

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG



ISO 9001 : 2008

KHÓA LUẬN TỐT NGHIỆP

NGÀNH: NGOẠI NGỮ

HẢI PHÒNG - 2010

HAIPHONG PRIVATE UNIVERSITY
FOREIGN LANGUAGES DEPARTMENT

GRADUATION PAPER

**HOW TO USE SOME TYPICAL TYPES OF
PUNCTUATION PROPERLY IN WRITTEN ENGLISH
AND COMMON MISTAKE MADE BY VIETNAMESE
LEARNERS**

By:

Trịnh Thị Lưu Quỳnh

Class:

Na1001

Supervisor:

Phạm Thị Thu Hằng, M.A

HAI PHONG - 2010

BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC DÂN LẬP HẢI PHÒNG

Nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp

Sinh viên:Mã số:.....

Lớp:Ngành:.....

Tên đề tài:

.....

.....

.....

Nhiệm vụ đề tài

1. Nội dung và các yêu cầu cần giải quyết trong nhiệm vụ đề tài tốt nghiệp (về lý luận, thực tiễn, các số liệu cần tính toán và các bản vẽ).

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Các số liệu cần thiết để thiết kế, tính toán.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Địa điểm thực tập tốt nghiệp.

.....

.....

.....

CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN ĐỀ TÀI

Người hướng dẫn thứ nhất:

Họ và tên:.....

Học hàm, học vị:.....

Cơ quan công tác:.....

Nội dung hướng dẫn:.....

Người hướng dẫn thứ hai:

Họ và tên:.....

Học hàm, học vị:.....

Cơ quan công tác:.....

Nội dung hướng dẫn:.....

Đề tài tốt nghiệp được giao ngày 12 tháng 04 năm 2010

Yêu cầu phải hoàn thành xong trước ngày 10 tháng 07 năm 2010

Đã nhận nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Sinh viên

Đã giao nhiệm vụ ĐTTN

Người hướng dẫn

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2010

HIỆU TRƯỞNG

GS.TS.NGUYỄN Trần Hữu Nghị

PHẦN NHẬN XÉT TÓM TẮT CỦA CÁN BỘ HƯỚNG DẪN

1. Tinh thần thái độ của sinh viên trong quá trình làm đề tài tốt nghiệp:

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Đánh giá chất lượng của khóa luận (so với nội dung yêu cầu đã đề ra trong nhiệm vụ Đ.T. T.N trên các mặt lý luận, thực tiễn, tính toán số liệu...):

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

3. Cho điểm của cán bộ hướng dẫn (ghi bằng cả số và chữ):

.....

.....

.....

Hải Phòng, ngày tháng năm 2010

Cán bộ hướng dẫn

(họ tên và chữ ký)

NHẬN XÉT ĐÁNH GIÁ

CỦA NGƯỜI CHĂM PHẢN BIỆN ĐỀ TÀI TỐT NGHIỆP

1. Đánh giá chất lượng đề tài tốt nghiệp về các mặt thu thập và phân tích tài liệu, số liệu ban đầu, giá trị lí luận và thực tiễn của đề tài.

2. Cho điểm của người chấm phản biện :

(Điểm ghi bằng số và chữ)

Ngày..... tháng..... năm 2010

Người chấm phản biện

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PART I. INTRODUCTION	1
1. Rationale.....	1
2. Aims of the study	1
3. Scope of the study	2
5. Design of the study.....	2
PART II. DEVELOPMENT	3
CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND	3
I. GENERAL VIEW ON WRITTEN ENGLISH	3
1. What is written English?	3
2. Types of written English	3
II. ENGLISH PUNCTUATION MARKS	4
1. What is punctuation?.....	4
2. Classification of punctuation	5
2.1. Grammatical points	5
2.1.1. The Comma [,]	5
2.1.2. The Semicolon [;].....	5
2.1.3. The Colon [:]	6
2.1.4. The Period [.]	6
2.2. The Grammatical and Rhetorical points	6
2.2.1. The Question mark [?].	6
2.2.2. The Exclamation mark [!]	6
2.3.2. The Hyphen [-].....	8
2.3.3. The Quotation mark [“ ”], [‘ ’].....	8
1.4. Miscellaneous points	8
1.4.1. The Brackets []	8
1.4.2. A Comma Inverted [‘]	9
1.4.3. Two Commas [,,].....	9
1.4.4. The Caret [^].....	9
1.4.5. Marks of Ellipsis [...].....	9

1.4.6. Slash [/].....	9
2. Main functions of Punctuation Marks.....	9
CHAPTER 2. AN INVESTIGATION ON SOME TYPICAL TYPES OF PUNCTUATION IN WRITTEN ENGLISH.....	11
I. WHAT IS TYPICAL TYPES OF PUNCTUATION MARKS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH?.....	11
II. RULES OF USING SOME TYPICAL TYPES OF PUNCTUATION MARKS.....	11
1. Comma	12
<u>1.1. The Use of a Comma in the Words or Phrases that are joined by coordinating conjunctions</u>	12
<u>1.2. The Use of Comma in Series of Words</u>	13
<u>1.3. The Use of Comma with Words in Apposition (Nouns or Phrases in Apposition)</u>	14
<u>1.4. The Use of Comma in Relative Clauses</u>	15
<u>1.5. The Use of Comma in Adjectival, Participial, and Absolute Phrases</u>	15
<u>1.6. The Use of Comma in Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases</u>	16
<u>1.7. The Use of Comma in Dependent Clauses</u>	17
<u>1.8. The Use of Comma in Direct Quotations</u>	17
<u>1.9. Other Conventional Uses of Commas</u>	18
2. Semicolon.....	19
<u>2.1. The Use of Semicolon in Coordinate Clauses</u>	19
<u>2.2. The Use of Semicolon in a Series</u>	21
<u>2.3. The Use of Semicolon in Explanatory Phrases and Clauses</u>	22
3. Colon	22
<u>3.1. The Use of Colon in Clauses</u>	22
<u>3.2. The Use of Colon in Quotations</u>	23
<u>3.3. The Use of Colon in Introducing a List or a Series</u>	24
<u>3.4. The Other Conventional Uses of Colon</u>	25
4. Periods.....	25

4.1. <u>The Use of Period in Sentences</u>	25
4.2. <u>The Use of Period in Headings and Subheads</u>	26
4.3. <u>The Use of Periods in Abbreviations</u>	26
4.4. <u>The Other Conventional Uses of Periods</u>	27
5. Question Mark.....	28
5.1. <u>The Use of Question Mark in indicating queries</u>	28
5.2. <u>The Use of Question Marks in Requests</u>	29
5.3. <u>The Use of Question Marks in Rhetorical question</u>	29
5.4. <u>The Use of Question Mark in Parenthesis to indicate uncertainty (?)</u>	30
5.5. <u>The Uses of Question Mark with Other Punctuation Marks</u>	30
6. Exclamation Mark	31
6.1. <u>The Uses of Exclamation Marks in Strong Emotion or Emphatic Declaration</u>	32
6.2. <u>The Uses of Exclamation Mark in Rhetorical Questions</u>	33
6.3. <u>The Use of Exclamation Mark For Drawing Attention to unlikely point</u>	33
CHAPTER 3 THE IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY	35
I. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES ON COMMON PUNCTUATION MISTAKES MADE BY VIETNAMESE LEARNERS	35
1. Participants	35
2. Purpose of survey questionnaires.....	35
3. Design of survey questionnaires	35
4. Data analysis.....	36
4.2. <u>Vietnamese students' knowledge about the use of punctuation marks in written English and common punctuation mistakes made by them.</u>	38
4.2.1. Students' attitudes toward punctuation marks and common mistakes (Question 2+3+4+5+6, Appendix).....	38
4.2.2. Students' understanding of comma and comma errors	40
4.2.3. Students' knowledge of semicolon and semicolon errors	42
4.2.4. Students' understanding of Colon and Colon Errors.....	43
4.2.4. Students' understanding of period and period errors.	44

4.2.5. Students' understanding of Apostrophe and apostrophe errors.....	45
5. Findings and discussion of findings.....	45
II. SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR SOME COMMON PUNCTUATION MISTAKES	46
1. Comma splice.....	46
2. Semicolon for colon.....	46
3. Colon after such as, including, to be.....	46
4. Missing period between sentences.....	46
PART III. CONCLUSION	47
APPENDIX THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES	48
I. Self-Assessment of English writing skills, basic grammar, and punctuation.	48
II. Question on the use of punctuation marks in written English and common some punctuation mistakes.	49
1. Survey on punctuation marks.....	49
2. Survey on comma and comma errors.....	49
3. Survey on semicolon and semicolon errors.....	50
5. Survey on period and period errors.....	51
6. Survey on apostrophe and apostrophe errors.....	52
REFERENCES	53

PART I. INTRODUCTION

1. Rationale

During four years studying at the university, I realized that writing is a difficult skill, which requires a basic background of English grammar. In written English, writers always have to pay attention to many grammar factors such as tenses, sentence structures, parts of speech, conjunctions, and punctuation marks. Each of them plays an important part in making a correct sentence, especially punctuations. A complete sentence hardly ever misses punctuation marks. In fact, punctuation marks have a big role in making clear the meaning of a sentence, avoiding the ambiguity.

Despite having learned it from the university, I still aware of that I need to study much more about punctuation and their rules because of some reasons. Firstly, I also have made many mistakes on punctuation when I write. Moreover, I want to find out the reasons and solution for those mistakes. Secondly, understanding well the use of some typical punctuation such as period, comma, colon, semicolon, question mark, and exclamation mark is necessary for my life.

For the reasons mentioned above, I decided to choose the title “How to use some typical types of punctuation properly in written English and common mistakes made by Vietnamese learners” for my study.

2. Aims of the study

The fact is, we all write in such these days, and punctuation is one of the first casualties. Difficulties with punctuation affect all writers, whether they are native speakers or otherwise. Therefore, I particularly want to make clear the rule of using punctuation in my study with these following aims:

- Giving a general view on written English and punctuation with its definition, classification, function, role.
- Providing the basic rules of some typical types of punctuation such as period (or full stop), commas, colon, semicolon, question mark, and exclamation mark.
- Indicating some common mistakes made by Vietnamese learners, giving solution for them.

3. Scope of the study

Punctuation marks in written English are rather various. However, the research on all kinds of punctuation in written English is too hard for an undergraduate student like me. Therefore, in this paper, I just focus on studying the rules of using some typical types of punctuation that are often used most in writing such as comma, colon, semicolon, period (or full stop), question mark (or interrogation mark), and exclamation mark.

4. Methods of the study

Quantitative method: During my research process, I chose the quantitative method to analyze my data that I collected through the survey questionnaires on the common punctuation mistakes made by Vietnamese learners. I also use some charts to express the figures and analyze them.

Others methods:

- Acquiring and referring to the guidance from my teachers.
- Getting all necessary information from internet, books, dictionaries, and library.

5. Design of the study

This paper provides a clear organization consisting three main parts that help an easy exploration and practical benefits gained for readers as well.

❖ **PART I** starts with an INTRODUCTION including Rationale, Aims of the study, Scope of the study, and Method of the study and Design of the study.

❖ **PART II** consists of DEVELOPMENT consisting three chapters as following:

- **Chapter 1:** Theoretical background of written English, punctuation with its definition, classification, functions, and role
- **Chapter 2:** An investigation on some typical types of punctuation in written English
- **Chapter 3:** The implication of the study

❖ **PART III** ends with CONCLUSION, which summarizes the knowledge mentioned through three chapters above.

