Bachelor thesis
Independent Degree Project, 15 credits.

Punctuation in Swedish Upper Secondary School

Subject Teacher Education for Upper Secondary School, Religion, History and English, 270 credit

Halmstad 2022-02-02
Emma Madsen
Summary


Nyckelord: Skiljetecken
Abstract

Punctuation enhances the understanding and correct reading of written text by the use of spacing and conventional signs. When learning a language, the usage of correct punctuation is vital. This is especially important when learning a second language since punctuation rules vary between languages. In Swedish schools, the teaching of English as a second language has shifted focus from a grammatically oriented method called ‘grammar translation method (GTM) to a more communicative approach which could have affected the students’ knowledge of grammar. Despite the importance of correct punctuation, there have been few studies addressing the subject in Sweden. Therefore, this essay aims to examine the knowledge and use of punctuation among students and teachers in Swedish schools. In order to meet the purpose of the essay, the method was divided into four parts: (a) student questionnaires, (b) teachers’ questionnaires, (c) analysis of students written texts and (d) analysis of second language acquisition learning materials. In total, 23 9th grade students and two teachers participated in the study. Nine different textbooks were analysed to examine how punctuation is addressed. The results showed that there is a general lack of knowledge on the correct use of punctuation among the students as well as the teachers. Moreover, the students’ textbooks did not, in any form, address punctuation. The results were analysed and discussed in relation to previous research on punctuation as well as the essays theoretical framework. Finally, implications for practitioners and future research were provided. Recommendations for teachers are that they follow, to a greater extent, the curriculum and teach punctuation in Swedish upper secondary schools. However, since there seems to be a lack of knowledge among teachers regarding the use of punctuations, the results of this essay highlight the importance of including punctuation in the textbooks provided to the students.

Keyword: Punctuation
# Introduction

## 1.1 The Current Situation of Grammar Teaching in Swedish Schools

## 1.2 Significance of the Research

## 1.3 Research Questions

# Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

## 2.1 Theories

### 2.1.1 Krashen’s Second Language Acquisition Theory

- Acquisition learning distinction hypothesis
- Monitoring hypothesis
- *Natural order hypothesis*
- Input hypothesis
- Affective filter hypothesis

## 2.2 Previous Research

## 2.3 Writing Development Skills

### 2.3.1 Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

- The history of the grammar translation method
- Positive views on grammar translation method
- The application of the GTM in Swedish schools

## 2.4 Punctuation

### 2.4.1 The Comma

### 2.4.2 The Colon

### 2.4.3 Semicolon

# Method

## 3.1 Data Collection

### 3.1.1 Student Questionnaires

### 3.1.2 Teachers’ Questionnaires

### 3.1.3 Students’ Written Texts

### 3.1.4 Text-Workbooks and Websites

# Result and Analysis

## 4.1 Questionnaire – Students

### 4.1.1 Questions where a majority of the students failed to insert the correct punctuation.
4.1.2 Questions where a majority of the students managed to correctly insert the missing punctuation ................................................................. 13
4.1.3 Summary .............................................................................. 14
4.2 Questionnaire – Teachers ................................................................. 14
  4.2.1 Quantitative Part ................................................................... 14
  4.2.2 Qualitative Part .................................................................... 16
4.3 Student Previous Written Materials ............................................... 16
  1.3.1 Missing Commas .................................................................. 16
  4.3.2 Comma Splicing ................................................................... 17
  4.3.3 Summary ............................................................................. 17
4.4 Textbooks ................................................................................... 18
Discussion ...................................................................................... 19
  Student’s Knowledge of Punctuation .................................................. 19
  The Teacher’s Knowledge and Way of Teaching ............................... 20
Conclusion and Implications .............................................................. 22
  6.1 Implications for Practitioners ..................................................... 22
  6.2 Implications for Future Research ................................................ 22
  6.3 Methodology Criticism and Reflection ......................................... 23
    Seeing the questionnaire beforehand ............................................. 23
    Allowing collaborations in answering the questions together .......... 24
    Small sample ............................................................................ 24
    Validity and Reliability ................................................................ 24
References ...................................................................................... 26
Appendices ...................................................................................... 28
Appendix 1 – Synopsis of the Correct Use of Punctuation .................. 28
  The Comma ................................................................................... 28
    Separation of independent clauses .............................................. 28
    After introductory words or phrases .......................................... 28
    After introductory clauses in sentences – before the main clause .... 28
    Before and after embedded clauses, phrases and words ............... 29
    To separate short items in a list .................................................. 29
    To indicate direct speech ........................................................... 29
    To indicate billions, millions and thousands ............................... 29
  The Colon ...................................................................................... 29
To join a clause to a word or a phrase – to emphasise ........................................ 29
To join two independent clauses – to emphasise the second clause .................. 30
To indicate an important message ..................................................................... 30
To introduce a quotation .................................................................................. 30
To introduce a list ............................................................................................. 30
To denote ratios and odds .................................................................................. 30
Semicolon ........................................................................................................ 30
To show clauses of equal emphasis .................................................................... 30
To list longer named items .............................................................................. 30

Appendix 2 – Common Punctuation Mistakes .................................................... 32
Examples of Errors Using Commas .................................................................... 32
The Lack of Commas ......................................................................................... 32
Incorrect Placement of Commas ......................................................................... 32
Overuse of commas ............................................................................................ 33
Comma splicing .................................................................................................. 33
Examples of Error in Usage of Colon .................................................................. 33
Incorrect use of Colon ....................................................................................... 33

Appendix 3 .......................................................................................................... I
Student questionnaire ........................................................................................... I
Introduction

When learning the English language, the application of correct punctuation is vital to disambiguate and understand the written language, since punctuation can heavily influence the way a sentence is interpreted. An example of this is ‘Woman, without her man, is nothing’ and ‘Woman: without her, man is nothing.’ (Truss, 2003, s 9) This is an example of a sentence with two different, perhaps even contradictory, meanings; however, it is the use of punctuation which creates this difference.

The punctuation rules in different languages vary and are often stylized by the personal preference of the author and tachygraphy language forms; for example, such personal preferences can be seen in written texts in online forums, as well in online chat and text messages. In western antiquity, ‘scriptura continua’ were used, where words are not often separated by spacing; however, in the Ancient Greek, the sporadic use of spacing was as an aid for oral delivery of texts (Saenger, 1997). Later, the Aristophanes of Byzantium’s system (Truss, 2003) was used and punctuation marks introduced to mark-up rhetorical divisions, as it is in modern times. It may be difficult for second language learners to understand and fully comprehend the punctuation rules of a second language without instruction as to when, where and how to correctly place the punctuation marks, since the punctuation rules vary from language to language. It is, therefore, imperative for learners to be taught the punctuation rules of the said language in order to understand the written meaning and context of written texts.

1.1 The Current Situation of Grammar Teaching in Swedish Schools

At the time of writing this, the form of language teaching used in Swedish schools is the one referred to as the ‘communicative approach’. This approach of teaching mainly employs conversation and speech exchanges rather than focusing on the rules of grammar. The communicative approach sometimes creates obstacles when students are trying to formulate written texts. Previously, the grammar-translation method was the primary teaching method (Gascoigne, 2002). This method mainly focuses on the written language and the understanding of the different grammatical rules upon which the language is based. Students learning a second language would spend most of their school time translating texts into their native language; this leads to a deeper understanding of the written language learned.

