frequencies, percentages, and inferential statistics were employed to interpret the questionnaire and test results. A dependent-samples t-test was used to examine differences between students' pre-test and post-test performance. Chi-square analysis was used to examine the statistical significance of questionnaire responses.

4. Results

4.1 Pre-test and Post-test Results

The results obtained from the 50 students are presented below.

Statistic	Pre-test	Post-test
Number of participants	50	50
Mean	43.24	69.00
Standard deviation	119.92	83.49

The results show an increase in the mean score from **43.24 in the pre-test to 69.00 in the post-test**. This indicates an improvement in students' punctuation performance following the instructional intervention.

The total score increased from **2,162** in the pre-test to **3,450** in the post-test. These results indicate substantial improvement in students' performance after receiving instruction in punctuation.

Figure 1. Comparison of Students' Pre-test and Post-test Performance

.Insert the original statistical figure here

Editorial note: The reported standard deviations (119.92 and 83.49) should be checked against the original SPSS output because they appear unusually large in relation to the reported mean scores. They should not be altered without reference to the original dataset.

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4.2 Questionnaire Results

Selected questionnaire findings are presented below.

Item	Statement	Always	Sometimes	Rarely
1	Punctuation helps in keeping track of writing.	100%	0%	0%
2	Punctuation helps readers/listeners under-stand meaning.	100%	0%	0%
9	Punctuation makes texts more fluent.	95.5%	4.5%	0%
11	Punctuation symbols are used to transcribe specific intonation patterns.	93.4%	4.4%	2.2%
8	The appropriate use of punctuation creates linguistic confusion.	91.2%	4.4%	4.4%
14	Teachers teach correct punctuation in writ-ten texts.	91.1%	8.9%	0%
16	Teachers enable learners to use proper punctuation.	91.2%	4.4%	4.4%
6	Punctuation marks, including capital letters and apostrophes, are conventional.	88.8%	2.3%	8.9%

The calculated chi-square value of **34.20** was reported as exceeding the critical/table val-ue of **18.82 at p = .001**, indicating statistically significant differences in the questionnaire responses.

Editorial note: Item 8 appears negatively worded ("creates linguistic confusion"), while the reported interpretation appears to assume that appropriate punctuation reduces confusion. The original questionnaire and SPSS coding should therefore be checked to determine whether Item 8 was intended to be reverse-coded or whether the statement contains a wording error.

5. Discussion

5.1 Punctuation and Textual Organization

The finding that 100% of respondents agreed that punctuation helps readers and writers maintain track of written discourse and understand meaning demonstrates the perceived

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importance of punctuation in textual organization. Punctuation enables writers to separate and organize words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. It also helps readers identify relationships among textual units. This finding is consistent with Khidir's (2000) view that appropriate punctuation helps writers organize words and groups of words and facilitates readers' interpretation of ideas.

5.2 Punctuation and Textual Fluency

The finding that 95.5% of respondents agreed that punctuation makes texts more fluent suggests that punctuation contributes significantly to the rhythm and readability of written discourse.

When texts are read aloud, punctuation can provide visual cues concerning pauses and boundaries. Commas, semicolons, colons, dashes, and terminal punctuation can therefore contribute to the rhythm of reading and help readers process textual information more effectively.

5.3 Punctuation and Intonation

The finding that 93.4% of respondents agreed that punctuation symbols can be used to represent specific intonation patterns provides evidence of a perceived connection between written punctuation and spoken prosody. Question marks, exclamation marks, commas, and terminal full stops may provide readers with visual signals concerning the intended delivery of written sentences. Although punctuation cannot reproduce the complete complexity of spoken intonation, it can provide important written cues that facilitate oral interpretation.

This finding supports the broader argument that written and spoken forms of English are interconnected rather than completely separate systems.

5.4 Punctuation and Meaning

The findings further indicate that punctuation contributes to meaning construction and interpretation. In written language, the placement or omission of a punctuation mark may alter relationships among clauses and consequently affect interpretation.

This is particularly important in academic, professional, and literary writing, where ambiguity can undermine effective communication. Appropriate punctuation therefore contributes not only to grammatical correctness but also to semantic clarity.

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5.5 The Role of Teachers

The questionnaire results show strong agreement concerning teachers' responsibility for developing learners' punctuation competence. Specifically, 91.1% of respondents agreed that teachers teach correct punctuation in written texts, while 91.2% agreed that teachers enable learners to use appropriate punctuation.