PART II. DEVELOPMENT

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

I. GENERAL VIEW ON WRITTEN ENGLISH

1. What is written English?

Written English is a way of recording English language using any of various instruments and material, such as pen and paper, chisel and stone, or computers. The language itself is either spoken or signed, so written language develops as a way of representing what has been said. In many cultures, community languages are unwritten.

(http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Written_language)

In fact, written English has many differences from spoken language. One of the most essential differences between them is the degree of formality. In general, we often our writing is often more formal than our speaking. Because, in spoken English, we can see listeners and may know well about them, our speaking can be less formal. Nevertheless, in written English, writer does not know readers personally. Therefore, they have to use words and sentences formally and clearly in order to serve a variety of readers.

2. Types of written English

In written English, types of texts are very various depending on the using purposes of writers. According to Writing of Hedge, T.1988.Oxford University Press, written English has some types as follows:

- *Personal writing*: Diaries, Journals, Shopping Lists, Packing Lists, Addresses, Recipes.
- *Public writing*: Letters of enquiry, complain, request, Form filling, Applications (for membership).
- *Creative writing*: Poems, Stories, Rhymes, Drama, Songs, Autobiography
- *Social writing*: Letters, Invitations, Notes, Cablegrams, Telephone

messages, Instructions to friends or family

- *Study writing*: Making notes while reading, taking notes from lecturer, making a card index, Summaries, Synopses, Reviews, Reports, Essays, Bibliographies.

- *Institutional writing*: Agendas, Minutes, Memoranda, Reports, Contracts, Business letters, Public notices, Advertisements, Speeches, Curriculum Vitae, Specifications, Note-making.

All the types of written English mentioned above are commonly used in life. Some of them such as social writing, study writing, and institutional writing are required to be strict in English grammar and punctuation. If one of above texts has poor punctuation and grammar, it cannot convey a writer's senses to his readers. Therefore, knowing how to use punctuation and grammar properly in written English is extremely important to language learners.

II. ENGLISH PUNCTUATION MARKS

1. What is punctuation?

Punctuation is the practice or system of using certain conventional marks or characters to make clear the meaning of written or printed language. Punctuation marks are used to add emphasis, minimize ambiguity, and aid reader comprehension.

<http://www.writingenglish.com/punctuation.html>

In *Principle of English Punctuation* (1898), George Smallfield stated that: "Punctuation is the art of dividing a written or printed composition into sentences, or into parts of sentences, by the use of points, or stops, for the purpose of making the different pauses which the sense and an accurate pronunciation require".

We also have another definition of punctuation: "In every language, besides the sounds of the words that are strung together, there are other features such as tone, accent, and pauses that are equally significant. Such features are

represented by punctuation, indicated by signs inserted usually between words, and often following the feature they mark”.

<http://www.answers.com/topic/punctuation>)

Because of the popularity of punctuation, each writer or dictionary has its own definitions of punctuation. In my opinion, punctuation is *a set of symbols used in writing to help indicate something about the structure of sentences, or to assist readers in understanding the whole meaning of texts given by writers.*

2. Classification of punctuation

Punctuation marks in written English can be classified into four main groups: *Grammatical points, Grammatical and Rhetorical points, Letter, syllabic and quotation points, Miscellaneous points.*

2.1. Grammatical points

In this part, I would like to devote the consideration of the principal sentential marks including comma, semicolon, colon and period.

2.1.1. The Comma [,]

The comma is used for a wide range of different purposes in punctuation. A comma may be used to separate units of a sentence such as an introduction or parenthetical thought, to separate items in lists such as this one, to lead a sentence into a quotation, and to separate independent clauses joined by a word such as “and” or “yet”. Comma also has a large number of uses, which will be shown in details in the Chapter 2.

Here is an example of using comma in sentences:

He is a greedy, stubborn, and selfish child.

2.1.2. The Semicolon [;]

Semicolons, like all punctuation marks, ensure clarity in written language by joining independent clauses and separating items in a list. Let's see an example of semicolon:

She lives in a small cottage in Roma, miles from the nearest town; the cottage is without gas, running water or electricity.

2.1.3. The Colon [:]

We often see a colon to appear in lists, or quotation marks. A colon is a unit of punctuation typically used to introduce a subsequent sentence that is in some way logically linked to the preceding sentence.

Example:

1. Success depends on three things: talent, determination, and luck.

2. Dear Mr. Mayor:

(John E. Lincoln, *Writing a college handbook*, 433)

2.1.4. The Period [.]

A period is the default terminal punctuation mark, used to end a sentence without conveying any additional meaning. Its primary purpose is to separate complete thoughts, to mark the end of declarative and imperative sentences.

Example:

She is a beautiful and talent singer.

2.2. The Grammatical and Rhetorical points

A part from the above punctuation marks, there are some other marks, partly grammatical and partly rhetorical including the Question or Interrogation mark, the Exclamation mark, the Dash, and the Parenthesis.

2.2.1. The Question mark [?]

Question mark, as it names implies, is placed at the end of every question. It indicates that the preceding sentence takes the form of an interrogative, and may be read to change the tone when reading aloud to reflect this.

What are you doing now?

2.2.2. The Exclamation mark [!]

An exclamation mark indicates that the preceding sentence is somehow excited or extremely important, and if read aloud should be given special stress. There are some examples of exclamation mark as follows:

What a beautiful girl it is!

2.2.3. The Dash [—]

Dashes are used for many different purposes, often to link specific things together. Dashes include three types: figure dash, en dash, and em dash. A *figure dash* is used to link numbers together such as in a phone number. An *en dash* is used to link things that are within a closed range of values, such as those between dates, times, or page numbers. An *em dash* is traditionally used to separate a thought from the flow of the sentence – like this – in an almost parenthetical manner.

En dash: *June–July 1967 1:00–2:00 p.m. For ages 3–5
pp. 38–55*

Em dash: *"The whole group had attended—even Matt and Rebecca—and I knew it was going to be a great night"*

2.2.3. The Parenthesis [()]

A parenthesis consists of two curved lines (), which is a clause containing some necessary information, or useful remarks introducing the body of a sentence indirectly, but can be omitted without affecting the sense or the construction of the whole sentence, for example:

Ex: Only a few weeks late, the company announced its intention to purchase the consumer products division (flour and pasta) of one of its smaller competitors.

<http://www.writingenglish.com/parentheses.html>

2.3. Letter, syllabic and quotation points

The marks being considered in this chapter are the Apostrophe, the Hyphen, and the Quotation marks.

2.3.1. The Apostrophe [']

Apostrophe is a mark, which is distinguished from a comma, only in being placed above the line; but its uses are very different. This mark of elision or shortening is used chiefly in poetry and in familiar dialogue, to denote the omission of a letter or words.

For example:

1.4.2. A Comma Inverted [‘]

According to John Wilson, a comma inverted is sometimes used instead of a very small *c*, in many proper names beginning with *Mac*; as, *M'Donald*, the abbreviation of *Macdonald*.

1.4.3. Two Commas [,,]

These marks are occasionally employed to indicate that something is understood which was expressed in the line and work immediately above, for example:

John Jones, Esq.....Plymouth

John Smith, Esq.....,,

(John Wilson, 1868:237)

1.4.4. The Caret [^]

John Wilson also stated that the caret is used, only in manuscript, to show where a letter or a word was accidentally omitted, but which has afterwards been placed over the line; as,

p are
Disapointments and trial often blessing in disguise.
 ^ ^

1.4.5. Marks of Ellipsis [...]

Marks or points of ellipsis are used in formal writing to indicate an omission from quoted matter, for example:

This combination caused Wright to wonder whether “since the interference velocities due to...walls are of opposite signs..., opposite effects might be so combined in a slotted tunnel as to produce zero blockage.”

1.4.6. Slash [/]

A slash, also called *solidus* or *virgule*, can be correctly used in *and/or*, in fraction (x/y), to indicate *per* (m/sec), and when quoting poetry.

2. Main functions of Punctuation Marks

As provided in the preceding parts, English punctuation consists of many different marks. Each of them has its own features and uses which will create

different effect in texts. Therefore, functions of punctuation marks are rather various. Based on my little knowledge and findings, punctuation marks perform four main functions as follows:

- (1) They separate (a period separates sentences)
- (2) They group or enclose (parentheses enclose extraneous information)
- (3) They connect (a hyphen connects a unit modifier)
- (4) They impart meaning (a question mark may make an otherwise declarative sentence interrogative)

3. Roles of punctuation marks in written English

In fact, punctuation marks play an important role in written English. They help writer know which words or sentences they should give more importance. The author can express the feelings with the punctuation marks as in verbal communication the writer is expressing the feelings with the body language.

Punctuation marks are also special signals, which inform writer's ideas in texts to readers. For example, when readers see a period, question mark, or exclamation point, they know that the writer has reached the end of a thought. Semicolons also let readers know that although the writer has presented a complete thought, he or she is still thinking and making more good stuff.

It is true that writers can make impression on readers by using correct punctuation marks in their writing. Through the variety of punctuation marks in a text, readers may understand that he or she is a good writer who can use many types of punctuation to create different sentence types and new writing construction.

CHAPTER 2

AN INVESTIGATION ON SOME TYPICAL TYPES OF PUNCTUATION IN WRITTEN ENGLISH

I. WHAT IS TYPICAL TYPES OF PUNCTUATION MARKS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH?

First, we should consider and define that which types of punctuation marks are called typical ones in written English. In some dictionaries, the adjective *typical* means that “having the usual qualities or features of a particular type of person, thing or group.”

(<http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com/dictionary/typical>)

Based on it, we may know that typical types of punctuation are marks, which have all characteristics of punctuation and commonly used in writing.

In general, we have six marks, which are used most commonly in written English. They are comma, semicolon, colon, period, question mark, and exclamation mark. To any writer, these marks are very common and familiar. All of them have enough qualities of punctuation and used popularly in every types of text. In fact, we cannot get a complete text without using any above punctuation marks, especially comma and period. The two typical marks are nearly main factors to form sentence structures or terminate a sentence. Therefore, they are regarded as the typical types of punctuation marks in written English.

In the following parts, I would like to introduce some common rules of using the typical types of punctuation marks. They may be the most basic rules, which will support anyone who get troubles when using punctuation marks in order to diversify their writing.

II. RULES OF USING SOME TYPICAL TYPES OF PUNCTUATION MARKS

In this part, I just want to address some of the most typical types of punctuation marks in written English, studying their functions, situations when the marks are required or incorrect, and situations when the marks are

appropriate but optional. They are Comma, Colon, Semicolon, Period (or Full stop), Question mark, and Exclamation mark.

1. 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.

According to Mary K. McCaskill (1998:48), the function of a particular comma is important: when it separates, it stands alone, but when it encloses, it needs a partner.

Due to the variety of using a comma and its importance, I would like to introduce to you the most common rules of comma in written English.

1.1. The Use of a Comma in the Words or Phrases that are joined by coordinating conjunctions

✓ **Rule 1. When two words belonging to the same part of speech are closely connected by one of the coordinating conjunctions *and, or, nor...*, we do not use a comma to separate from each other.**

Examples:

1. *She is living with Tom and Mary in a small house in London.*

2. *You and I coincide in opinion.*

In these examples, it will be seen that the comma is inadmissible, not only between two words united by a conjunction, but also after them. Here no point should be used, except when they come at the end of a clause or sentence, or form such phrases from their construction with others, require to be punctuated.