1.2 Significance of the Research

Grammatical choices have a profound effect on communication, understanding, and reliability in written as well as orally produced messages. In Swedish schools, grammatical accuracy has always featured as a key aspect within the educational system. However, since the decreased use of the grammar-centred educational method ‘grammar translation method’, the grammatical structure often used by students seems to have been affected profoundly.

---

1 The art or practice of rapid writing: SHORTHAND, STENOGRAPHY; especially: the rapid writing or shorthand of the ancient Greeks and Romans (Merriam Webster dictionary, 2020)

2 A term that refers to the practice, prevalent in classical and early medieval writing, of writing the words continuously with one another; in other words, there are no spaces between them (Wingo, 1972).
The significance of a study constructed to enhance understanding regarding the use of grammar in Swedish schools would be of importance since there appears to be a lack of research to indicate how much time and effort Swedish schools devote to teaching the rules of punctuation to students learning English as a second language, how these rules are determined and the extent to which the teaching in this regard is accurate. More specifically, this essay seeks to gauge students’ and teachers’ knowledge regarding the use of punctuation in written English, and to establish whether the ESL textbooks are comprehensive and accurate in instructing students on the correct use of punctuation. Also, by increasing the knowledge regarding the use of punctuation in Swedish upper-secondary schools, the study hopes to contribute to the development of the understanding of the importance of punctuation.

1.3 Research Questions
1. What is Swedish upper-secondary school students’ knowledge of punctuation and how it is used?
2. What is the English teachers’ knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation and how to teach students punctuation?
3. How, if at all, do language teaching resources used in Swedish schools address the rules and conventions of English punctuation?
Theoretical Framework and Previous Research

This chapter will outline and review the relevant (a) theories, (b) previous research, (c) writing development skills and (d) punctuation. The subchapter titled ‘Theories’ will present the two leading theoretical approaches in the field of second language acquisition: Krashen’s theory of second language acquisition and the behaviourism theories. There are several diverse theories regarding second language acquisition, but the two mentioned are considered those most relevant to this study. In the subchapter named ‘Previous Research’, the information necessary for the understanding and contextualizing of the result analysis and discussion will be shown; this is followed by a subchapter titled ‘writing development skills’ in which the grammar translation method (GTM) is described. The last subchapter titled ‘punctuation’ to a range of sources and having regard to the fact that there is no single authority for this for the English language. It also indicates common punctuation errors made by Swedish learners who wrongly expect English punctuation rules to mirror those of their own language.

2.1 Theories

This chapter will begin by outlining the most recent and widely accepted theories of language acquisition. Theories within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) aim to explain the cognitive process through which a second language is acquired. More specifically, SLA theories are designed to uncover how learning a second language differs from acquiring the first language (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015).

Before the 1990s, the study of SLA was divided into two periods; the first of these was the period during which behaviourist theories were regarded as the most complete and accurate, and the second is marked by the emergence of structuralist approaches (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015). However, since it was established and agreed that these theories and approaches could not wholly account for the process of second language acquisition, other hypotheses arose to try to explain this process. Multiple approaches, hypotheses and theories have been advanced and, while some have been sufficiently robust to survive into the modern era, others have been less successful and were eventually abandoned. Stephen Krashen’s language acquisition theory is still held in regard and considered as a basis for subsequent approaches to second language acquisition (Vanpatten & Williams, 2015).

2.1.1 Krashen’s Second Language Acquisition Theory

The theory of second language acquisition, constructed by Krashen (1982), was created to better explain the acquisition process, and it does this by identifying the distinction between conscious and subconscious acquiring. It contains five hypotheses: (1) acquisition learning-, (2) monitoring-, (3) natural order-, (4) input- and (5) affective filter hypothesis.

Acquisition learning distinction hypothesis

The act of acquiring languages is the main focus of the monitoring theory. Therefore, one long-term aim of linguistic research has been to explain how someone acquires a language and in which way they learn a language.
The acquisition/learning distinction hypothesis describes the two different ways adults acquire a second language, both consciously and subconsciously (Krashen, 1982, p. 10).

The first explanation of acquiring a language is by the learner subconsciously being exposed to the language, and thereby acquire knowledge regarding the usage of the second language. The learner is not aware of the learning process itself, nor the rules of the language; the learner is, however, aware of the usage for communication. The learner does not consciously understand the grammar of the language, yet will acquire an impression of what is considered right or wrong from the constant exposure. As an example, the learner might not understand the difference between the singular (is) and the plural (are) but has a feeling that it sounds wrong to say, ‘he are’ or ‘they is’ (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). The way a learner is unconsciously exposed to a language is through personal interactions with others, but also exposure to different varieties of mass media. If the learner sees an English text in an advertisement, for example, linguistic elements within it may be absorbed and unconsciously transferred to the long-term memory. This way of learning’ is quite similar to the initial learning process of children. The only two clear distinctions are the learners’ ages and that the adult language learner has prior knowledge from a first language which the child lacks. (ibid).

The second way a language learner acquires a second language is through conscious and intentional absorption of the second language. The acquisition of languages as facilitated in schools through formal lessons offers one example of a conscious way of learning a language. In schools, languages are being taught to students, and are therefore consciously acquired due to the active teaching of a language. However, the unconscious way of learning a language is, to some scientists, the optimal and most efficient way of acquiring a language. (ibid)

The best methods are, therefore, those that supply ‘comprehensible input’ in low anxiety situations, containing messages that students want to hear. These methods do not force early production in the second language but allow students to produce when they are ‘ready,’ recognizing that improvement comes from supplying communicative and comprehensible input, and not from forcing and correcting production. (Krashen, 1982, p.7)

The reason that unconscious acquiring is considered the most efficient way of learning a language is that intentional acquiring can be affected by certain variables, such as motivation, anxiety, stress, and will to learn. Krashen (1982) also emphasises that it is in an anxiety-free situation the student learns most efficiently. When a student is subjected to the teaching of a language, it typically brings a feeling of expectations which may cause stress and anxiety to some students. Therefore, this conscious way of learning, as opposed to non-conscious exposure to a language is considered to be less efficient and this due to hindrances that arise when learners experience stress and anxiety during the process. (Krashen, 1982, p. 10). Students are encouraged to read considerable amounts of texts in school, exposing them to written form, including punctuation. Through this exposure, it can be assumed that students subconsciously absorb at least some of the rules of punctuation whether they are taught systematically or not.
Monitoring hypothesis

This hypothesis explains the active, consciously acquired learning. It argues that the learner monitors their own input derived from formal teaching in terms of grammar and structural aspects. Competence in grammar and syntactic structure can be difficult to acquire if not taught, and this is because these aspects differ depending on the language in question. Even though practitioners in the field of SLA conclude that subconscious acquisition is perceived to be the most efficient way of achieving language proficiency, grammar is seldom entirely absorbed.

We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a "feel" for correctness. Grammatical sentences "sound" right, or "feel" right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated. ” (Krashen, 1982, p.10)

Therefore, the unconscious and conscious engagement with the language being learned both play a role in learning and acquiring a language. Even though this hypothesis likely aimed to understand spoken language, there is no reason to believe it could not also be applied to the acquisition of written language.

Natural order hypothesis

The natural order hypothesis suggests that acquiring a language occurs in a pre-determined order (Krashen, 1982). Among SLA practitioners, there is a belief that certain morphemes appear in a particular order, for example, English learners develop the knowledge of the morpheme -ing faster than the third person phoneme -s. This hypothesis suggests that the order in which a language is learned is constant regardless of explicit teaching.

