

The Correlation Between Punctuation and Narrative Writing on The Communication Students of BSI University

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Abstract. This research is made as a result of issue of error punctuation usage and narrative writing. It is scrutinized by using correlation research method. The data was taken from population of second year academic communication's students of BSI through the sampling unit consists of 37 students. The result of the research was elaborated into three categories. They are low, middle, and high. Based on variable of punctuation usage, the low grade defined 21,62% or 8 students, the middle grade defined 65,75% or 21 students, and the high grade defined 21,62% or 8 students. Furthermore, based on narrative writing, the low grade set 24,32% or 9 students, the middle grade set 51,35%, and the high grade set 24,32% or 9 students. Then, the researchers resulted "r count" = 0,5956 and "r table" = 0,334 or 0,430. The calculation showed that "r count" was bigger than "r table". It means that there was a significant correlation between punctuation usage and narrative writing among the second-year communication sciences students. Through the finding and looking at middle category grade, it can be summed up that there was significant study between punctuation usage and narrative writing.

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INTRODUCTION

Punctuations are the marks that separate the sentence from each other and provide interpretations among the words. Punctuation is the tool that is used to clear the meaning of the words. Punctuation is used in the written documents. In verbal communication, if one wants to emphasize on the words then used to change the tone while speaking but in written form punctuations are used to emphasize on the words and facts etc. Punctuation is a complex system of cues in which the writers give signs to their readers how to move through prose with ease (Garner, 2015). Book authors have said that, in text, punctuation is used to scrutinize the text and make communication to be understood easily. Punctuation marks fulfill four main functions: they distinguish elements (such as using a period to separate

sentences), they enclose or group information (like parentheses used to include non-essential details), they connect components (for example, a hyphen joining words in a compound modifier), and they convey intent or meaning, (McCaskill, 1998). When used properly, punctuation aids writers in achieving both clarity and emphasis. It also plays a crucial role in preventing misinterpretation of written text, (Mujiyanto, 2017). The function of a punctuation mark forms the foundation for the rules that dictate how it should be used. Moreover, punctuation assists writers in establishing rhythm within their writing. In essence, punctuation consists of symbols in written text that help readers read more smoothly and grasp the intended meaning more easily.

“Punctuation, the use of spacing, conventional signs, and certain typographical devices as aids to the understanding and correct reading, both silently and aloud, of handwritten and printed texts” (Brown, 2025). Another author has said that punctuation is sign that show what the appropriate expression with the sentence that have been built by the writer (Ginting, 2018). Moreover, Peter Newmark states that “punctuation is an essential aspect of discourse analysis, since it gives a semantic indication of the relationship between sentence and clauses, which may vary according to language” (Newmark, 1988). There are 14 punctuation marks in the English language: the period (referred to as a “full stop” in British English), question mark, exclamation point, comma, colon, semicolon, dash, hyphen, brackets, braces, parentheses, apostrophe, quotation marks, and ellipsis. The period (.) is most commonly used to indicate the end of a sentence. A question mark (?) takes the place of a period at the end of a question. The comma (,) resembles an apostrophe or a single closing quotation mark in some fonts. It is used to separate items in a list, within addresses or dates, and to set off appositives. Apostrophes (') is the punctuation mark to indicate the omission of a letter or number, also to form the possessive. Colons (:) is punctuation to mark consisting of two equally sized dots centered on the same vertical line. It is to introduce a list at the end of a sentence, to be used in a greeting formal business letter. The hyphen (-) is punctuation mark to join word and to separate syllables of a single word. Semicolon (;) is an intermediate one, somewhat stronger than the comma, yet not a full stop. A semicolon connects closely related independent statements or clauses where no conjunction is used. A semicolon is used to separate two statements or clauses when the second one begins with a connector that is a conjunctive adverb. Parentheses () are used to enclose explanatory words, phrases, and statements where stronger separation than the comma is required. Bracket ([]) is used to enclose an incidental word or phrase, words used as identification of a word (in text), or a comment added by another person or an editor (for the purpose of explanation). Exclamation mark (!) is used to indicate strong feelings or a raised voice in speech. A non-question sentence beginning with “what” or “how” is often an exclamation and requires an exclamation mark. Quotation mark (“...”), (‘...’) The use of quotation marks, also called inverted commas, is very slightly complicated by the fact that there are two types: single quotes (` `) and double quotes (" "). As a general rule, British usage has in the past usually preferred single quotes for ordinary use, but double quotes are now increasingly common; American usage has always preferred double quotes (Kramer, 2022).