✓ **Rule 2. When several nouns or pronouns which are in the same parts of speech, are joined in pairs by the conjunction *and, or*, they must be separated in pairs by a comma.**

Examples:

1. *He and she, you and I, may conveniently travel in the same carriage.*

2. *Friendship is cool and deliberate, sedate and temperate, steady and*

discreet.

We usually use this rule of comma when we want to separate a series of nouns, pronouns, or adjectives. A subject, which has multiple pronouns as the first example, needs commas to separate those pronouns in pairs. Without commas, writer may feel hard to define which pronoun is the main subject of the whole sentence and will cause some confusion with the tense of verbs used in the sentence.

1.2. The Use of Comma in Series of Words

✓ **Rule. A comma should be inserted in a series of three or more items, which have the same parts of speech.**

Examples:

1. *My \$10 million estate is to be split among my husband, daughter, son, and nephew.*

2. *The flight navigation system also provides altitude, roll, pitch, yaw, and ground speed.*

Normally, with a series of three or more noun phrases and adverbial phrases as in the above examples, we put the coordinating conjunction before the last phrase or noun. We also need commas before that conjunction to separate any words or phrases, which have different meanings. For example, nouns as *my husband, daughter, and son*, each of them indicates different objects. Therefore, commas must be applied to avoid any confusion and misreading to readers.

• Remarks

❖ A comma must be placed after the last noun in a series, if it is not connected with the rest ones by conjunction, and does not end a sentence or clause.

Examples:

Reputation, virtue, happiness, depends greatly on the choice of companions.

The good man is alive to all the sympathies, the sanctities, the loves, of social existence.

1.3. The Use of Comma with Words in Apposition (Nouns or Phrases in Apposition)

✓ **Rule 1. Two nouns or personal pronouns, which are in apposition with the others, should not be separated by a comma, if they may be regarded as a proper name or as a single phrase.**

Example:

1. *The Poet Milton wrote excellent prose and better poetry.*

2. *He himself was the editor of New York Times in five years ago.*

The term *noun* here is so used to applied either to a single word of this character, or to an unemphatic word and a noun. In the first sentence, we can see that two nouns, “*the poet*” and “*Milton*” indicates one person. “*The poet*” means a career of that person and “*Milton*” is his proper name. They are called words in apposition, which use no comma between. Similarly, the second sentence also has two pronouns, a personal and .Thus, both words, “*the poet*” and “*himself*” in the two above examples, are to avoid circumlocution, spoken of as a noun, and not a phrase.

✓ **Rule 2. Nouns in apposition, which is, added to the other nouns in the same case, by the way of explication or illustration, accompanied by adjuncts, or words adjoined, are separated from the rest of the sentence by a comma.**

Ex: *Homer, the most famous poet of antiquity, is said to have been blind.*

Ho Chi Minh, the greatest leader of Vietnam, was born on 19 May 1980.

This rule is very different from the preceding one. In this rule, the second phrases often explain or illustrate the meaning of the words, which precede it. For example, in the first sentence, “*Homer*” is a proper name that some people may know about him; others maybe not. To make clear the meaning, we put extra information about the person mentioned and separate them by commas.

1.4. The Use of Comma in Relative Clauses

✓ **Rule .** A comma is put before a relative clause, when it is explanatory of the antecedent, or presents an additional thought (a nonrestrictive clause). However, the mark is omitted before a relative clause, which restricts the general notion of the antecedent to a particular sense (restrictive clause).

Examples:

1. Restrictive clause

Anyone who publishes a book at the age of six must be remarkable.

2. Nonrestrictive clause

Dorothy Straight of Washington D.C., who published her first book at the age of six, was a remarkable child.

In the first sentence, *who*-clause is necessary to understand the meaning of the sentence because it restricts the sense of *anyone* into a definite person. Therefore, *who*-clause helps to indicate which person is remarkable. In the second example, *Dorothy Straight* is a proper name, which defines itself. *Who*-clause just provides additional information and is called nonrestrictive clause. Let's see another example.

1. *At the microphone stood a man wearing a green suit. (restrictive clause)*

2. *At the microphone stood the master of ceremonies, wearing a green suit. (nonrestrictive clause)*

Normally, the use of commas in nonrestrictive clause is not only applied to adjective clause as *who publishes a book at the age of six*, and particle phrases such as *wearing a green suit*, but also includes any element modifying the basic meaning of the sentence.

1.5. The Use of Comma in Adjectival, Participial, and Absolute Phrases

✓ **Rule.** Adjectival, participial, and absolute phrases are each separated by a comma from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

1. *Having approved of his plan, we decided to leave home.*

2. *Stuck in the crowd, she tried to call me for help.*

3. *To speak candidly, I do not understand the subject.*

4. *Generally speaking, environmental pollution is caused by human activities.*

In the two first examples the phrases, “*having approved of his plan*” and “*stuck in the crowd*” show the punctuation of adjectival and participial phrases. Each of them is separated by a comma from the clause which follows, and with which it is associated. However, the next two sentences contain the infinitive “*to speak candidly*” and participle absolute “*general speaking*” which are grammatically independent of the rest of the sentence in which they occur. All of them needed commas to set off the subordinate phrases from the main clauses, which brought out the clearness for the sentence.

1.6. The Use of Comma in Adverbs and Adverbial Phrases

✓ **Rule.** When we use adverbs and adverbial phrases to modify not only a single word but also clauses or sentences, a comma follows them. If they stand in the middle, they admit a comma both before and after them.

Examples:

1. *Lastly, let me repeat what I stated at the beginning of my lecture.*

2. *On the other hand, we have to solve many different matters.*

The rule above shows very obviously the use of commas with adverbs and adverbial phrases. Now, I would like to introduce a list of adverbs and adverbial phrases, which follow this rule.

Again, further, moreover, once more, as yet, well, firstly, secondly, finally, accordingly, consequently, namely, at present, in truth, in short, in general, in particular, in the meanwhile, nevertheless, doubtless, that is, on the other hand...

We properly put commas before or after these words when using them in the text.

1.7. The Use of Comma in Dependent Clauses

✓ **Rule 1. A comma separates two clauses, which depend on each other in sense.**

✓ **Examples:**

1. *If I were you, I would never do that.*
2. *Until we can go alone, we must lean on the hand of guide.*
3. *When she came back home, it was raining heavily.*

Sentences containing dependent clauses are generally distinguished by one of them beginning with a particle expression of condition, admission, purpose, causation, time, or place. They need a comma to separate the dependent clause and the main clause as expressed in the above examples. However, we note that no point should be inserted between two clauses coordinated by the conjunction *that* which signify purpose or design of the sentence if it is closely connected with the preceding verb.

Examples:

1. *Live well that you may die well*
2. *We go that we may be in time.*

But, the comma can be put between the clauses, when the word *in order* come before the conjunction *that*.

She came home early in order that she could pick up the children on time.

1.8. The Use of Comma in Direct Quotations

✓ **Rule. A comma from the clause, which precedes it, separates a direct quotation, or any expression that resembles a quotation.**

Examples:

1. *In reference 6, he states, "Thermal neutron fluxes up to 10^{20} might be required.*
2. *Patrick Henry commenced by saying, "It is natural to man to indulge in the illusions of hope."*

Direct quotation means a single sentence, containing the remark of a writer, which needs a comma to separate from the rest of the sentence. However, an

indirect quotation never requires a comma before them.

He said that he could not live without her.

1.9. Other Conventional Uses of Commas

a. Dates

✓ *Use a comma to separate the day of the month from the year and after the year.*

1. *Kathleen met her husband on December 5, 2003, in Mill Valley, California.*

2. *On the afternoon of July 1, 1963, the fighting began.*

✓ *If any part of the date is omitted, leave out the comma.*

They met in December 2003 in Mill Valley.

✓ *When beginning with number of days, do not use a comma to separate them.*

The atomic bomb was first dropped on 6 August 1945.

b. Geographical names and addresses

✓ *Use a comma to separate the city from the state and after the state in a document. If you use the two-letter capitalized form of the state in a document, you do not need a comma after the state.*

1. *I lived in San Francisco, California, for 20 years.*

2. *I lived in San Francisco, CA for 20 years.*

✓ *With addresses on envelopes mailed via the post office, do not use any comma.*

1. *24 Mechanic Street Lebanon NH 03766*

2. *35 Rosemount Avenue Montreal Que. H3Y3G6*

c. Degrees, titles, affiliations, etc.

✓ *Use commas to surround degrees or titles used with names. However, commas are no longer required around Jr. and Sr., and never set off II, III, and so forth.*

Examples:

Members of the committee consisted of J. J. Delius, Ph.D., NOAA Environmental Research Laboratory; J. P. Friend III, Drexel University; and

M. P. McCormick, chairman, NASA Langley Research Center.

d. Names

✓ *Use commas before or surrounding the name of a person directly addressed.*

1. *Will you, Aisha, do that assignment for me?*

2. *Yes, Doctor, I will.*

✓ *Use a comma after first name of a person when written before last name.*

Lunt, George D.

Wilson, Smith

e. Numbers

✓ *The comma is used to separate thousands in numbers of five or more digits; but in technical work, we prefer a (thin) space over a comma because in some foreign languages the comma indicates the decimal point.*

Correct : *There were 88,000 data points, 2500 of which had to be discarded.*

f. In letters

✓ *Use a comma after greetings and conclusion of both formal and informal letters.*

Dear Mary,

Dear Uncle Paul,

Your sincerely,

Your faithfully,

2. Semicolon

The semicolon is a hugely powerful punctuation mark. In fact, many people think that the rules of semicolons are very complicated and hard to use. However, when you see these following rules, you will find easy to take a semicolon in your text.

2.1. The Use of Semicolon in Coordinate Clauses

✓ **Rule 1. A semicolon is most commonly used to link two independent clauses that are closely related in thought. When a semicolon is used to join two or more ideas (parts) in a sentence, those ideas are then given equal position or rank.**

Examples:

Winter storm conditions have made travel impossible; the roads are completely covered in snow and ice.

In this case, some people often make mistakes because they do not know to use a comma or a semicolon. This mistake is known as a comma splice. However, it will be seen that both parts of the sentence are independent clauses, and commas should not be used to connect independent clauses if there is no coordinating conjunction. Therefore, admitting a semicolon here is more correct.

✓ Rule 2. If coordinate clauses are already joined by coordinating conjunctions, but long, complicated, or internally punctuated with commas, they may be separated by a semicolon.

Examples:

Some people write with a word processor, typewriter, or a computer; but others, for different reasons, choose to write with a pen or pencil.

(<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html>)

When a sentence consists of three or more clauses, united by a conjunction, but none of which are susceptible of division, a semicolon should be put between those, which are least connected in sense, and a comma only between the others.

✓ Rule 3. When coordinate clauses are joined by a conjunctive adverb *however, thus, therefore, hence* or transitional phrases, a semicolon must be used to separate the conjunctive adverb from the rest of the sentence.

Examples:

1. The differences were generally about 11 percent; however, larger differences occurred at = 15.

2. However, they choose to write, people are allowed to make their own decisions; as a result, many people swear by their writing methods.