Input hypothesis

The input hypothesis explains the way a second language is learned, by ‘acquiring’ not ‘learning’. The hypothesis explains the acquisition of languages through the use of input in form of feedback. Input is what the learner is told and shown by others. In similarity with Vygotskij’s theory of ‘zone of proximal development’, Krashen emphasises the approximal learning by the 1 + 1 (level + 1); this being that the learner progresses in their language skills when the input is slightly more advanced than the third person phoneme -s. This hypothesis suggests that the order in which a language is learned is constant regardless of explicit teaching.

Input hypothesis

The input hypothesis explains the way a second language is learned, by ‘acquiring’ not ‘learning’. The hypothesis explains the acquisition of languages through the use of input in form of feedback. Input is what the learner is told and shown by others. In similarity with Vygotskij’s theory of ‘zone of proximal development’, Krashen emphasises the approximal learning by the 1 + 1 (level + 1); this being that the learner progresses in their language skills when the input is slightly more advanced than the learner is, to current knowledge level. (Krashen, 1982; Vygotskij, 1978). In addition, Saville-Troike and Barto (2016) state that positive (as well as negative) reinforcement enhances the learning of a certain behaviours. For example: positive reinforcement in form of input by a teacher (stimuli) to a student will enhance the student’s correct use of punctuation.

---

3 Morpheme is a short segment of language that meets three essential criteria: (1) It is a word or a part of a word that has meaning, (2) It cannot be divided into smaller meaningful segments without changing its meaning or leaving a meaningless remainder, and (3) It has relatively the same stable meaning in different verbal environments (Krashen, 1982).

4 This theory is that the current level which the learner is at, is challenged by increasing the level slightly. Therefore, making the language learner better learning the language due to the increase in difficulty.

5 This being the current level the language learner is at, and the slight increase in difficulty. This is considered the 1+1, a slight increase in difficulty in order to challenge the learner and benefit learning.
Affective filter hypothesis

The affective learning is, to Krashen, heavily monitored by the emotions and stress experienced by the learner. If a learner suffers substantial stress during the process, or if their attitude towards the target language is less than positive, this will affect their progress in language acquisition. This can, in turn, cause the learner to block the language learning, and the learning process thereby becomes inefficient. The way the learner experiences the language will, in turn, affect both the language acquisition and also the input (Krashen, 1982). However, to what extent this applies in writing composition is not specified by Krashen. When students perform writing exercises there is, unlike with conversations, a time interval between writing the text and receiving feedback from the teacher. Moreover, since the purpose of writing exercises in an educational setting is to identify and correct errors, the stress factor is likely to be absent or at least less apparent.

2.2 Previous Research

Nilsson (2016) analyzed students’ texts produced by secondary school students for national tests. The study aims to assess the students’ knowledge and use of punctuation, in which contexts, as well as what potential the use of punctuation has, for textual and interpersonal function. The study method comprises linguistic analysis consisting of three parts: (a) inventory, (b) correctness analysis and (c) textual and interpersonal functional analysis. The result of the study shows that students’ use of punctuation fills many functions and contributes positively to the communicative quality in students’ written answers in the form of boundary and prosodic markers which, in turn, contributes to the text’s emphases, readability, and expressivity. The results also show that differences in students’ use of punctuation when writing different types of texts. When writing narrative texts, the students tend to use spoken language to a greater extent than when writing other texts.

Bhela (1999) describes how, when writing or speaking a second language, learners rely on the structures of their native language, especially in cases when the structure of the languages is distinctively different. The interference of the native language can cause a high frequency of errors when using the second language. Over recent years, there have been several studies on the topic illuminating different aspects of how native language interferes with the learning and usage of second language. Bhela (1999) studied texts from four participants written in their native and second language and compared a number of factors such as prepositions, spelling, past tense and punctuation, the latter factor being relevant for this essay. It was found that, when the structure of punctuation was similar in both languages, the participants made the same errors with its use in both the native as well as in the second language, implicating that there is a direct interference from the native language.

Besides studies regarding punctuation in second language, there have also been a few Swedish studies aimed towards researching students’ use of punctuation in their native language (i.e. Swedish). Wahlquist (2012) studied the use of commas among Swedish 6th and 9th graders. The main aim of the study was to compare 6th and 9th graders’ use of commas to investigate whether there is a difference in knowledge and understanding of how and where to use them. In addition to the main aim of comparing age differences, the study also aimed to investigate gender differences and how the students’ parents’ lingual background affected the use of commas.
An interesting result was that the study did not find any significant differences regarding correct use of commas between the students who had parents with Swedish as a first language and students with parents that had Swedish as a second language.

2.3 Writing Development Skills

2.3.1 Grammar Translation Method (GTM)

In order to provide context for the teaching of grammar in Swedish compulsory education, this chapter will outline the features of the grammar translation method and its use in Swedish schools with a historical perspective.

The history of the grammar translation method

Previously in the Western world, the teaching of Latin or Greek was viewed as adequate for higher education. The method used to teach Latin, which focused mainly on grammatical rules, has later come to be referred to as “the Classical method”. Other aspects to this method revolved around memorization of vocabulary and primarily the translation of texts (Brown, 1994). As other languages throughout history were originally taught in educational institutions during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the classical method later became known as the ‘grammar translation method’ (GTM), with its primary focus on the grammatical aspects of translation. GTM is intended to assist students develop reading strategies rather than development in speech and communication (Lightbown & Spada, 2013; Harmer, 2007). Therefore, students are kept separate while working and writing on translating a given text.

"This method, then, aims at inculcating an understanding of the grammar of the language, expressed in traditional terms, and at training the student to write the language accurately by regular practice in translating from his native language. It aims at providing the student with a wide literary vocabulary, often of an unnecessarily detailed nature; it aims at training the student to extract the meaning from foreign texts by translation into the native language and, at advanced stages, to appreciate the literary significance and value of what he has been reading.” (Rivers 1968: p. 16-17)

As suggested by Rivers’ (1968), there was a focus on the grammar of the language, which is expressed in traditional terms, hence its origin from the classical method.

The GTM was widely used since its introduction in the early 20th century until the late 1970s (Taylor, 2018). This method was used for the sake of being ‘scholarly’, and for increasing the proficiency in reading by the use of a dictionary. However, this form of self-reliant study method was considered inappropriate in group teaching settings for younger children.
Positive views on grammar translation method

In a departure from behaviourist theories, subsequent scholars argue that a speaker’s native language greatly influences their ability to learn a second language (Chellapan, 1982). It is believed that the first language helps form an individual’s way of thinking and their use of a second language. It also provides an understanding of the influence the first language may have on the grammatical structure of a second language and potential errors which may occur due to preconceptions held of a language and its structure. This act of knowledge is called ‘negative transfer’ (ibid).

Translation can make the student come to closer grips with the target language. A simultaneous awareness of two media could actually make the student see the points of convergence and divergence more clearly and also refine the tools of perception and analysis resulting in divergent thinking.” (Chellapan, 1982, p 60).

The application of the GTM in Swedish schools

During the 1970s, the use of grammar-translation methods began slowly decreasing in Swedish schools across the nation; even though this method was viewed as outdated and less effective, its use continued in some schools and is still evident at the time of writing. Even though the GTM somewhat influences modern teaching, most modern schools tend to have adopted more modern communicative approaches (Malmberg, 1993).