Writing is letters or symbols that are written or imprinted on a surface to represent the sounds or words of a language. Basically, writing means producing oral message to written language. It involves an active process to organize, formulate, and develop the ideas

into a piece of paper. So that the readers can follow the writer message as well as in oral form. Writing is one of the ways to give information to the readers, the writing should be clearly and useful for the reader need (Hasyim, 2017). There are four types of writing that had been learned by students during the semesters, they are; narrative writing, descriptive writing, argumentative writing, and expository writing. Yet, the students were asked to write a narrative writing in this research. In accordance with writing and its relation to punctuations, it is very crucial because if the writing is not well written, many educated readers will not even bother to read it, either because it is too difficult what the author is trying to state, or they will just assure that it will not be good as it does not appear to be well written. A proof of that could be the correct use of punctuation marks and how they cut the steam of words into meaningful groups and prevent confusion (Suliman, 2019).

Narrative refresh to retelling a story that happened in the past using chronological order and sequences of events to entertain readers. In various ways, narrative text is presented to entertain readers with imagined or actual experiences. The purpose of a narrative, other than providing entertainment, it can be to make readers think about an issue, stimulate their emotions, and to teach them a lesson. Narrative texts can be categorized into fiction narrative and nonfiction narrative. Fiction narrative presents an imaginary story that takes place in an imaginary world, e.g. legends, fables, myths, fairy tales, folk tales, short stories, novels, and comics. Besides that, there is nonfiction narrative. It presents the real-life story of a person. Examples: news and magazine articles, diaries, biographies, and textbooks that talk about history of a person. There were generic structures and language features in narrative text. Complication, orientation, resolution, and reorientation are narrative text generic structures. Meanwhile, narrative text language features include the use of noun phrases, time and place adverbial phrases, and the simple past tense (Nur'ainy, 2023).

According to authoritative studies in the field of rhetoric, narrative is one of the primary modes of discourse that can fulfil a range of communicative aims. One of the common features of narrative structure is the use of a timeline to convey characters' actions. When these events revolve around a structured plot—often involving conflict and resolution—the text may be classified as a 'story'. However, the difference between narrative and story remains a topic of ongoing discussion. If stories are commonly used as vehicles of entertainment in print media, they may be seen as fulfilling literary aims, as opposed to expressive, referential, or persuasive ones. Punctuation use within a text can vary according to the narrative's structure, with genre theorists providing a more linguistically-informed version of the traditional dis-tinctions between a 'beginning, middle and end' framework, such as the 'orientation, disruption (sequence of events) and resolution'. A more nuanced, five-part framework is provided by 'opening, inciting moment, development, denouement and ending'. Graham validates the framework by applying it to a selection of children's literature and the framework has influenced recent work on language play in children's writing, (Beard, 2022).

METHODS

The researchers used quantitative method for this research. In supplying data of the research, Quantitative data relies on exact measurements collected through structured and validated instruments. It typically includes statistical reports that analyze correlations, compare means, and assess the significance of findings. Generally, a correlational study is a type of quantitative research that examines two or more numerical variables from the same group of participants. Through a series of calculations, it aims to identify whether a relationship (or covariance) exists between the variables—indicating a similarity, though not necessarily a difference in their averages, (Asamoah, 2014). Correlational studies can take the form of either prediction or relationship studies. In prediction studies, researchers aim to use one or more variables (called predictor variables) to forecast outcomes on other variables (known as criterion variables). For instance, if a strong relationship exists, kindergarten test scores might be used to predict performance in first grade. It's crucial in such studies to consider any additional variables that might influence the criterion variable. On the other hand, relationship studies investigate the connections between different variables measured from the same individuals at roughly the same time. These studies help researchers better understand the factors influencing more complex traits. The strength of the relationship between variables is represented by the correlation coefficient, which ranges from 0 to ± 1.00 —the closer it is to ± 1.00 , the stronger the relationship. The typical steps in conducting correlational research include: defining a relevant research problem, selecting the variables to be examined, choosing appropriate participants, gathering measurable data, and analysing and interpreting the findings. (Mertens, 2010).

Statistics serve two main purposes: identifying differences between variables and exploring relationships among them. The method used for the latter is known as *correlation analysis*, which enables researchers to assess both the strength and direction of the connection between two variables. This is done by calculating a *correlation coefficient*, which ranges from -1 to +1. A high correlation coefficient indicates a strong association—for example, a strong positive correlation is often found between students' language aptitude scores and their foreign language grades. Conversely, a coefficient of 0 indicates no relationship between the variables; for example, students' attitudes towards chocolate and the number of brothers/sisters they have are likely to have no significant correlation. Negative correlation coefficients suggest inverse relationships; for example, the number of days students miss school is likely to have a negative correlation with their overall school achievement. Of course, similar to t-test and ANOVA statistics, the correlation coefficients need to be statistically significant to indicate true scores, (Dornyei, 2007).