Whether a period, semicolon, or comma is used between clauses is a matter of style. As in the first sentence, the conjunctive adverb *however* signals a connection between two independent clauses, and commas should not be used

to connect independent clauses if there is no coordinating conjunction. Here, we should place a semicolon before the conjunctive adverb and a comma after it. A semicolon before “*however*” or “*as a result*” separated two equal clauses, which related in thoughts. But, a comma after them may be used to set off the transitional phrases from the following clause.

2.2. The Use of Semicolon in a Series

✓ **Rule.** When elements of a list or a series are long, complex, or already punctuated with commas, separating the elements with commas may not make meaning clear; we should use a semicolon between them.

There are two ways to write: with a pen or pencil, which is inexpensive and easily accessible; or by computer and printer, which is more expensive but quick and neat.

(<http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html>)

The above sentence is punctuated with many marks such as colon, commas, and semicolon. Colon is introducing the following items in a series. Comma and semicolon are also used to separate those items. However, if we omitted semicolon and only used commas here, the sense is not clear any more. Semicolon is better than comma when used to make a big pause in long and complicated sentences like that. But, we should remember to place a semicolon after each item in the series except for the last item. We also put the last semicolon before the coordinating conjunction. Geographical locations are common items that contain commas that are written as series.

• Remarks

❖ Do not use semicolons to separate items without commas in a series. For example:

Cheddar cheese; skim milk; and ice cream are three of my favorite dairy products.

❖ Do not use semicolons to separate only two items that contain commas. For example:

Please grab cereal, milk, and bowls for breakfast; and bread, lunchmeat, and cheese for lunch.

2.3. The Use of Semicolon in Explanatory Phrases and Clauses

✓ **Rule.** It is preferable to use a semicolon before introductory words such as *namely, however, therefore, that is, i.e., for example, e.g., or for instance* when they introduce a complete sentence.

Examples:

1. *Some random processes are reasonably independent of the precise time; that is, measurements made at different times are similar in their average properties.*

2. *As we discussed, you will bring two items; i.e., a sleeping bag and a tent are not optional.*

(Mary K. McCaskill, 1998:74)

As mentioned in the rule 3 of the part 2.1, it is necessary to get a semicolon before these introductory words to transfer the sense from the former to the latter. Semicolon signaled that the flow of thought continued even we had a complete sentence already.

3. Colon

Although a colon is still useful in causing a reader to pause before pushing into and through a series or itemized list, the dash has taken over many of its other functions. Colons facilitate the construction of long, unwieldy sentences.

3.1. The Use of Colon in Clauses

✓ **Rule .** We use a colon instead of a semicolon between two clauses when the second clause explains or illustrates the first one, and no coordinating conjunction is being used to connect these clauses.

Examples:

1. *This year William's favorite pastime, golf, was replaced by something new: a girl friend.*

2. *The issue is quite simple to understand: We raise prices or close the business.*

As we know, a semicolon is also used to connect two clauses, which explain

and relate to each other. However, the main difference between this rule of colon and rule of semicolon is that the semicolon is used between two clauses when they are connected by a conjunction and the colon when the particle is omitted.

Garlic is used in Italian cooking; for it greatly enhances the flavor of pasta dishes.

Garlic is used in Italian cooking: it greatly enhances the flavor of pasta dishes.

(John Wilson, 1868:138)

When the conjunction is omitted between clauses, which have only one verb, a semicolon is preferable because the parts of the sentence are dependent in their construction.

3.2. The Use of Colon in Quotations

✓ **Rule 1. A colon should be placed before a direct quotation, speech, or a specification of articles, when formally introduced.**

Examples:

1. Whitehead had this to say about writing style: "Style is the ultimate morality of mind."

2. In reference 6, he states this conclusion: "Thermal neutron fluxes up to 1020 might be required."

By a formal introduction to a quotation, the use of any phrase or mode of expression will draw the attention of the reader to what is about to be said.

✓ **Rule 2. We use a colon to set off lengthy quoted copy from the rest of the text by indentation without the use of quotation marks.**

Examples:

The term, absorption rate, has been explained in Speaking Real Estate as follows:

The estimated annual sales (or new occupancies) of a particular type of property or land use. A developer or builder may take that figure and multiply it by his anticipated market share to forecast his sales of units or homes

during the coming year.

With the lengthy and complicated quotation like this, we cannot use a quotation mark to cover them. We only need to use a colon to introduce the quoted copy. This use of colon makes the sentence shorter and easier to understand than the use of quotation marks. Quotation marks in a long sentence may cause some confusion when writer does not know where to put a suitable quotation mark.

3.3. The Use of Colon in Introducing a List or a Series

✓ **Rule 1. A colon is used to introduce a series or a list, particularly after a term such as "as follows" or "the following, namely, for example."**

Examples:

- 1. The sequence in which the colors were assigned is as follows: blue, green, red, yellow, and black.*
- 2. The operations undertaken were the following: printing, die-cutting, folding, collating, binding, trimming, and packaging.*

Using a colon after the introductory phrases makes the sentence more clearly.

✓ **Rule 2. We need a colon to introduce a list that amplifies an introductory sentence.**

Examples:

The purpose of this report is twofold: to evaluate the performance of the instruments and to expand the database.

However, if the introduction to a displayed list is not a complete sentence, no colon is used.

Example:

The purposes of this report are

- 1. To evaluate the performance of the instruments*
- 2. To expand the data base*

There is a trend toward 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.

begin with *and*, and other conjunctions.

✓ **Rule 2.** We use a period to end a declarative sentence or sentence fragment, excluding exclamatory or imperative sentences.

Examples:

1. *Batteries extra.*

2. *Strange. In fact, bizarre.*

These sentence fragments also end with a period when we want to highlight the sense. This use occurs frequently in speaking and sometimes in writing. Actually, in writing, a fragment terminated with a period may create an impression which conveys the meaning more perfectly than other sentences. However, it should be careful to use a fragment in texts because too many fragments will make the texts disordered.

4.2. The Use of Period in Headings and Subheads

✓ **Rule.** A period may be placed after following cases:

- **After a heading or a subhead, indicating the kind of matter, which is treated off.**

CHAP.I. —INTRODUCTION

I. RATIONALE

- **After every signature to a document**

JONATHAN K.SMITH

ASA H.FISK

Note: When the names in signature are followed by an explanatory term, the period should be placed after the latter. For example:

JAMES MARSHALL, President.

4.3. The Use of Periods in Abbreviations

✓ **Rule.** The periods may follow every abbreviation except those for units of measure.

a.m.

e.g.

assn.

i.e.

Ph.D.

p.m.

Dr.

etc.

Feb.

Apr.

fig.

When an abbreviated word ends a sentence, only one period is used to show the omission of the letters and the termination of the sentence; but any other mark required by the construction should be inserted after the period, as exemplified in this below sentence:

The plays of Wm. Shakespeare are sometimes printed from the text of Geo. Steven, Esq., and Edw. Malone, Esq.

- **Remarks**

- ❖ We do not use periods for abbreviation of unit of measure (except *inch*), for acronyms, or for contractions (with apostrophe).

Examples:

<i>ft</i>	<i>cm</i>	<i>lb</i>
NASA	V/STOL	nat'l

A period does follow the abbreviation for inch:

<i>1 in.</i>	<u><i>but</i></u>	<i>in/hr</i>
<i>14 lb/in.</i>		<i>in-lb, 6-in-wide</i>

4.4. The Other Conventional Uses of Periods

The period is so useful for separation that several conventional uses exist:

- **A period precedes decimal numbers:**

<i>0.2</i>	<i>0 .68</i>	<i>29.32</i>
------------	--------------	--------------

- **A period separates dollars and cents:**

<i>\$6.50</i>	<i>but</i>	<i>50 cents</i>
---------------	------------	-----------------

- **A period may be used only with quotation marks, parentheses and brackets, and points of ellipsis, but not with other marks unless the period marks an abbreviation:**

(In this fig., the dots denote dots)

(Why include the following three pp.?)

But, a period is never repeated after an abbreviation:

I prefer the abbreviation Ms.

5. Question Mark

Question mark, as its name, is placed at the end of every question. Question mark has some minor rules, which will be shown in these following parts.

5.1. The Use of Question Mark in indicating queries

✓ **Rule 1. A question mark should be used when posing a direct query in an interrogative sentence.**

Examples:

1. *Are there any letters for me this morning?*
2. *When will you finish your report?*

These question forms are very popular in conversation, dialogues. They denote that the speaker is seeking information from the listener. Commonly, the answers for these questions begin with *yes*, *no* and provided information.

✓ **Rule 2. We use the question mark in statements ending with a word inflected as a query and with question tags.**

Examples:

1. *Just leave these papers on my desk, OK?*
2. *So you got a promotion, eh?*
3. *You did not find those documents, did you? [Question tag]*

In two first examples, we can see that the words *ok*, *eh* stand at the end of sentence showing the expectation of speakers to take the agreement from listeners. Therefore, we should put a question mark so that listeners can understand those are questions, not statements.

The next sentences are forms of question tags, which have some main purposes such as confirming the expected information and asking unexpected information. However, the understanding of a question tag depends much on the use of intonation when speaking.

✓ **Rule 3. When writing a series of questions, we put a question mark for each item, even if items are not complete sentences. Capitalization of the question items is optional so be consistent with whatever option you choose.**

Examples:

*The board members had to decide on a new course of action for the company.
Expand? Sell out? Consider new financial reforms?*

All questions in a series are optional question that writer gave to readers when he wondered about any matter. Only question marks are used here to separate questions. No other marks should be admitted because they don't denote a question.

5.2. The Use of Question Marks in Requests

✓ **Rule . A question mark is used with a mild command or polite request instead of a period that would make the request more demanding.**

Examples:

1. *Would you take these reports down to accounting?*

2. *Would you take these reports down to accounting.*

The first sentence is a polite request when a speaker wants another to do something for him. With the question mark at the end, the request denotes that it would be nice if you do it for me. In the second sentence, with the same content except the period at the end, the sense will change a lot. A polite request turns into direct order, which force listener to do. Because of this meaning, people only use question mark for any kind of request.

5.3. The Use of Question Marks in Rhetorical question

✓ **Rule. A question mark is used to indicate a rhetorical question**

The rhetorical question is usually defined as any question asked for a purpose other than to obtain the information the question asks. For example, "Why are you so stupid?" is likely to be a statement regarding one's opinion of the person addressed rather than a genuine request to know. Similarly, when someone responds to a tragic event by saying, "Why me, God?!" it is more likely to be an accusation or an expression of feeling than a realistic request for information. Now, let see the use of rhetorical question with a question mark, a period, and an exclamation mark in the below examples:

Examples:

1. *Aren't his paintings amazing?* [Showing interested or surprised reaction]

2. *Aren't his paintings amazing.* [Showing uninterested or musing reaction]

3. *Aren't his paintings amazing!* [Showing indignant or exciting reaction]

When the above rhetorical question is used with different punctuation marks, the rhetorical implication is altered (as shown in the brackets). This demonstrates the emotional effect punctuation marks may have in a text.

5.4. The Use of Question Mark in Parenthesis to indicate uncertainty (?)

✓ **Rule . A question mark is enclosed in parenthesis (?) if a date or another number is unknown or doubtful among the experts.**

Example:

Joan of Arc, 1412 (?) – 1431, is considered a French heroine.