2.4 Punctuation

This subchapter will review the most commonly used punctuation marks in English texts and how they are used. The most common punctuation marks are full stops, question marks, commas, colons, exclamation marks, quotation marks and apostrophes. Some, such as full stop, question marks and exclamation marks are commonly first acquired in both native as well as second language (Elsadig & Abdall, 2016). In addition, there are no discernible differences in usage across languages and consequently there is little risk of ignorance as to their correct usage in English. Therefore, this essay will not focus on these as their use for European speakers is generally unproblematic. Of the remaining punctuation marks, there are three that could be considered especially useful as objects of study, since they are a source of confusion for Swedish upper secondary students when writing texts in English. These are: commas, colons and semicolons. While there are other differences with other punctuation marks’ usage between English and Swedish, such as speech marks, apostrophes and dashes, these will fall outside the scope of this essay and may instead be considered for future studies.

Punctuation rules differ in a few ways between British English and American English. One such difference relates to what is called “Oxford comma”. According to American punctuation rules, commas should be placed both before and after a list of single words (Truss, 2003). For example: “I need my computer, keyboard, coffee, and chair”. However, according to British punctuation rules, there should normally not be a comma after the last single word (even though both options sometimes is considered correct (Truss, 2003). The sentence would instead be written: “I need my computer, keyboard, coffee and chair”. For the purpose of this essay, the British punctuation rules will be considered to apply in such cases when there is a difference between British and American punctuation rules. The initial research conducted for this essay
indicates that there is no single or specialist authority on punctuation use, but rather a matter of convention. Nine workbooks used in Swedish upper secondary schools, such as *Happy, The champion* and the digital learning platform *Clio*, were analysed with the conclusion that all of them contained sparse information regarding the use of punctuation. After an initial review of several different published sources on punctuation such as dictionaries from several universities (Oxford University, Cambridge University and Purdue University) it was surmised by the writer of this essay that there are almost no differences between them. Of these, Cambridge University Dictionary was considered an uncontentious choice and selected as a benchmark for this essay.

2.4.1 The Comma

According to the Cambridge University Dictionary (2020) there are seven different ways of using commas correctly: separation of independent clauses; after introductory words or phrases; after introductory clauses in sentences; before and after embedded clauses, phrases and words; to separate short items in a list; to indicate direct speech and to indicate billions, millions and thousands. See appendix 1 for a detailed description with examples and appendix 2 for examples of common mistakes using commas such as: Comma splice, to many commas, misplacing commas and lack of commas.

2.4.2 The Colon

There are six different ways of using colons correctly (Cambridge University Dictionary, 2020). These are: to join a clause to a word or a phrase; to join two independent clauses – to emphasise the second clause; to indicate an important message; to introduce a quotation and to introduce a list. See appendix 1 for a detailed description with examples and appendix 2 for examples of common mistakes using colons.

2.4.3 Semicolon

In contrast to commas and colons, there are only two ways semicolons should be used (Cambridge University Dictionary, 2020). The semicolon should be used either to *show clauses of equal emphasis* or to *list longer named items*. An example of the latter could be seen above in the listing of commas and colons. See appendix 1 for a detailed description with examples.
Method

In this chapter, the chosen method of the study will be presented. The data collection consists of two questionnaires (students and teachers), analysis of students’ previously written texts and a review of teaching materials used in the education. These mixed methods were considered necessary to create the best prerequisites for answering the research questions. Moreover, it was also considered beneficial for the studies reliability, since it provides the opportunity to triangulate and compare the results from different methods against each other.

3.1 Data Collection

To meet the purpose and aims of the essay, the chosen methodology consisted of four parts: (a) Student questionnaires, (b) Teachers questionnaires, (c) Analysis of students’ written texts, and (d) analysis of second language acquisition teaching literature. The first (a) and the third (c) section, was designed to answer the question: What is Swedish upper-secondary school students’ knowledge of punctuation and how it is used? Section (b) aimed to answer the question: What is the English teachers’ knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation and how to teach students punctuation? Section (d) aimed to answer the question: In what way does the language teaching school literature address punctuation?

3.1.1 Student Questionnaires

The student questionnaire consisted of 21 sentences or statements, all of which were completely devoid of punctuation. More specifically, the sentences lacked commas, colons and semicolons. The students were instructed to place the missing punctuation or to let the sentence remain unpunctuated. There were, in total, 23 9th grade students participating in the study. This questionnaire can be viewed in Appendix 3.

3.1.2 Teachers’ Questionnaires

The teachers’ questionnaire consisted of two parts: the first part being quantitative, the second being a mix of both quantitative and qualitative. The first quantitative part, just like the students’ questionnaire, consisted of eight sentences which all lacked punctuation. The teachers were instructed to place the missing punctuation marks (the three mentioned previously) or to leave the sentence unpunctuated. This part of the questionnaire aimed establish the teachers’ current knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation in the English language.

The second part consists of three questions in total and it aims to provide both quantitative and qualitative data. The questions were designed to confirm (or disprove) the teachers’ (own) stated knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation in relation to the answers given in the first part of the questionnaire. The question the teachers were asked were “how comfortable are you with teaching: (a) commas, (b) colons, and (c) semicolons?” The quantitative answers were categorised using the Likert scale, consisting of a scale of 1-5, with 1 being “very uncomfortable” and 5 being “very comfortable” with the use of the three punctuation marks. Furthermore, the qualitative answers were given by the teachers being asked to describe and motivate their answers chosen in the Likert scale.
3.1.3 Students’ Written Texts

The choice of using students’ previously written texts was based on the aspect that one must consider human factors. Some individuals have the tendency to become stressed when tested, and this has the potential to cause an uncertain result for the study. Therefore, the choice of using previously written texts became necessary to strengthen the reliability of the result.

The teachers gave access to the students’ previously written texts, which meant that a greater selection was presented. In order to meet the aim of this essay, a movie review assignment, written by the students, was chosen since the texts produced by students are normally lengthier than other assignments. Moreover, analysing students’ written texts provided an opportunity to establish whether students had a better (or the same) knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation, than they did at the moment of the questionnaire, excluding or diminishing the human factor. In other words, the function of analysing students’ previously written texts was to serve as complement to the other chosen methods.

3.1.4 Text- Workbooks and Websites

In order to acquire a greater understanding of the materials used by students, nine books were analysed. Of these, the students participating in this essay had, at one point in time, used three: *The Champion 5* (Bermheden, Sandström & Wahlgren, 2005), *Happy- year 7* (Peterson, Johansson & Bergman, 2012b) and *Happy- year 8* (Peterson, Johansson & Bergman, 2012a). The aim with analysing the course literature was to ascertain if, and if so to what extent, punctuation was addressed in second language textbooks in English class. Furthermore, the students were also using a website which is called *Clio*.

The textbook ‘Champion’ is a series of workbooks which teachers use from fourth to sixth grade. The books called ‘Happy’ are workbooks used from seventh to ninth grade and focus on grammar such as word inflection, conjunctions and conjunctions. The virtual book *Clio* is, however, not just a workbook. This is a website which combines technology with teaching. It works like a normal work and textbook, the only difference being that it is online.
Result and Analysis

This chapter presents the result of the study and is divided into four major parts, (a) questionnaire (students’), (b) questionnaire (teachers’) and (c) students’ previously written texts (d) textbooks. The use of punctuation is a subject in which there could be different views on what is considered the correct use of punctuation. However, the answers provided by the respondents is compared to the previously described correct use of punctuation which, in this study, is deemed correct.