An author research book stated that population is total all of analysis unit (subject) that the characteristic will be estimated. Meanwhile, sampling is the part of population that will be scrutinized (Kusnadi, 2008). The population derived from second year communication science students' of Universitas BSI. There are 76 students of total population and the researchers use cluster sampling which only 37 students represent of data analyzed. The researchers also use test instrument to show capability of punctuation usage and narrative writing. There are two kinds of test. The first test students' punctuation mastery consists 40 numbers of test. The criteria of scoring are around 0-100. The second test is the writing. To measure students writing, in this case, the researchers used the test of writing. The students

will be asked to make narrative writing which was learned during the semester. The researchers only gave the topics for the students, then, they are ordered to enlarge those topics using their own ideas.

FINDINGS

There are many factors that may rise from writing skill related to punctuation usage, as it addresses a common issue in writing skills development. These difficulties stem from various factors, including limited grammar education, language barriers, and inconsistent exposure to proper punctuation rules. These struggles can profoundly impact the quality of students' writing. Incorrect or absent punctuation can lead to unclear communication, affecting coherence, and readability. It can also diminish the overall impact of their work, hindering their ability to convey ideas effectively. Current educational methods might not adequately address these challenges, lacking in engaging strategies or comprehensive materials tailored to students' individual learning styles and needs (Farjana, 2025). The issue or problem that is faced by the students is punctuation usage on their writing. For example, "*Let's eat, Dad*" and "*Let's eat Dad*" are significant differences. Another example is period usage; *He lived on main st.* and *He lived on main st*. One period is sufficient to end a sentence. Furthermore, the authors focused on the kinds of punctuation that commonly error made by their students. They are period, comma, apostrophe, exclamation mark, colon, semicolon, quotation mark, and hyphen.

The researchers show two tables consist of punctuation test and the indicator of score narrative writing.

Table 1. Punctuation Test Grillwork

No	Indicators	Number of items	Items	Score
1	Period (.)	1, 6, 10, 30, 38	5	1
2	Comma (,)	3, 16, 27, 34, 40	5	1
3	Question mark (?)	7, 12, 18, 24, 35	5	1
4	Apostrophe (')	5, 19, 26, 28, 36	5	1
5	Exclamation mark (!)	4, 11, 22, 31	4	1
6	Colon (:)	8, 14, 37, 39	4	1
7	Semicolon (;)	9, 17, 21, 32	4	1
8	Quotation mark (" " , '..')	15, 20, 23, 29	4	1
9	Hyphen (-)	2, 13, 25, 33	4	1

Table 2. The indicators of score narrative writing

Writing Ability	Score	Level	Indicator
Content	30-27	Excellent	The student understands the content of writing. Their writing is wide and complete. It's suitable the title.
	26-22	Good	Understand; wide and complete; describe suitable the title, however less specification.
	21-17	Fair	Understand is less; not complete, not specification.
	16-13	Poor	Not understand the content
Organization	20-18	Excellent	It's very arrangement and neat; clearly; rich ideas; sequence is less logical
	17-14	Good	Arrangement and neat; enough ideas; sequence is logical
	13-10	Fair	The writing is less arrangement and neat; not clearly; sequence is less logical
	9-7	Poor	The writing is not arrangement and neat; poor ideas
Vocabulary	20-18	Excellent	It's very rich; effective in use; very understand the form of word; diction is very right
	17-14	Good	Wide; effective in use; understand the form of word; diction is very right
	13-10	Fair	It's not effective; the form of word is less; diction is not right
	9-7	Poor	Not understand the form of word and the word
Grammar	25-22	Excellent	The grammar is very good
	21-18	Good	Can use and arrange a simple sentence; the grammar incorrect is little
	17-11	Fair	Using the grammar can make the meaning is hazy
	10-5	Poor	The grammar is very not good
Mechanics	5	Excellent	It's very understood mechanics (punctuation)
	4	Good	Understanding in mechanics is good, have little mistake
	3	Fair	Understanding of punctuation is not good; have more mistake
	2	Poor	It's not understood of punctuation; the writing is difficult to read

DISCUSSION

Punctuation usage is the independent variable of this research. To measure the student's punctuation usage, the researchers put the test on the students by giving multiple choice test. Along with analysis, the researchers find some limitations through this research, they are subjective in error identification, limited contextual understanding, and sample size and diversity constraints. The process of identifying and categorizing punctuation errors can be subjective, leading to potential inconsistencies among evaluators. Without clear, standardized criteria, reliability may be compromised. Punctuation errors are often analyzed in isolation, without considering the broader contextual or grammatical factors influencing the writer's choices. This can lead to misinterpretation of errors as mistakes rather than stylistic or contextual variations. Furthermore, small or homogenous samples

limit the generalizability of findings. Variations in language proficiency is often not fully captured, affecting the applicability of results.