Here, the uses of the question mark shows that people may are not sure about the accuracy of the date or number.

When using question marks in parenthesis, we have to pay attention to some following remarks:

• Remarks

❖ To avoid using (?) for expressing uncertainty, we should consider using the word _____ about.

Joan of Arc, born about 1412 – 1431, was considered as a French hero.

5.5. The Uses of Question Mark with Other Punctuation Marks

In this case, the use of period or comma after question mark is unnecessary because only the question mark can also end a complete sentence as a query.

✓ **Quotation marks.**

When a question mark follows a quoted text, put it before the closing quotation mark if it applies just to the quoted text; but, put the question mark outside the closing quotation mark if it applies to the entire sentence,

Examples:

1. *Do you think it would be better in this case to stick to the attitude of "what's*

in it for me”?

2. *I really do not like her attitude of "what's in it for me?"*

In the first example, the whole sentence including quoted one is a question beginning with the auxiliary *do*. This case is called question in question. The question mark should be put outside the closing quotation to avoid confusion. However, the completely second example is an affirmative sentence, only quoted text is in question. Therefore, the question mark is put within the quotation mark, and no extra period is placed after the question mark.

✓ **Parenthesis**

When a question mark is used with parenthesis, put it inside the parenthesis if the enclosed sentence stands alone. When the parenthesis encloses just part of a sentence, put the question mark outside the parenthesis.

Examples:

1. *For months, she stayed in extra hours to complete the project (Was she that eager to get promoted?).*

2. *Did she really stay in extra hours to complete the project (despite being denied of a promotion)?*

In the example 1, the question mark is inside the parenthesis because the enclosed text is a complete sentence. But, the enclosed text in the second one is just a part of the sentence; the question mark should be outside. Note that we always add another terminal punctuation mark to the end of the sentence.

6. Exclamation Mark

The exclamation mark is a terminal punctuation mark in English and is used at the end of a sentence with no extra period. Exclamation marks often occur in poetry, informal letters, or funny stories to show these above expressions. Here, I provide you some rules, which may be the best ones of using exclamation mark in written English.

6.1. The Uses of Exclamation Marks in Strong Emotion or Emphatic Declaration

✓ **Rule 1. An exclamation point is used in dialogue to indicate a strong command in an imperative sentence.**

Examples:

1. *Clean the elephant enclosure now!*

2. *Look out, there is an elephant running behind you!*

All exclamation marks in the two examples are denoting firm and direct order. As in the first one "*clean the elephant enclosure now!*", the exclamation mark helps to emphasize the order.

✓ **Rule 2. In dialogue, we use the exclamation point to convey an emphatic declaration, which can indicate any of the following emotions:**

- **Shock** : *"There's been a terrible accident!"*
- **Excitement** : *"Oh my God! What a fantastic birthday gift!"*
- **Urgency** : *"Drive carefully! Watch out for traffic signs! If you don't, you could die!"*
- **Vehemence** : *"Down with the new anti-elephant laws!"*
- **Astonishment** : *"I just can't believe what she's done! It's simply beyond me!"*

Without exclamation mark, these above sentences cannot show writer's emotions. Therefore, it is hard for readers to understand the implication of writers in sentences. For example, in the first example of shock, if no exclamation mark were used, the sentence would become a statement, which informed about something happen. It is not the emphatic declaration focusing on *a terrible accident* any more.

Remarks

These uses of exclamation mark have some remarks as follows:

❖ **Do not use the exclamation point to express overt amazement or sarcasm.**

1. *At 3.3 meters and 7 tons (!), the African elephant is the biggest (!) land*

animal on Earth.

2. *Yet, Johnny (!) thinks that the Indian elephant is bigger.*

The two first exclamation point expresses amazement, but, the third exclamation point in the next sentence expresses sarcasm. The use of exclamation in both two sentences is wrong because they are statement, not emphatic declaration.

To avoid this, we should use other words for rephrasing as follows:

1. *At a majestic 3.3 meters and 7 tons, the African elephant is the largest land animal on Earth.*

2. *Yet, Johnny, stubbornly, thinks that the Indian elephant is larger.*

The word *majestic* expresses amazement, *stubbornly* expresses sarcasm, both instead of the exclamation point.

6.2. The Uses of Exclamation Mark in Rhetorical Questions

✓ **Rule.** A rhetorical question can end in either a question mark, or an exclamation point or a period, depending on context and the writer's purpose.

Examples:

1. *I did everything I could for that company; do you think they thanked me?*

2. *How can I ever thank you enough!*

It will be seen that rhetorical questions end with different punctuation marks will have different effect. In the first example, the question mark shows the meaning that the company apparently do not thank to the speaker. But, the exclamation mark in the second sentence means that speaker will obviously have to work hard to thank

6.3. The Use of Exclamation Mark For Drawing Attention to unlikely point

✓ **Rule.** An exclamation mark is sometimes enclosed in parenthesis to draw the reader's attention to unlikely, ironic or unexpected sentences.

Examples:

1. *After his 98th (!) hot dog, Abner Manishewitz won first place in the L.A.*

County eat-offs.

2. *After his hard to believe and visually disturbing 98th hot dog, Abner Manishewitz won first place in the L.A. County eat-offs.*

In the first example, the exclamation expresses amazement and maybe also disgust. But, in the second one, his hard to believe and visually disturbing expresses amazement and maybe also disgust.

- **Remarks**

- ✓ Do not use a comma after an exclamation point occurring in the middle of a sentence.

"You didn't do everything I asked!" her boss said angrily.

CHAPTER 3

THE IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

I. SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES ON COMMON PUNCTUATION MISTAKES MADE BY VIETNAMESE LEARNERS

In fact, many Vietnamese learners say that the uses of punctuation marks in written English are too complicated to remember. That is the reason why they often confuse and make many mistakes in their writing. Based on that reality, I decided to make these survey questionnaires to find out the common punctuation mistakes made by Vietnamese learners. Because the punctuation mistakes are very various among students, I just focused on some punctuation marks which students often make mistakes. They are comma, semicolon, colon, period, and apostrophe. Students do not make many mistakes of the use of question mark and exclamation mark. A part from these survey questionnaires, I also provide some suggestion or solution for those mistakes.

1. Participants

17 survey questionnaires and 5 exercises were thoroughly completed by 60 English major students in Haiphong Private University.

2. Purpose of survey questionnaires

The survey questionnaires are designed for the following purposes:

- ❖ To make out the attitude of students toward the importance of using correct punctuation in writing English.
- ❖ To get information about the general situation of using some typical punctuation marks of English major students.
- ❖ To get to know the most common mistakes of punctuation made by Vietnamese learners.

3. Design of survey questionnaires

The design of survey questionnaires is shown as follows:

Part I (1 Question): Self- Assessment of English writing skills, basic grammar, and punctuation.

Part II (16 Questions + 5 exercises): Questions on the use of punctuation marks in written English and common punctuation mistakes.

➤ *Question 2 – 6* : studying on students' attitudes toward punctuation marks and common mistakes.

➤ *Question 7 – 10 and Exercise 1* : exploring students' knowledge of commas and commas errors.

➤ *Question 11- 13 and Exercise 2*: students' knowledge of semicolon and semicolon errors.

➤ *Question 14 – 16 and Exercise 3*: Students' knowledge of colon and colon errors.

➤ *Question 17 and Exercise 4*: Students' knowledge of period and period errors.

➤ *Question 18 and Exercise 5*: Students' knowledge of apostrophes and apostrophe errors.

4. Data analysis

4.1. Self- Assessment of English writing skills, basic grammar, and punctuation (Question 1, Appendix).

In this part, I gave students a table of questions surrounding writing skills, basic grammar, and punctuation with multiple choices. The asked students circled numbers from one to five, which were the most suitable with them. The below table shows the specific results that I collected from the survey questionnaires:

Expressions	1	2	3	4	5
1.I can write a good English academic paragraph.	0%	8%	70%	12%	10%
2. I have a good English grammar.	0%	12%	40%	32%	4%
3.I can understand and use appropriate spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in my writing.	0%	7%	45%	32%	16%
4.I often make mistake with punctuation and ask my teacher for help.	0%	20%	32%	36%	12%
5.I can identify the problem in my writing and see what should be improved.	0%	11%	28%	45%	16%

As it has been illustrated in the chart, in the first expression, there were 70% students chose the answer *somewhat true for me* while only 8% people felt *usually not true* for them. The large unbalance between two answers show the fact that Vietnamese students' writing are not too bad. As being taught in the university, some of them usually have a good English grammar (32%); others always get on well with it (4%). The number of students who cannot use appropriate spelling, capitalization and punctuation in writing is just only 7% (*usually not true for me*, the third expression) while people who understand and often use them in their text take rather high percentage (45% for the choice *somewhat is true for me*, and 32% for *usually true for me*).

In the forth expression, there was 36% of students choosing the option *usually true for me*, and 32% of them choosing *somewhat true for me*. This means that, most English major students often make mistake with punctuation and ask their teacher for help. 45% of Vietnamese learners can identify their writing problems and see what should be improved (*usually true for me*, the last expressions). Only 11% of them get difficulty in recognizing the matters and do not know how to correct.

Through these collected figures, we realized that about 60% of Vietnamese students who being asked have a good English grammar and know how to use spelling, capitalization and punctuation in their writing. The rest people do not understand well about English main factors and often make mistakes with them.

However, this is only the self-assessment made by students about their writing, grammar, and punctuation. To have a detail view on the situation of using punctuation in writing and common mistakes made by Vietnamese learners, we should check the information showing in next survey questionnaires.

4.2. Vietnamese students' knowledge about the use of punctuation marks in written English and common punctuation mistakes made by them.

4.2.1. Students' attitudes toward punctuation marks and common mistakes (Question 2+3+4+5+6, Appendix)

At the beginning of this part (question 2), I asked students about the importance of punctuation in writing so that I could see their general attitudes of punctuation. It is surprising that 100% people who were asked chose the answer *b*, which is *very important*. None of them thought that punctuation in writing is not important. This showed that most English major students always aware of the role of punctuation in their writing. Some students even said that they could not imagine how a text would be without punctuation marks.