4.1 Questionnaire – Students

The students participating were provided 21 unpunctuated sentences and asked to make the unpunctuated sentence grammatically correct by either place missing punctuation marks, or leave the sentence unaltered.

Table 1. Results of student questionnaire.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N=23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.1.1 Questions where a majority of the students failed to insert the correct punctuation.

As shown in table 1, more than 80 percent of the students failed to use correct punctuation in 13 of the 21 questions, including four questions where zero students managed to place the correct punctuation marks. Seven of these questions tested the students’ ability to correctly place commas (Q1, Q2, Q5, Q6, Q9, Q15, Q20), three tested their ability to correctly place colon (Q18, Q19, Q20) and five questions tested their ability to correctly place semicolon (Q3, Q5, Q7, Q11, Q21). For example, none of the students managed to correctly place the missing punctuation marks in the following sentences (for a more detailed presentation of the results, see appendix 3):

“I said to her before she left that she must, in the future, give me back my hairclip, my makeup, my hair straighteners and everything else she has borrowed from me” (Q2).

“The car had been to Rome, Italy; Sydney, Australia; Stockholm, Sweden; Copenhagen, Denmark” (Q5).

In addition, there were four other questions with over 50 percent of the student failing to place the correct punctuation marks (see table 1). The most common answer from the students was leaving the sentence unpunctuated. For example, for question four to be correct the students needed to place a comma between the word “pain” and “I” in the following sentence: “Because of my back pain, I cannot stand up for more than 10 minutes”. All of these questions were designed to test the students’ ability to correctly place commas (Q4, Q8, Q12 and Q16). (for a more detailed presentation of the results, see appendix 3).

4.1.2 Questions where a majority of the students managed to correctly insert the missing punctuation

In total, there were only four questions in which a majority of the students managed to insert the correct punctuation (see table 1). For three of these (Q10, Q13 and Q17), 39 - 49% of the students failed. Examples of these were (for a more detailed presentation of the results, see appendix 3):

“He never understood the question, nor did he understand what to do” (Q10).

“The thief had burgled the story, yet he had not taken all the jewels” (Q13).

These questions all tested the students’ ability to use comma. Finally, there was only one single question on which a strong majority (87%) of the students managed to use correct punctuation (Q14). This question (unpunctuated) was: “She needs to return my phone charger my headphones and my backpack”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “She needs to return my phone charger, my headphones and my backpack”. This question tested the students’ ability to use comma.
4.1.3 Summary

In summary, the results show a pattern with a majority of the students failing to insert colon and semicolon. Regarding the use of colon, the results are more varied, ranging between 0 percent to 87 percent correct answers. The high number of students leaving the sentences as is also indicates a widespread insecurity among the students regarding use of punctuation.

4.2 Questionnaire – Teachers

4.2.1 Quantitative Part

Figure 1. Survey (teachers). Quantitative part

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>This was, unfortunately, a very bad idea.</em></td>
<td><em>This was unfortunately a very bad idea</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above example, the teachers did not put out a comma in front of and behind the word ‘unfortunately’. The correct use of punctuation (see appendix 1), is to put a comma in front of and behind a word. Since the teachers did not add the missing comma the punctuation of the sentence becomes incorrect.

Table 3. Question 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Suddenly, the students all started singing: “school’s out”.</em></td>
<td><em>Suddenly, the students all started singing: “school’s out”.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Question 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>I said to her, before she left, that she must, in the future, give me back my hair clips, my makeup, my special straightener and everything else she has borrowed from me.</em></td>
<td><em>I said to her before she left that she must in the future give me back my hair clips, my makeup, my special straightener and everything else she has borrowed from me.</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5. Question 4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“There are many things I like about watching television; the commercials are not one of them”.</td>
<td>“There are many things I like about watching television; the commercials are not one of them”.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6. Question 5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“When I visited Las Vegas last year, I won a lot of money”</td>
<td>“When I visited Las Vegas last year I won a lot of money”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7. Question 6.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“The car had been to Rome, Italy; Sydney, Australia; Stockholm, Sweden; Copenhagen, Denmark”</td>
<td>“The car had been to Rome; Italy, Sydney; Australia, Stockholm; Sweden, Copenhagen; Denmark”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8. Question 7.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I stopped being her friend for many reasons: she never returns my stuff she has borrowed; she never stays over for dinner; she never sits with me in school anymore, and she never replies to my messages”</td>
<td>I stopped being her friend for many reasons: she never returns my stuff she has borrowed, she never stays over for dinner, she never sits with me in school anymore and she never replies to my messages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 9. Question 8.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grammatically correct sentence</th>
<th>The teachers’ answer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Because of my back pain, I cannot stand up for more than 10 minuets”</td>
<td>“Because of my back pain I cannot stand up for more than 10 minuets”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.2 Qualitative Part

Table 10. Survey answers (teachers). Qualitative part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Likert scale (1-5)</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “How comfortable are you with teaching the use of commas?”</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>This is what we focus on plus point and capital letter.” (Answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. How comfortable are you with teaching the use of colon?</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>This isn’t anything we tend to focus on at all since they don’t learn it in Swedish either during the elementary school years. (answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. How comfortable are you with teaching the use of semicolon?</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>This isn’t anything we tend to focus on at all since they don’t learn it in Swedish either during the elementary school years. (answer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The teachers expressed confidence when using commas, therefore gave the number 4. However, there were, as shown in the previous part, that they did not manage to place the comma in the correct location. The participating teachers did not manage to put the missing punctuation 83.33% out of the 6-question containing missing commas.

By contrast, the teachers expressed a lack of confidence when using colons and semicolons, giving their perceived knowledge a 2 and a 1. As shown in the previous part, the teachers manage to correctly place the missing colon 100% out of the two questions containing missing colons. However, when analysing the teachers’ given answers regarding semicolon, they did manage to correctly answer 1/3 out of the questions, where a semicolon was needed for the sentence to be correctly punctuated.

4.3 Student Previous Written Materials

When analysing the students’ written materials, there are a couple of grammar issues which stand out. Generally, the students seem to have little to no knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation. Common grammatical mistakes which are in the students’ texts are: (a) misusing commas and (b) comma splicing.

In the sections below, examples of comma misuse, including comma splicing will be shown (see appendix 2). The students did not make any errors in using colon and semicolon, since they did not use these types of punctuation marks at all in their texts.

1.3.1 Missing Commas

Example 1: “The acting in the film is good and I think it was pretty accurate how I thought of each character in the book.” (Student answer)

According to the punctuation rules (Appendix 1), there is a comma missing in between the adjective ‘good’ and the conjunction ‘and’ in a compound sentence.
Example 2: “As punishment he gets sent to Camp Green Lake and there his new task is difficult.” (Student answer)

When compared to the punctuation rules (Appendix 1), the student is missing a comma after the introductory phrase “as a punishment”.

Example 3: “Shia Labeouf plays Stanley Yelnats, Khleo Thomas plays Zero and Clyde Livingston is played by Rick Fox.” (Student answer)

It appears that the student is missing a comma before the coordinating conjunction “and” in a compound sentence. For the sentence to become perfectly punctuated, the student might have considered placing a comma in front of the conjunction “and.”