The work has been done by using formula of Interval Class. It is used to calculate among the data reached from top to bottom. A grouped frequency distribution can be sorted either on the basis of exclusive or inclusive class intervals.

Note: IR = Class Interval

t = The highest score = 90

r = The lowest score = 60

N = Total of the categories = 3

$$\begin{aligned}
 IR &= \frac{t - r}{N} \\
 &= \frac{90 - 60}{3} \\
 &= \frac{30}{3} \\
 IR &= 10
 \end{aligned}$$

The total of Class Interval (IR) for independent variable of this research is 10. After knowing the class interval, the data taken from interval above was put on the table of frequency distribution, that is:

Table 3. Frequency Distribution as the Result of Punctuation Usage

No	Class Interval	Frequency	Category	Percentage
1	81-91	8	High	21.62%
2	70-80	21	Middle	56.75%
3	59-69	8	Low	21.62%

Based on the table of frequency distribution above, it can be inferred that 37 students as the research population can be divided as follow:

1. There are 8 students who get score 81-91 and included in the high category (21.62%).
2. There are 21 students who get score 70-80 and included in the middle category (56.75%).
3. There are 8 students who get score 59-69 and included in the low category (21.62%).

Therefore, it can be inferred that ability in punctuation usage among the second-year students is in the middle category.

Narrative writing is as the dependent variable in this research. To measure the writing skill of the students, the researchers put the test on the students by asking them to write a narrative text. This is also measured by Class Interval formula.

Note: IR = Class Interval

t = The highest score = 85

r = The lowest score = 55

N = Total of the categories = 3

$$\begin{aligned}
 IR &= \frac{t-r}{N} \\
 &= \frac{85-55}{3} \\
 &= \frac{30}{3} \\
 IR &= 10
 \end{aligned}$$

The total of Class Interval (IR) for independent variable of this research is 10. After knowing the class interval, the data taken from interval above was put on the table of frequency distribution, that is:

Table 4. Frequency Distribution as the result of Narrative Writing

No	Class Interval	Frequency	Category	Percentage
1	76-86	9	High	24.32%
2	65-75	19	Middle	51.35%
3	54-64	9	Low	24.32%

Based on the table of frequency distribution above, it can be inferred that 37 students as the research population can be divided as follow:

1. There are 9 students who get score 76-86 and included in the high category (24.32%).
2. There are 19 students who get score 65-75 and included in the middle category (51.35%).
3. There are 9 students who get score 54-64 and included in the low category (24.32%).

Table 5. Table of Interpretation to the Grade of "r count"

The grade of "r count"	Interpretation
0.800-1.00	High
0.600-0.800	Enough

0.400-0.600	Middle
0.200-0.400	Low
0.000-0.200	Lower

The researchers calculated variable dependent and independent through the formula:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{N \sum XY - (\sum X)(\sum Y)}{\sqrt{\{(N \sum X^2) - (\sum X)^2\} \{(N \sum Y^2) - (\sum Y)^2\}}}$$

Note:

r_{xy} : Index correlation "r" product-moment

N : Number of cases

$\sum X$: Total score X

$\sum Y$: Total score Y

$\sum XY$: Total the multiplication between score X and score Y

The critical value of "r count" is 0.5956. If interpreted it based on the table above, it can be inferred that there is middle correlation between punctuation usage and narrative writing among the second-year communication science students' at Universitas BSI. The researchers have proposed the Alternative Hypothesis (H_a), which states: "There is a significant correlation between students' punctuation usage and narrative writing among second-year communication science students." To determine the critical value of the Pearson correlation coefficient (r table), the researchers calculated the degrees of freedom (df). The formula for calculating df is $df = N - 2$, where N represents the sample size of the research population.

$$df = N - 2$$

After considering the product moment table by using df 35, it can be known that the critical value of r product moment (r table) for the 5% level is 0.334 and the critical value of r product moment (r table) for the 1% level is 0.430. From all data analysis above, it can be drawn that "r count" = 0.5956 and "r table" = 0.334 or 0.430. Finally, the data confirmed that "r count" is bigger than "r table". Therefore, it can be inferred that H_a is accepted. It means that there is a significant correlation between students' punctuation usage and narrative writing. Furthermore, the researchers measured the level of correlation between its variable by counting the quadrate of "r count" and multiplying it by 100%. As a result, the level of correlation between students' punctuation usage and narrative writing equals $(r \text{ count})^2 \times 100\% = 36\%$