These findings emphasize the importance of explicit instruction and guided practice. Learners are unlikely to develop consistent punctuation competence merely through exposure to written texts. They require opportunities to identify punctuation patterns, explain their functions, apply punctuation rules, and revise their own writing.

However, the finding that only 66.7% of respondents indicated that teachers always follow strategies designed to teach punctuation mastery suggests that there remains room for improvement in instructional practice.

5.6 Validation of the Research Hypotheses

Research Hypothesis	Result
Proper punctuation helps solve difficulties in understanding discourse.	Confirmed
Punctuation contributes to establishing a close relationship between writing and speaking.	Confirmed
Similar punctuation marks may have different functions and uses.	Confirmed
Misuse of punctuation can change or obscure meaning.	Confirmed

The results therefore provide support for all four hypotheses formulated for the study.

6. Conclusion

The study investigated the role of punctuation in establishing a close relationship between written and spoken forms of English. The findings demonstrate that punctuation plays a central role in organizing written discourse, clarifying meaning, facilitating comprehension, and providing visual cues related to aspects of spoken language.

The pre-test/post-test findings indicate a substantial improvement in students' punctuation performance following the instructional intervention. The questionnaire results likewise demonstrate a high level of agreement concerning the communicative importance of punctuation.

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The major conclusions of the study are as follows:

1. Punctuation is fundamental to the organization and coherence of written texts.
2. Appropriate punctuation facilitates readers' understanding of intended meaning.
3. Punctuation can provide written cues corresponding to certain features of spoken language, particularly pauses and intonation.
4. Appropriate punctuation contributes to textual fluency and readability.
5. Inappropriate punctuation can alter, obscure, or complicate intended meaning.
6. Effective punctuation instruction can improve learners' ability to use written English accurately and meaningfully.
7. Punctuation contributes to the relationship between receptive and productive language skills.

Consequently, punctuation should be treated as an integral component of English language communication rather than merely as a collection of mechanical writing conventions.

7. Recommendations

Based on the findings, the study recommends the following:

7.1 Pedagogical Practices

1. English language teachers should provide explicit instruction on punctuation and its communicative functions.
2. Teachers should demonstrate the relationship between punctuation and oral features such as pauses, stress, and intonation.
3. Teachers should provide learners with systematic practice in punctuating sentences and longer passages.
4. Learners should be trained to identify how punctuation affects meaning during reading and writing activities.
5. Teachers should provide regular corrective feedback on learners' punctuation errors.

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7.2 Curriculum Development

1. English language syllabuses should include sufficient activities dealing with the use and functions of punctuation.
2. Curriculum designers should incorporate practical exercises demonstrating how punctuation contributes to meaning, coherence, and fluency.
3. Punctuation instruction should be integrated into reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities rather than being taught as an isolated component.
4. Textbooks should provide authentic examples of punctuation in academic, literary, and everyday communication.

7.3 Teacher Professional Development

1. English language teachers should receive continuous professional development in effective punctuation instruction.
2. Teacher-training programmes should emphasize the relationship between punctuation, pronunciation, intonation, and meaning.
3. Teachers should use appropriate instructional strategies and technological resources to enhance learners' punctuation competence.
4. Teachers should encourage learners to revise and edit their own writing with particular attention to punctuation.

7.4 Further Research

1. Further studies should investigate the role of punctuation in specific English language skills.
2. Future research should examine the relationship between punctuation proficiency and students' overall writing achievement.
3. Further research should investigate the effectiveness of different methods of teaching punctuation.
4. Studies should explore punctuation in digital communication and its changing conventions.
5. Comparative studies should examine punctuation knowledge across different educational levels and linguistic backgrounds.

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8. Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The study was limited to third-semester English language students at the Faculty of Arts, University of Kordofan, and English-language specialists from the El Obeid area. The student component was conducted within the period specified by the original study, 2020–2023.

The limited geographical and institutional scope of the study may affect the generalizability of its findings. Future research could therefore extend the investigation to students from different universities, academic levels, and disciplines.

Future studies could also:

1. Compare punctuation proficiency across different academic levels.
2. Examine the relationship between punctuation competence and writing achievement.
3. Investigate the effectiveness of specific punctuation-teaching methodologies.
4. Examine punctuation practices in digital communication.
5. Compare punctuation knowledge among learners from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

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