4.3.2 Comma Splicing

When reading the participants written texts, it becomes apparent that the comma splicing often occurs. The students incorrectly build sentences where they do not make full sentences. This is because the students do not know that the semicolon is the appropriate punctuation for separating independent clauses where they do not choose to use a coordinating conjunction or simply cleave the text into two sentences.

Example 1: “He was going to be there in 18 months, You get a day off if you find something interesting.” (Student answer)

In the sentence shown above, there is a clear comma splice. The participating student put the word “you” with a capital letter after the comma.

Example 2: “I like Zero the most, he is kind, cute and funny.” (Student answer)

In the sentence shown above, it is a clear comma splice. The participating student placed a comma between the word “most” and the pronoun “he.”.

Example 3: “Shia LaBeouf stars as the main character Stanley Yelnats and my favourite character in the film is X-Ray played by Rax Washburn, I like him because he is funny and badass.” (Student answer)

In the sentence shown above, there is a clear comma splice. The participating student placed a comma between the name “Washburn” and the first person singular “I”.

These sentences seem to have two contiguous independent clauses, making the construction of the sentence grammatically incorrect. Either using a full stop instead of the comma, or replacing the comma with a semicolon, would correct the comma splice. Placing a full stop would make the following sentence into a new sentence, thereby not connecting the two sentences. However, if the student had instead used a semicolon, the following sentence would have become a new sentence, but would still maintain cohesion with the first sentence.

4.3.3 Summary

The main grammatical mistakes as seen in the students’ texts are misuse of commas and comma splicing. It does not appear to have occurred to the students that they might use a colon or semicolon, at least not in the texts which have been reviewed.
4.4 Textbooks

As table 11 shows, none of the books the students had been using during English education explained the principles of punctuation. These includes no punctuation exercises, no explanation as to what punctuation is nor how it works. A total of nine books were analysed which can be viewed in the table below.

Table 11. Course literature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text-Workbook</th>
<th>Year (grade)</th>
<th>Teach punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Happy (workbook)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy (textbook)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy (workbook)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Happy (textbook)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The champion 5 (workbook)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The champion 5 (textbook)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>new champion 4 (workbook)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New champion 4 (textbook)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clio (online workbook)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the examined books contained information or exercises regarding the use of punctuation. The books, just like the books called ‘Happy’, all focus on other aspects of grammar as previously mentioned. The virtual book Clio also did not teach punctuation, nor did it focus heavily on grammar.
Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the knowledge and use of the correct punctuation in second language acquisition in Swedish schools. This essay also sought to study students’ and teachers’ knowledge regarding the use of punctuation in written English, and also to analyse whether English second language acquisition teaching-literature addresses the correct use of punctuation. This study highlights a gap in understanding by teachers and students in Sweden which results in a lower competence in composing written texts, and this is important when English has become the de facto international language, essential for commerce, science and other human activities across the globe.

By increasing the knowledge regarding the use of punctuation in Swedish upper-secondary schools, the study offers a small contribution to the development of the understanding and the importance of punctuation. The research questions for this essay were: (a) What is Swedish upper-secondary school students’ knowledge of English punctuation and how it is used? (b) What is the English teachers’ knowledge regarding the correct use of punctuation and how to teach students punctuation? and (c) In what way does the language teaching course literature address punctuation?

Student’s Knowledge of Punctuation

The result showed that the Swedish upper-secondary school students lacked knowledge regarding punctuation and how it is accurately used; this is possibly due at least in part to the change in teaching methods. Previously, the teaching method primarily used in Swedish schools was the grammar translation method which focuses heavily on the written language. This method is predicated on the view that written language facilitates the comprehension of and competence in spoken language. Conversely, the communicative approach is concerned primarily with the spoken language and oral interactions in natural conversations. This is not to say that the communicative approach does not focus on writing; however, it is a secondary consideration of the approach.

The Swedish curriculum directs that the students should be taught “Linguistic phenomena to clarify and enrich communication such as pronunciation and intonation, spelling and punctuation, courtesy phrases and other fixed linguistic expressions and grammatical structures” (Lgr11, 2020, ‘authors translation’). The results shown in this essay suggest that the students are not actively being taught the correct use of punctuation, since they failed to insert the correct punctuation mark most of the times. Moreover, one teacher interviewed in this study explained that several punctuation rules are not taught in English, since it is not taught in the students’ native language (Swedish) classes either. The teacher described that instruction mainly focuses on capitalisation rules and comma when teaching punctuation.

The ethos present in the school system is that students need to be given relevant instruction in order to learn and this is why Krashen’s (1982) advocacy of conscious learning and unconscious acquisition plays a major role in the understanding of how people learn a language.
We are generally not consciously aware of the rules of the languages we have acquired. Instead, we have a "feel" for correctness. Grammatical sentences "sound" right, or "feel" right, and errors feel wrong, even if we do not consciously know what rule was violated.” (Krashen, 1982, p.10)

Krashen appears here to be intimating that it is indeed possible to unconsciously acquire an understanding or “feeling” of what is, or is not, the correct use of the grammatical rules. However, even though it is true that a learner can acquire unconsciously an understanding of the rules, ‘a feel for correctness’, they will not acquire a conscious awareness of the rules and how they are used in the target language. Therefore, it could be argued that students need to be taught the rules of a language expressly and in a classroom setting.

The students’ errors using punctuation in their second language could also be understood as an effect of direct transfer from their use of punctuation in their native language, as suggested by Bhela (1999). This transfer from the native language could, according to Saville-Troike and Barto (2016), either be positive or negative (interference). Negative transfer occurs when the “structure or rule is used in an L2 utterance and that use inappropriate and considered and error” (Saville-Troike & Barto, 2016, p 19). If the students are being taught punctuation in their Swedish classes, but not the English, it is plausible that the errors made by the students is an effect of direct interference of the punctuation rules in their native language. In other words, the students transfer their knowledge, or lack thereof, on the rules of punctuation in their native language to the second language.

However, if the students are not taught how to use correct punctuation in their native language (nor the second language) as one teacher described, the students’ errors could instead be understood in terms of inference from the subconscious learning of communicative and oral structures in their native language. With lack of conscious learning of written punctuation in the native language nor the second language, the students have to rely on what Krashen (1982) described as a subconscious learning which creates a feeling for what is considered right or wrong when using punctuation. Since the rules of punctuation, as all grammar, is difficult to acquire with a subconscious and communicative process and also differ between languages, it is plausible that students that are not actively taught punctuation in either of the languages will make errors in both languages, as described by Bhela (1999). The importance of taught and conscious learning of punctuation is also supported by the results from (Wahlquist, 2012).

Wahlquist’s (2012) study did not show any difference in correct use of comma between students that have native Swedish speaking parents and students with parents with Swedish as a second language, implicating that correct punctuation is not affected by the parents’ knowledge of the language’s rules and therefore needs to be actively taught punctuation in school.

The Teacher’s Knowledge and Way of Teaching

Teachers’ own lack of understanding of punctuation rules when teaching a language is likely to manifest within their own students. In the questionnaire, one of the teachers said the following regarding the usage of the punctuation marks semicolon and colon: “This isn’t anything we tend to focus on at all since they don’t learn it in Swedish either during the elementary school years” (teacher’s answers).
The curriculum states that students in upper secondary school shall be taught punctuation; the curriculum does not specify what aspects of punctuation, or punctuation marks, are to be included in language teaching. This means that the lack of knowledge by teachers of certain punctuation, such as the use of colons and semicolons, is perpetuated. Teachers, aware of their own ignorance of these linguistic features, tend to avoid teaching it rather than addressing their own lack of knowledge. Their own students would thereby be deprived of this input and, with that, a precious opportunity to develop their writing skills is lost.