Experts support the idea that in applied linguistics research, correlation coefficients as low as 0.3 to 0.5 can still be considered meaningful. When two tests show a correlation of around 0.6, it typically suggests they are measuring roughly the same construct. It's important to understand that a negative correlation (indicated by a minus sign) refers only to the direction of the relationship, not its strength—for instance, $r = 0.6$ and $r = -0.6$ represent relationships of equal strength. Additionally, correlation coefficients reflect only *linear* relationships—those in which high scores on one variable are likely to correspond with high scores on another. Therefore, correlation is not suitable for analysing *curvilinear* relationships, such as those that follow a U-shaped pattern.

The implications of this research offer several important knowledge both for educators and learners that can be summed up as follow; enhanced understanding of learners' language development, improvement of teaching strategies, assessment and feedback enhancement, and implication for language and literary research. By identifying specific punctuation errors, educators can better understand the developmental stages of students' writing skills. Recognizing common mistakes allows for targeted instruction that addresses punctuation mastery, which essential for clear and coherent storytelling. The findings suggest the need for explicit teaching of punctuation rules within the narrative context. Teachers can incorporate focused exercise and feedback sessions that emphasize correct punctuation usage, thereby improving overall writing quality. Understanding typical punctuation errors enables more precise assessment criteria and personalised feedback. Educators can use this insight to guide students toward correct punctuation practices, ultimately enhancing their writing clarity and effectiveness. The analysis contributes to broader research on language acquisition and literacy development. It underscores the importance of punctuation as a vital component of language proficiency and offers a foundation for further studies into writing accuracy and cognitive processes involved.

By identifying gaps and needs, the researchers have reviewed some relevant studies by prior research that strengthen their ideas. These are mutual to add their work credibility. In 2021, the title was made by Mukhammad Isnaeni and Frans from Indonesia University. Their title was An Error Analysis of Using Punctuations in Narrative Texts. The objectives of this research are to find out whether the students commit punctuation errors in their narrative writing or not and to identify the types of errors which are made by the students in terms of Surface Strategy Taxonomy. Another study has revealed in 2022 by Safriyaldi Rahadi Hasibuan. Through his title An Analysis on The Students Errors in Placing Punctuation in Narrative Text at Grade VIII SMP Negeri 5 Panyabungan, this research is focused on students' errors in placing punctuation in narrative text at grade VIII SMP Negeri 5 Panyabungan. One of the problems which were still faced by the students in English was about students' lack in usage of punctuation in narrative text. The students still felt difficult to used punctuation because most of them did not understand well about punctuation, lack of vocabulary, and lack of attention about the importance of punctuation. There are 3 formulations of the problems and corresponding with the purposes of this research. It is to find out the kinds of errors, the most common errors and then the factors that cause the students often made errors in placing punctuation on the narrative text at grade VIII SMP Negeri 5 Panyabungan. The last relevant study came from Nur'ainy (2023), she brought the

title Capitalization and Punctuation Used in Writing Narrative Text. The aims of this study are to describe how capitalization and punctuation are used by students of the tenth-grade level in writing narrative text and to find out the students' difficulties in using capitalization and punctuation at SMA Negeri 4 Purworejo.

CONCLUSIONS

All of the data that have been found and calculated by the researchers jumped to the conclusion that there was a correlation between punctuation usage and narrative writing towards the second-year communication science students at Universitas BSI. The results of the research might be influenced by several factor of students during the research. For example, data sample was collected randomly. So, the significant study only resulted as many 36% of total 37 students. Some students might not acquire the usage of punctuation. In reverse, not all of the students comprehend the narrative writing but they understand how to use punctuation. Some problems were also found by the researchers during analysis; such some students were not able to answer the questions in choosing the right answer in punctuation test. Some students also were not able to develop their words and ideas because of vocabularies comprehending. This research has been very useful both for researchers themselves and lecturers or teachers who want to encourage their student in technical writing capability. The researchers state some recommendations for further researchers who want to analyse punctuation. First, develop a detail framework categorizing different types of punctuation errors (e.g., comma misuse, sentence boundary errors, apostrophe misuse). This will enable systematic analysis and comparability across studies. Second, combine quantitative approaches (e.g., frequency counts, error rates) with qualitative analysis (e.g., error contexts, underlying causes) to gain a comprehensive understanding of punctuation issues. The last, analyze how punctuation errors vary across different proficiency levels or age groups to identify specific learning challenges and tailor instructional strategies accordingly.

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