Next, I wanted to know the understanding of using punctuation marks with the question *how do you know about the use of punctuation mark*. The results of this question are shown in the following chart:

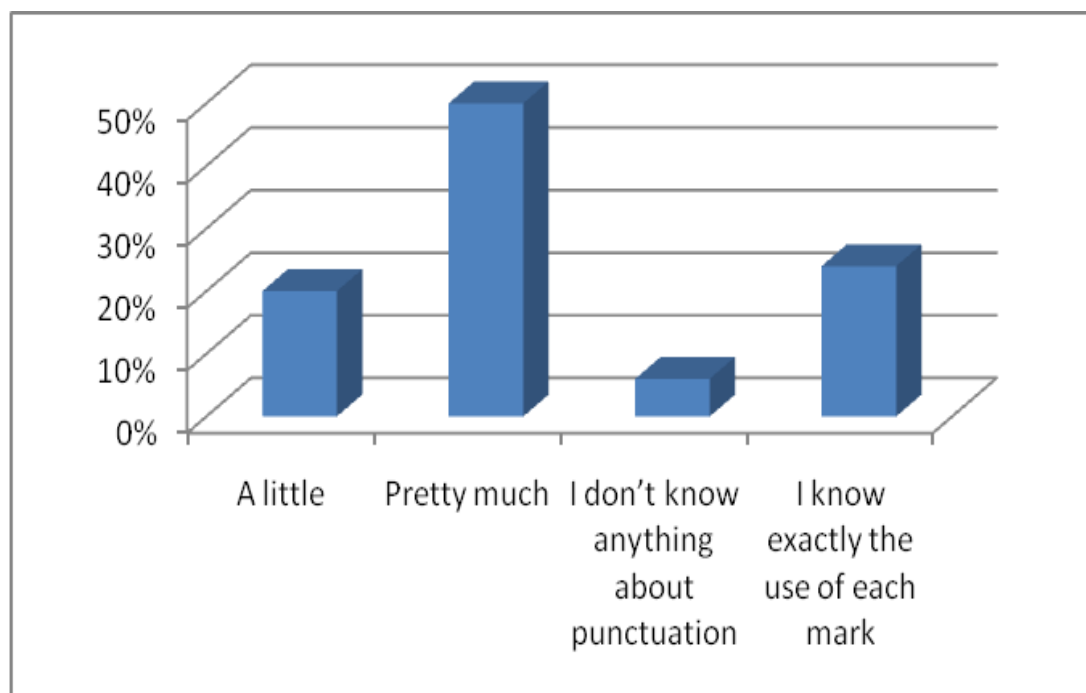


Chart 1. The students' understanding on the use of punctuation marks

The results given from the chart reveal the fact that most students know how to use punctuation marks. In the total of 60 students being asked, 50% students know pretty much about punctuation while people who know exactly

the use of each mark take up to 24%. It is very lucky that students who do not know anything about punctuation are just 6%. However, it is surprising that even students who know exactly the use of each punctuation mark or understand pretty much about it also get some difficulties and make mistakes when using them in their writing. The frequency of making mistakes with punctuation marks was shown in the below chart (Question 4, Appendix):

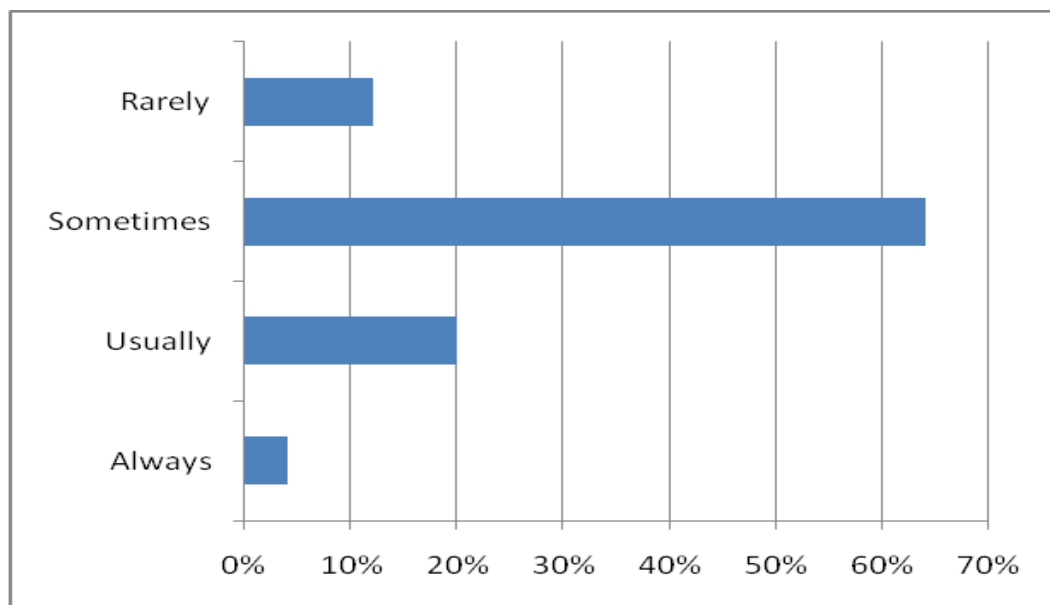


Chart 2. The frequency of making punctuation mistakes

As it has been illustrated in the chart, the numbers of students who *sometimes* make mistake with punctuation marks have the highest percentage with 64%. Meanwhile, students who *usually* make mistakes occupy about 20%, which is much higher than those who *always* make mistakes (4%). People who *rarely* make mistakes just stop at a small number with 12%. When looking around these numbers, we can see that making punctuation mistakes is unavoidable to English major students even if they are good writers or not. The distance between knowing how to use marks and using them correctly is very different. A student may know that a comma is used in nonrestrictive clause; but, she cannot distinguish between restrictive and nonrestrictive clause. Of course, he or she will cause some mistakes with comma. To understand more about punctuation mistakes that students often meet, we should check the next chart:

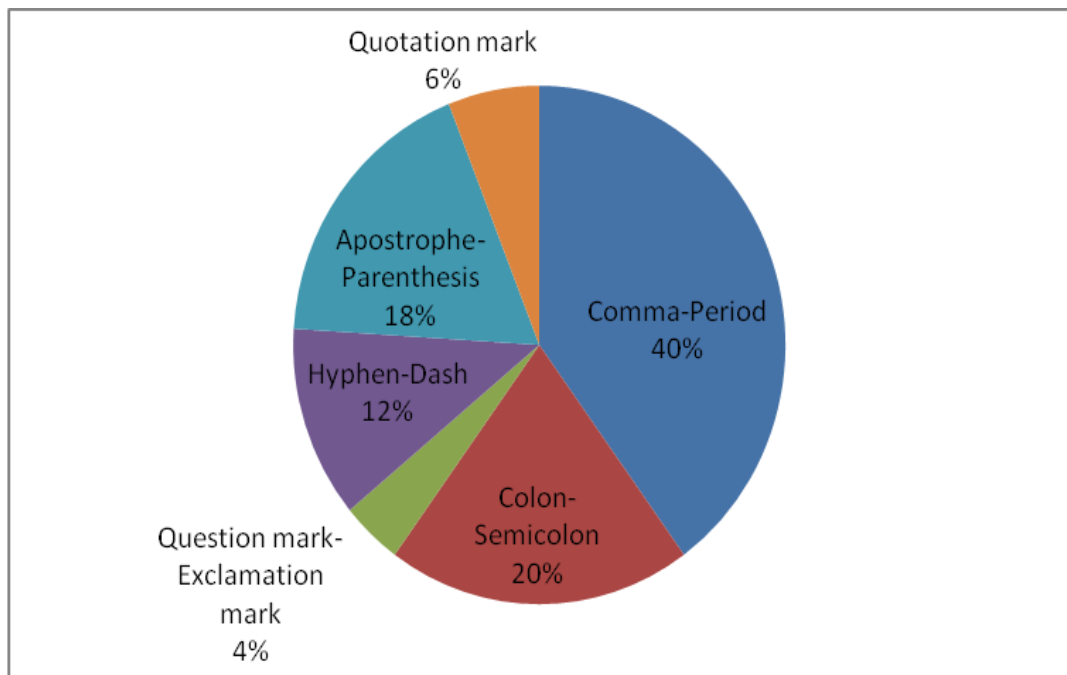


Chart 3. The Common Punctuation Mistakes made by Vietnamese learners

The above chart shows very clearly the percentages of each type of punctuation mistakes. At the first rank of them is comma and period with the highest percentage (40%). Standing at the second position is colon and semicolon with 20% while other marks such as apostrophe, parenthesis, hyphen, and dash occupy around 12% - 18%. The lowest is question mark and exclamation mark stopping at 4%. These numbers show that the rate of making punctuation mistakes among English major students is rather high and primarily focusing on typical punctuation marks as comma, colon, semicolon...

In fact, none of students do not make mistake with punctuation marks. However, they often make mistakes with different marks. Some people feel hard to use comma or period, but the other cannot get on well with colon, apostrophe, hyphen, or dash. Therefore, in the next survey questionnaires, some typical punctuation marks and their common mistakes will be asked and checked so that we can find out which punctuation mistake is the most common to students.

4.2.2. Students' understanding of comma and comma errors

(Question 7+8+9+10, Appendix)

The question 7 asking about the main function of a comma had 20 right answers and 40 wrong ones. It means that 33 % people thought that a comma is used to separate and enclose elements of a sentence; meanwhile, 67 % the other considered that the main function of a comma is making pause in reading comprehension or connecting independent clauses. Based on survey, we know that most of people who had wrong answers are often confused when they use commas in their writing (question 8). Some of the rest people (33%) said yes when being asked about the confusion, but most of them felt confident to use a comma in texts.

However, when I mentioned some most common errors of comma in the question 10 such as comma splice, misuse comma with conjunction, misuse comma in a list or a series...none of students omitted any mistakes. These comma mistakes are compared obviously in the below chart:

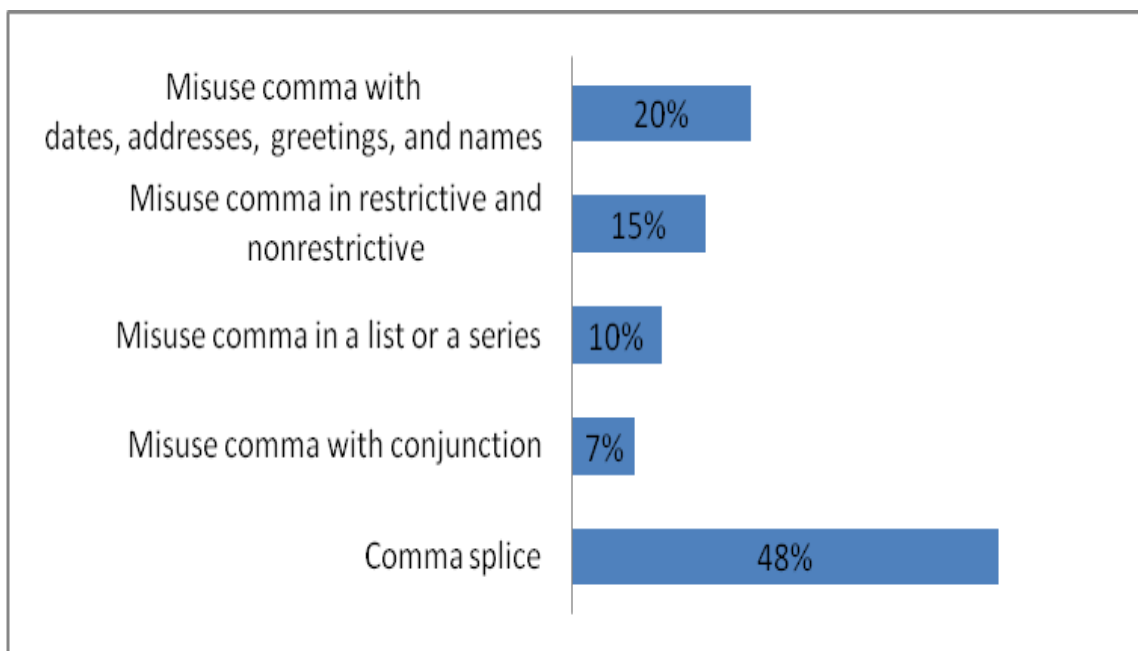


Chart 4. Common mistakes of comma made by Vietnamese students

It will be seen from the chart that comma splice is the most common mistakes of comma with highest percentage at 48%. This error is caused by the confusion and misunderstanding between the use of comma and semicolon in a sentence.