The analysis of the questionnaire shows that the teachers participating in this study did not themselves have adequate knowledge regarding the correct usage of punctuation. The one aspect they however got correct was the usage of the comma.
Conclusion and Implications

In conclusion, the result of the study shows that the students did not display knowledge regarding the accurate use of punctuation. This could be related to the lack of knowledge among the teachers as well as the fact that the subject is not addressed in any of the textbooks provided in their education. Moreover, the results of this essay could also be understood as consequential to the change of focus from GTM to a more communicative approach in the teaching of second language in Swedish schools. Furthermore, even though the curriculum for the subject English in Swedish schools clearly states that punctuation should be taught, this study found that teachers ignore this. Instead, they rely on the fact that punctuation is taught in the Swedish classes and assume that any differences that do exist are likely to be insignificant enough to be ignored.

6.1 Implications for Practitioners

According to the curriculum, punctuation should feature in lessons in Swedish upper secondary schools. Since this essay found that both the students and the teachers lack knowledge of correct punctuation, there are several practical implications for practitioners. The first and most obvious implication is that teachers need to follow the curriculum and actively teach punctuation. However, because there is also a lack of knowledge on punctuation among teachers, it seems even more important that punctuation is included in the textbooks. Since the research for this essay showed that none of the used textbooks includes instruction on the use of punctuation, another implication is that the authors of these texts should recognise and address this deficiency in future editions.

6.2 Implications for Future Research

The study has shown that there is a general absence of observance of the rules of punctuation among students as well as teachers, it is evident there is a need to develop knowledge and proficiency in this respect. As this was a study with a relatively small sample, a proposal for future research is to investigate students’ and teachers’ knowledge of punctuation using a more extensive quantitative method, making the results of generalizable. Additionally, there is a need to further investigate the practical effects the students’ lack of knowledge creates.

Having observed the teachers lack of knowledge on correct punctuation, an implication for future research is to study the training of teachers, more specifically, to research how punctuation is integrated as part of the education of teachers at the universities.
Finally, the use correct punctuation is important to be understood in order to avoid misunderstandings, especially when writing in a second language. This could be especially important in a time with digitalisation and social media largely used by young people. Therefore, a further recommendation for future research is to study how punctuation among students is affected by their use of social media.

6.3 Methodology Criticism and Reflection
There are several aspects about the chosen method which can be discussed and whether it would have been beneficial to have conducted the study differently. However, there are three aspects which could have produced a different result. These three aspects are (1) giving the teachers the questionnaire beforehand, (2) allowing collaborations in answering the questions together, and (3) small sample.

Seeing the questionnaire beforehand
The first aspect, giving the teachers the questionnaire beforehand, could have created a conundrum. Since the teachers had to plan their lessons and manage to schedule in the participating students’ questionnaire, they wanted to see it so they could estimate how long it would take to conduct the questionnaires. The problem with handing the questionnaires out to the teachers, and not being there at the time of them answering them, is that the teachers would have had the opportunity to look up the answers beforehand. However, since the teachers did not manage to put in the missing punctuation in 75% of the times, this suggests that they did not actually look up the answers before conducting the questionnaire, or alternatively did not use the same source regarding what is deemed correct punctuation as this study. Furthermore, since the students did not show a great understanding for the correct use of punctuation, it appears that they also did not see the correct answers before completing the questionnaire, therefore, disproving this method as being detrimental to the reliability of the findings.

The process of providing the questionnaires to the teachers beforehand was necessary in order to be able to conduct the questionnaire in a classroom; this was due to the teachers having to change the structure of the lesson plan. The assessment that was made was that the questionnaire would not be affected by this choice which was later shown to be strengthened. The reliability of the questionnaire answers could have been affected, but in this case it was not.
Allowing collaborations in answering the questions together

The second aspect was that the teachers conducted the questionnaire together as a unit. It was intended that the questionnaire would be answered individually; however, due to the instructions not being specific enough, the respondents answered the questionnaire together. This could have impacted the reliability of the result.

The teachers had answered the questionnaire together, which meant that they had the chance to talk and collaborate on the answers. A possible problem with this could be that, if one of the teachers were to have had a greater understanding of the correct use of punctuation, the teacher possibly would have given the correct answer and the question would have been registered as correct; this applies even if the other teacher would have answered the question incorrectly, which did not happen. However, since the teachers with their collaboration did not manage to answer more than 25% of the questions correctly, this would suggest that neither of the teachers possessed an understanding of accurate English punctuation and had not looked up the answers beforehand.

Small sample

In this study, the sample was, of necessity, small. As in all research with small samples, there are limitations regarding the generalizability of the results. However, the aim of the study was to acquire qualitative data about teachers’ and students’ knowledge regarding punctuation and to secure a general understanding and not a wide-ranged study that would have applied nationally. In order to obtain a wider national understanding, a greater number of responses would be required; therefore, a general understanding of students’ and teachers’ knowledge regarding punctuation was what could be measured. Moreover, it could also be argued that the mixed method, using several different data sources compensates, at least to some degree, for the reliability risk of the relatively small sample in this study.

Validity and Reliability

In summary, it could be argued that the chosen methods have validity and reliability issues. As stated above, a divided method also provides the opportunity to compare the results from the different data collection and create a broader understanding of, and possibility to analyse the results, thereby contributing to the competence in the use of punctuation among students.
References


Appendices

Appendix 1 – Synopsis of the Correct Use of Punctuation

The Comma

Commas are used in seven different ways, some similar to each other; to comprise these usages of commas, they have been separated and categorized into sections:

Separation of independent clauses

The first example of when a comma is used, is to separate two independent clauses joined by the following seven coordinating conjunctions: and, for, or, but, nor, so, yet. A clause is a sentence which is complete in itself and could be ended with a full stop, however, since the sentences are connected and contains the same topic, it is joined by a comma. It is important to note that a comma is only used in a tag-on clause, when the coordinating conjunction is ‘and’.

A tag-on clause is a sentence which is made up by two separate clauses; however, these two clauses are joined by the conjunction ‘and’, referring to the tag-on. An example of two independent clauses which should be separated by a comma, is ‘the show had already ended’ and ‘but the crowd did not want to leave at that instant’; making the correct sentence: The show had already ended, but the crowd did not want to leave at that instant. It is, however, important to note that a comma should never suffice as a full stop or a semicolon, nor should it be used between a verb or object of a clause and a prepositional phrase.

After introductory words or phrases

The second way a comma is used is when an introductory word is introduced in the sentence; examples of introductory words are: However, therefore, also, consequently. An example of a sentence with the comma correctly placed after the introductory word, is: ‘Therefore, I don’t wish for you to visit me’. Similarly, to the introductory word, the comma is also used after an introductory phrase in a sentence. An example of an introductory phrase is: To everyone’s surprise, the dog was not aggressive. The comma is also used after introductory phrases and words related to time, place or circumstances; an example of this is: Meanwhile, the teacher decided to tell the parents.

After introductory interjections and vocatives, a comma is also used. A vocative is a word such as ‘darling’ or ‘madam’, which is used to address someone or to get their attention. Examples of sentences with introductory interjective and vocatives are: yes, that truly was a surprise!

