

## **An error analysis of the difficulties of using punctuation marks in students' writing**

**MM. Abdul Rahuman and MF. Fathima Sumeya**

Department of English Language Teaching, Faculty of Arts and Culture, South Eastern University of Sri Lanka

Correspondence: mmarahuman@seu.ac.lk

### **Abstract**

This study intends to describe the difficulties students face while using punctuation marks in their writing. Punctuation mark plays an important role in conveying the meaning of a text. It remains an essential skill for good writing. The purpose of the study is to examine the difficulties of using punctuation marks and to identify the most common errors the students make while using punctuation marks. The study is conducted for the first, second, and third-year students: from the academic years, respectively, who take English as their main subject from the Faculty of Islamic Studies and the Arabic language. 56 students were taken as samples by using a purposive sampling technique to conduct the research. In order to analyze the data, an authentic text was distributed to the students without any punctuation marks, and the data were analyzed manually. A qualitative textual analysis is used in order to conduct this research. Furthermore, the punctuation marks focused on in this research are the comma, full stop, exclamation mark, inverted commas, question marks, apostrophe, and hyphen. As a result of the findings, it reveals that students make errors in using these punctuation marks. Omission (79%) is the most common type of error the students make, and 96.64% of the hyphens were due to omitting it in places where it should be placed, whereas this particular percentage of apostrophes and commas were identified as 75.45% and 64.88%, respectively. Though they are students who take English as their main subject, they still have issues in using punctuation marks due to their carelessness, lack of attention, and motivation to mark it correctly. Besides, their lack of understanding of the rules of using punctuation marks plays a major role in the difficulties of using it.

**Keywords:** punctuational errors, and causes of punctuational errors