The chart also shows that there are 20% Vietnamese students often misuse comma with dates, addresses, greetings, and names; 15% students makes

mistakes with comma in restrictive and nonrestrictive clauses. Only 10% people get difficulties when using comma in list, series, and 7% with conjunctions. Most of these mistakes come from missing or using unnecessary commas in sentence, which were shown in the exercise that I gave to the students. Through this exercise, I could see that students often omitted commas when they felt hard to use them in complicated sentences; or, they used commas but not correctly.

4.2.3. Students' knowledge of semicolon and semicolon errors

(Question 11+12+13, Exercise 2, Appendix)

At the first question, there were about 50 students in total 60 people saying *yes*, and the rest answered *no*. The above numbers reveal the fact that semicolon, like comma, is one of the hard punctuation marks in written English. The students' understanding of semicolon was expressed through the result of question 13.

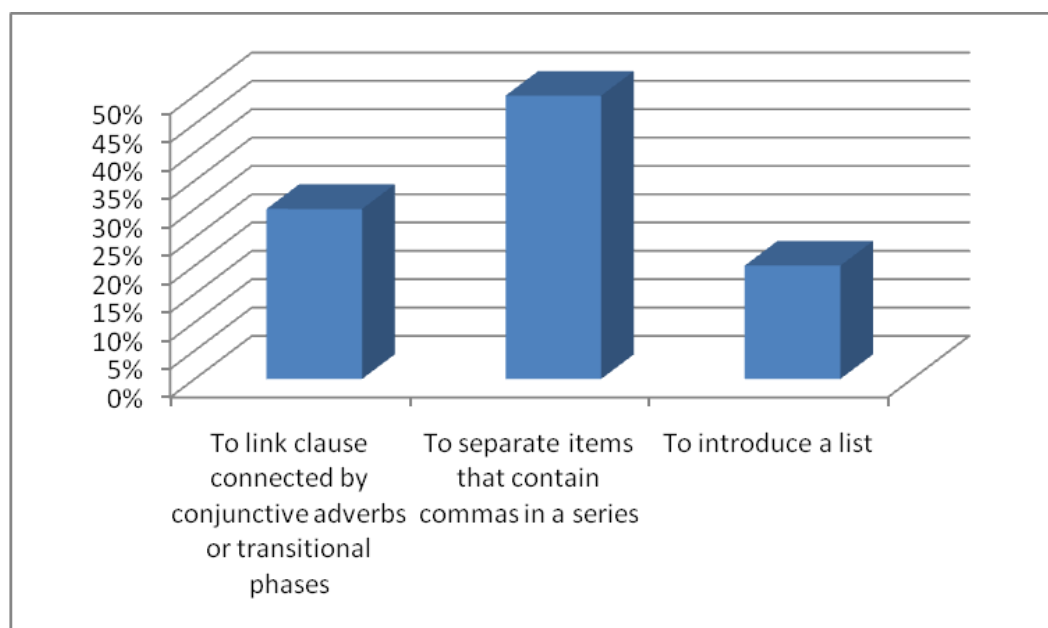


Chart 5. Students' knowledge of semicolon

The chart rose up the truth that the knowledge of semicolon among English major students is not too bad. 50% of them thought that is used to separate items that contain commas in a series; and, 30% students said that most common use of a semicolon is linking clauses, which are connected by conjunctive adverbs or transitional phrases. As I mentioned in rule 3 of using semicolon in coordinate clauses, chapter 2, both above thoughts of semicolon

are right. The people who have wrong choice were just 20%.

The semicolon errors were found in the exercise 2 which asked students to put or remove semicolon if necessary. The following chart will show the results of this:

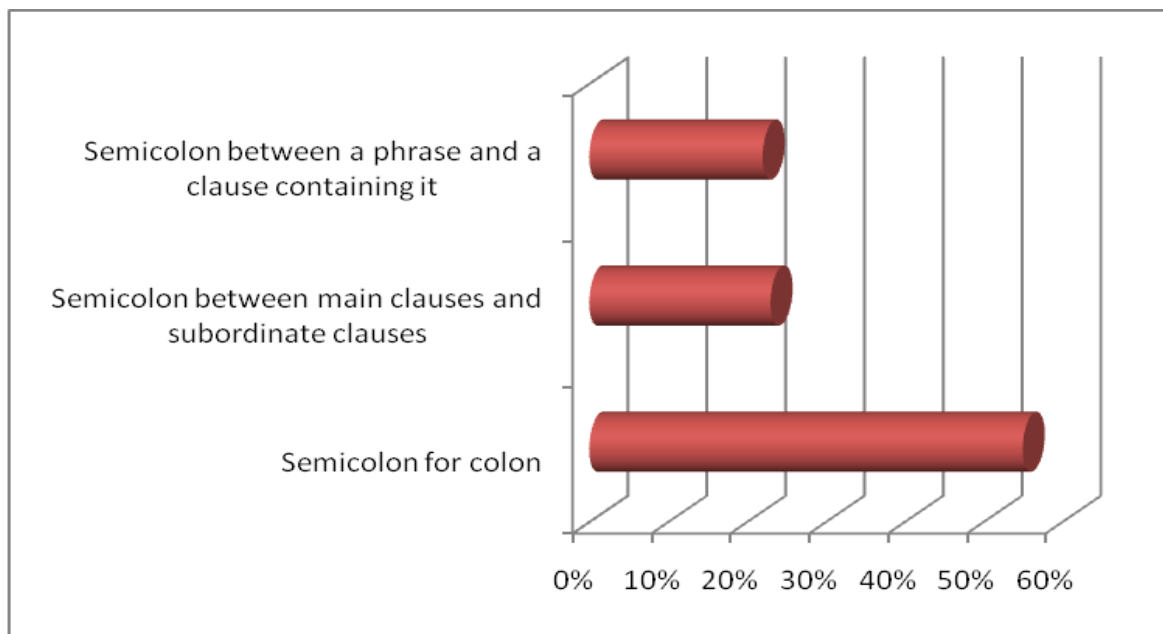


Chart 6. Common mistakes of semicolon

The bar chart shows that 60% of students make mistakes with semicolon for colon. In this case, they cannot distinguish between the use of semicolon and colon. So, they replaced colon with a semicolon to introduce a list. There is an equal percentage in the misuse of semicolon between a phrase and a clause, and misuse of semicolon between main clauses and subordinate clauses. Both of them are 20%.

4.2.4. Students' understanding of Colon and Colon Errors

(Question 14 +15 +16, Exercise 3, Appendix)

Through three survey questionnaires about the use of colon, 70% students being asked had right answers that a colon is used to introduced quotations, lists, and clauses. The 30% remaining wrong answers said that we use a colon when we want to join two independent clauses or use in a series. The details of colon mistakes were shown in the following chart:

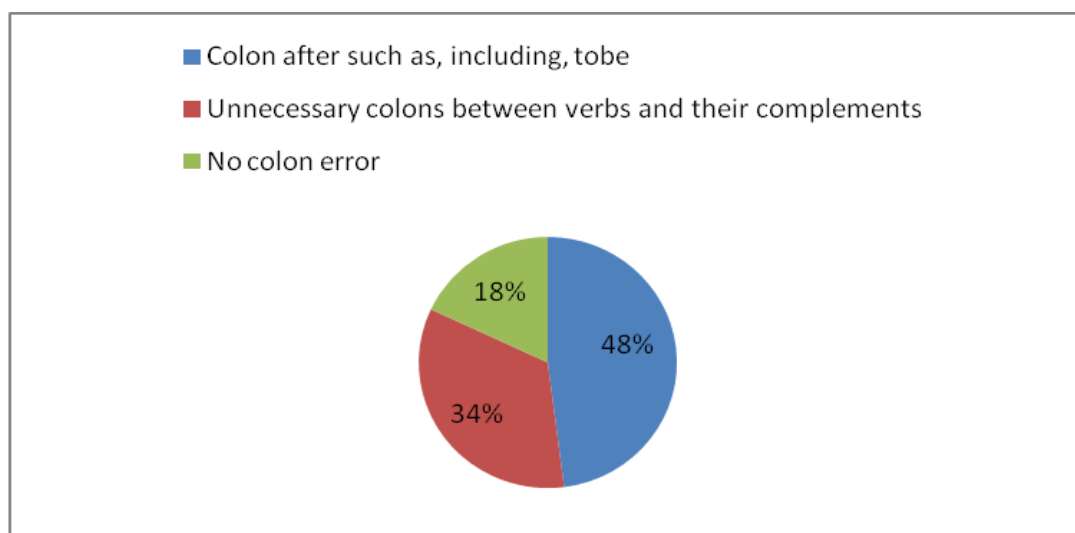


Chart 7. The colon errors made by Vietnamese learners

Most question in the exercise 3 are wrong sentences which required students to choose True if those sentences are right, and False if they are wrong. In fact, there were 48% of people made mistake when they thought that a colon should be put after *such as*, *including*, and *to be*. Some other had unnecessary colons between verbs and their complement. Just 18% of students being asked had right choices.

4.2.4. Students' understanding of period and period errors.

(Question 17, Exercise 4, Appendix)

Period is an easy punctuation mark. It often stands at the end of a sentence to terminate it. In first question of this part, nearly 100% answered that period is used to end a sentence and express abbreviations. However, there was still some period errors occurred when the students were checked by the exercise 4

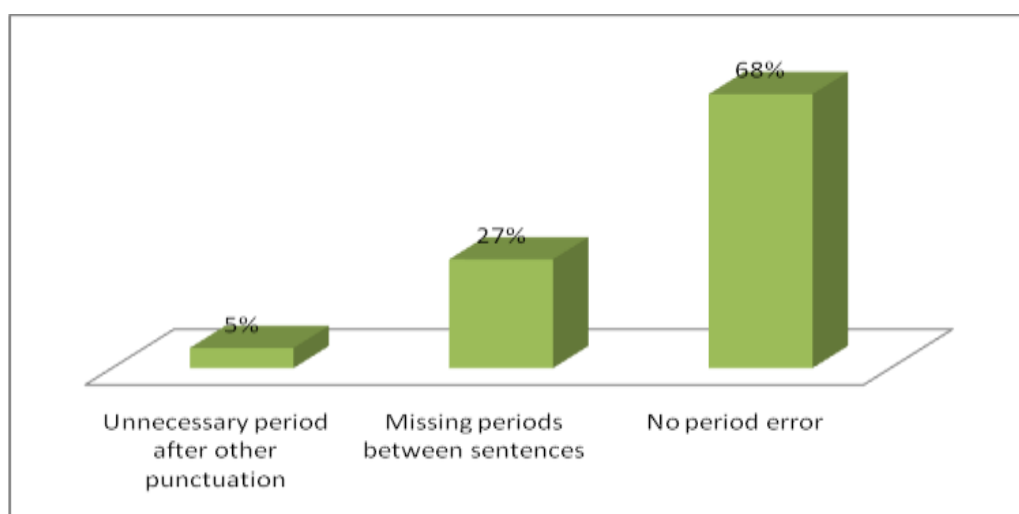


Chart 8. Common period mistakes made by Vietnamese learners

Looking at this chart, we realized a good new; that is, Vietnamese learners did not make any mistakes in the given exercise (68%). Most of them know how to use a period in a sentences. The number of students who made mistakes was just nearly a half of the above percentage with 27% for missing periods between sentences, and 5% for unnecessary period after other punctuation.

4.2.5. Students' understanding of Apostrophe and apostrophe errors (Question 18, Exercise 5, Appendix)

Based on the survey results, I can say that Vietnamese learners understood and used apostrophes in their writing very well. The given question required students to put a tick on the choice, which are suitable with their opinions. Consequently, approximately 80% gave right options while 20% of people had wrong ones. Most of them also could finish the exercise 5 with the good results as follows:

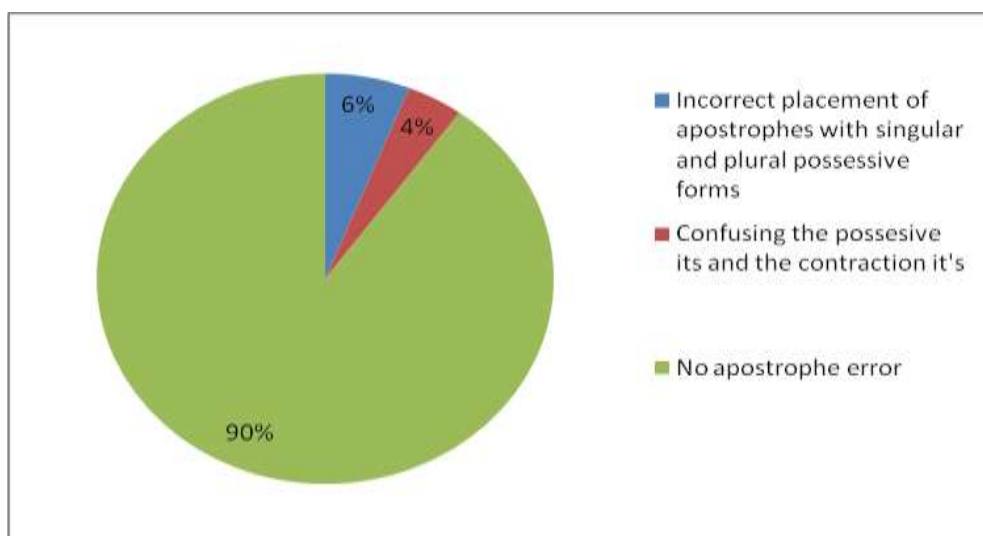


Chart 9. Common apostrophe errors made by Vietnamese learners

5. Findings and discussion of findings

As the survey is restricted to only a small number of students in Haiphong private university, surely the result cannot reflect the real of common punctuation mistakes made by Vietnamese learners. However, it is hoped that the findings and discussion can give useful information to some extends.

As we can see from the charts of each punctuation mark given above, most students being asked often made mistakes with comma, especially comma

splice. After comma, semicolon is also a hard mark to Vietnamese learners. Period and apostrophe are marks which did not cause many difficulties to students because of its easy uses.

II. SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS FOR SOME COMMON PUNCTUATION MISTAKES

In this part, I just suggest solutions for the most common mistakes of each mark shown in the preceding charts.

1. Comma splice

There are three ways to remedy this particular error:

- Firstly, separate one sentence into two.
- Secondly, add a conjunction after the comma.
- Lastly, correct the sentence with a semicolon.

2. Semicolon for colon

This error is caused by the confusion between semicolon and colon in the use of introducing or separating items in list, series. To avoid this mistake, we should consider whether the sentence includes two independent clauses or not.

3. Colon after such as, including, to be

Some people thought that it can be used a colon after *such as*, *including*, like used after *for example*, *as follows*. In fact, we should omit colon after these words.

4. Missing period between sentences

Some people, when writing, forget the important function of periods and omit them. This mistake leads to a run-on sentence. To correct it, you have to realize which sentence is independent one.

PART III. CONCLUSION

In general, this research has been carried out with the purpose of investigating the basic rules of using some typical types of punctuation in written English as well as finding out the most common punctuation mistakes among Vietnamese learners.

Through some parts of this study, we understand that punctuation marks play an important role in writing English. Punctuation marks can help to clarify meaning and make piece of writing easier to read. The use of punctuation mark in writing can change the meaning of the discourse. If you do not use punctuation properly in your text, it will cause a lot of mistakes and confusion for readers. On the other hand, with good punctuation marks, writers can also show their knowledge of English grammar and writing skills. Looking at the variety of punctuation marks in any kind of writing, readers understand that he or she is a good writer or not.

Based on the data collected from the survey questionnaires, it can be concluded that the rate of Vietnamese students who made mistakes with punctuation is rather high. Not only non-major students but also English major students got difficulties when using punctuation marks in writing. The results of this survey reveal the fact that Vietnamese learners do not really understand the use of typical marks such as commas, semicolon, colon... That may be the reason why they cannot get good marks in writing.

In spite of the limit of knowledge, I have completed this study with the hope that students can read, check, and know how to use punctuation marks properly in written English. Any further comments and contributions for perfection of this paper are highly appreciated.

APPENDIX
THE SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRES
(For English Major Students)

This survey questionnaire aims at finding out your knowledge of punctuation marks in written English and your common mistakes when using them. Your answers will be used for researching purposes of my graduation paper entitled “how to use some typical types of punctuation properly in written English and common mistakes made by Vietnamese learners?” Thanks for your cooperation in completing this survey questionnaires.

I. Self-Assessment of English writing skills, basic grammar, and punctuation.

Please rate your abilities for each item below a scale from 1 to 5. Circle your choice.

- 1=never or almost never true for me 4=usually true for me
 2=usually not true for me 5=always or almost always true for me
 3=somewhat true for me

Expressions					
1. I can write a good academic paragraph.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have a good English grammar.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I can use appropriate spelling, capitalization, and punctuation in my writing.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I often make mistake with punctuation and ask my teacher for help.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I can identify the problem in my writing and see what should be improved.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Question on the use of punctuation marks in written English and common some punctuation mistakes.

1. Survey on punctuation marks

Choose the most suitable answers with you.

Question 2: What do you think about the role of punctuation in writing?

- a. Important
- b. Very important
- c. Not very important
- d. Not important

Question 3: How do you know the use of punctuation marks?

- a. A little
- b. Pretty much
- c. I don't know anything about it
- d. I know exactly the use of each mark

Question 4: Do you get any difficulty when you use these punctuation marks in you writing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Question 5: How often do you make mistakes with punctuation marks?

- a. Always
- b. Usually
- c. Sometimes
- d. Rarely

Question 6: Which types of punctuation do you often make mistakes with?

- a. Comma and Period
- b. Colon and Semicolon
- c. Apostrophe and Parenthesis
- d. Question mark and Exclamation mark
- e. Hyphen and Dash
- f. Quotation marks

2. Survey on comma and comma errors

Question 7: What is the main function of a comma?

- a. It is used to separate and enclose elements of a sentence.
- b. It is used to make a pause in reading comprehension.
- c. It is used to connect independent clauses.
- d. It is used for making the sentence ambiguous.

Question 8: Do you often confuse when you use comma in your writing?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Question 9: What do you often do when you make mistakes with a comma?

- a. Ask teachers for help
- b. I can't recognize the mistake.
- c. I will correct them by myself.
- d. I have no idea about it

Question 10: Which comma errors do you often face when you write?

- a. Comma splice
- b. Misuse comma with conjunction
- c. Misuse comma in a list or a series.
- d. Misuse comma in restrictive and nonrestrictive
- e. Misuse comma with dates, addresses, greetings, and names

Exercise 1. Add a comma if it is needed in these sentences.

1. Kristy forgot to set her alarm, she woke up forty minutes late.
2. Joey ate all of his peas but he refused to eat his lima beans
3. Edgar Allen Poe the father of the short story is buried in Baltimore.

3. Survey on semicolon and semicolon errors

Question 11: Does the semicolon cause any troubles for you? If have, what are they?

.....

Question 12: What is the most common use of a semicolon?

.....

Question 13: What for do you use a semicolon? (Put a tick (✓) on the your choice)

- To link clauses connected by conjunctive adverbs or transitional phrases
- To separate items that contain commas in a series
- To introduce a lists

Exercise 3: Each of the following requires the addition or removal of one or more semicolons. Make any necessary changes, adding other punctuation if necessary.

1. The prophets denounced three types of wrongdoing idolatry, injustice, and neglect of needy.
2. There were four errors in my copy; although I proofread it carefully.

3. The climbers carried an extra nylon rope to ensure their safe descent from the cliff.

Survey on colon and colon errors

Question 14: Where does a colon usually appear?

- a. In a quotations, lists, and clauses
- b. In a series
- c. Before conjunctions
- d. Between a subject and its object

Question 15: When do we use a colon?

- a. When we want to end a sentence.
- b. When we want to join two independent clauses.
- c. When we want to separate or introduce lists, clauses, and quotations.
- d. Others uses.

Question 16: Can you mention some uses of a colon? What are they?

.....

Exercise 4: Check these following sentences. Write T (True) for the right sentences and F (False) for the wrong ones.

- 1. Microwave instruments are used for remote sensing of environmental variables such as: sea ice, soil moisture, and surface wind speed.
- 2. The quantities calculated from microwave instrument are : radiometer wind speed, radiometer rain rate, and scatterometer wind vector.
- 3. We need: pasta, a window screen, and a tank of gasoline.

5. Survey on period and period errors

Question17 : What are the functions of a period? Where do you often use them?

.....

Exercise 5: Put a period in the correct position in these sentences.

- 1. Customers should be treated courteously even if they are extremely rude
- 2. We don't want customers saying, "Why don't you have what I want?" She ran her best race ever he ran his worst.

6. Survey on apostrophe and apostrophe errors

Question 18. Put a tick (✓) on the choices that are suitable with you.

Apostrophe is used to form possessive case of a noun and abbreviations that do not end with *s*.

Apostrophe is used to form the possessive case of a personal pronoun.

Apostrophe is used to form genitive case of plural nouns.

Exercise 6: Change each underlined noun to the correct possessive form.

1. The husbands of the sisters have lunch together every Monday.

- The.....husbands have lunch together every Monday.

2. The guess of anybody is as good as mine.

-guess is as good as mine.

3. The cat played with the toy belonging to it.

- The cat played with ...toy.

REFERENCES

❖ Books

1. James .A.w. Heffernan & John E.Lincoln , **Writing. A college handbook**, NXB Tre
2. Quirk, R & GreenBaum, S (1993), **A university grammar of English**
3. Hedge, T.1998, **Writing**, Oxford: Oxford University Press
4. John Wilson (1868), **An treatise on English punctuation**, Boston (seventeenth edition)
5. Mary K. McCaskil (1998), **Grammar, Punctuation, and Capitalization**
6. George Smallfield (1898), **The principles of English punctuation**, London
7. Vu Thanh Phuong, **Ngu phap tieng Anh**

❖ Websites

8. (<http://www.writingenglish.com/punctuation.html>)
9. <http://writing.wisc.edu/Handbook/Semicolons.html>)
10. (<http://www.answers.com/topic/punctuation>)
11. <http://www.writingenglish.com/parentheses.html>)
12. <http://www.oxfordadvancedlearnersdictionary.com/dictionary/typical>)
13. http://en.citizendium.org/wiki/Written_language)
14. <http://copyediting-grammar-style.suite101.com/article.cfm/what-is-the-difference-between-an-em-dash-and-an-en-dash#ixzz0nhOfI5qM>
15. <http://www.whitesmoke.com/punctuation-comma-sentences.html>