After introductory clauses in sentences – before the main clause

the third way the comma is used, is when being placed after and introductory clause in a sentence; this introductory clause therefore comes before the main clause. The main clause is the clause which expresses a complete concept.
An example of an introductory clause in a sentence before the main clause, is: Because I have pain in my back, I have to take medication to battle the pain regularly. The main clause in this example is ‘I have to take medication to battle the pain regularly’, which provide the clause ‘because I have pain in my back’ with context. The clause ‘because I have pain in my back’, therefore, cannot stand alone in a sentence.

Before and after embedded clauses, phrases and words
A pair of commas is used in front and behind embedded, phrases and words. The embedded clause can be placed anywhere in the sentence, as long as it has a pair of commas accompanying it. An example of a sentence with an embedded clause, phrase or word, is: I was, unfortunately, not able to complete my sentence.

To separate short items in a list
A comma is used in the middle of a sentence to separate short items in a list. It is important to note that the last two items are separated by using the conjunction ‘and’. An example of this is: I told you I wanted my laptop, my blue top, my makeup and my jeans. It is argued that the use of an Oxford comma, is the correct end of the example sentence. The Oxford comma is a comma which is used to separate the list and the last item in a sentence. An example of this is: I told you I wanted my laptop, my blue top, my makeup, and my jeans. However, in this essay the Oxford comma is not used since it is considered more accurate without it. This is due to the function the conjunction ‘and’ has, this being the same as a comma; therefore, it is deemed unnecessary to use the Oxford comma.

To indicate direct speech
Another way the comma is used, is when indicating direct speech. It is important to note that quotation marks must be used, following the comma. Direct speech is referring to when a person is being spoken to directly, hence the indication of direct speech. An example of this is: I told her, “please do not talk behind my back”.

To indicate billions, millions and thousands
A comma between numerals is used when indicating billions, millions and thousands. It is important to note that a full stop is never supposed to replace the comma, as it then turns the number into something else. An example of this is: The bank had lost 5,000,000 £”. The reason why one does not use a full stop to indicate billions, millions and thousands is due to the fact that Great Britain and U.S.A use the full stop to indicate a decimal.

The Colon
Colon is used in six different ways:
To join a clause to a word or a phrase – to emphasise
The Colon is used when one wish to emphasise a word or a phrase. An example of this is: There is one thing I cannot stand: liquorice. It is important to note, that after a colon, a capital letter is not required.
To join two independent clauses – to emphasise the second clause

A Colon is used to join two independent clauses, which could stand on their own; however, a colon is used to emphasise the second. An example of a sentence when a colon is used in this manner is: Many people believe Santa Clause exists: that is not true.

To indicate an important message

A colon is used when the writer wants to convey an important message to the reader. An example of this is: “Note: remember to clean the dishes”.

To introduce a quotation

Another way the colon is used, is when introducing a quotation. The quotation should be moved in and should not contain quotation marks. An example of this is: In Shakespear’s Romeo and Julia, Romeo supposedly began his speech as follows:

> What light through yonder window breaks? It is the east, and Juliet is the sun. And none but fools do wear it; cast it off. It is my lady, O, it is my love!

A colon can also be used to introduce direct speech, much like a comma; this is considered an alternative way of introducing direct speech. An example of this is: “Miranda said: I don’t like you anymore”.

To introduce a list

A colon is used when introducing a list, this includes a bullet point list; however, it is important to note the difference between naming short items, as when a comma is used, or introducing a list as mentioned above. An example of this is: “I told you that I, in the future, must get back: my hair drier, my laptop, my notes from class, my hoodie, the clasp for my pamphlets and my dotted jacked which you borrowed last year.

To denote ratios and odds

Another common usage of colon, which might not be used often when writing, is to denote ratios and odds. An example of how colon is used when denoting ratios is: “the students had outnumbered the teachers by a ratio of 5:1”

Semicolon

The semicolon is a punctuation mark which is more than a comma, but less than a full stop. This is useful for sentences where you need more than a comma, when wishing to show clauses of equal emphasis; when the sentence requires led than a full stop, since they are connected. The semicolon is therefore only used in two different way: a) to show clauses of equal emphasis and b) to list longer named items.

To show clauses of equal emphasis

A semicolon is used when two clauses, independent sentences, is joined in order to show that the two clauses are of equal importance. In this instance you need more than a comma, but less than a full stop. It should, therefore, be treated as two separate sentences. It is important to note that a capital is never requires after a semicolon if it is not a name which comes first in the second sentence. An example of this is: “The videotape was hers; it was mine in the beginning, but I gave it to her in the end.”
To list longer named items

The second way the semicolon is used, is when listing longer named items. This should not be mixed up with the short listed named as when using a comma, instead the semicolon is used when listing objects in a full sentence. An example of this is: “She did not wish to be friends with Samantha for many reasons, but mainly it was because; she borrowed all of her stuff without giving them back; she talked badly behind her back without her knowing; she never invited her to any of the parties and because she never sat next to her in class”.
Appendix 2 – Common Punctuation Mistakes

Examples of Errors Using Commas

The Lack of Commas

“Hunters - please use caution when hunting pedestrians using walk trails” (Hubspot, 2018)

Misusing commas, or as in this example, the lack thereof can cause the reader to misinterpret the meaning behind the statement. As in the example shown above, what the writer meant to say is: Hunters – please use caution when hunting, pedestrians using walk trails. The writing would imply to the reader that hunters must take caution; otherwise, they might shoot pedestrians using the walking trail. However, since the writer did not use the comma as intended, the statement suddenly becomes incorrect, and the meaning shifted. In the example shown above, the writer is implying that there are hunters hunting pedestrians using walking trails and that they should take caution while hunting said pedestrians.

“Include your children when baking cookies” (Miller, 2013)

By misusing commas, or in this case the lack thereof, makes this news headline a little bit morbid. Since the writer missed a comma, what the headline implies is that one should include children as an ingredient when baking. What the writer possibly meant to write is: Include children, when baking cookies. The change in writing would imply that the children could and should contribute while doing the activity of baking.

“Highlights of his global tour include encounters with Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector” (Oxbridge editing, 2018)

The sentence shown above gives a vivid explanation of Nelson Mandela, or does it? This sentence is an example of where the incorrect use of commas, can create a shifting in meaning in what a writer intends to say. What the writer is implying, in the example above, is that Nelson Mandela is an 800-year-old demigod and a dildo collector. Since there is a lack of a comma between the word “demigod” and the word “and,” the sentence does not become what it is intended. If the author had put the comma in the right place, one would understand that the encounter would include Nelson Mandela, an 800-year-old demigod, and a dildo collector; instead of meaning, three different people.

“Let’s eat grandma” (LEG, 2013)

The example shown above is the name of a British experimental pop band. The sentence “Let’s eat grandma” implies to the reader that one is invited to feast on grandma. However, if the band would have chosen to put the comma in after the word “eat,” the meaning would have shifted, and instead of eating grandma, the sentence would have implied that grandma is the one invited to go eat.

Incorrect Placement of Commas

“No, U turn” (Vappingo, 2018)

"I do not want to turn around. No, you turn!” Probably not what the author intended to write. Presumably, the author meant to write “No U-turn,” implying that one cannot make a U-turn at said location. By adding the extra comma to the sentence, the meaning changed.
Overuse of commas

“No, smoking in this area” (Vappingo, 2018)

It is allowed to smoke, not in that area, but at this location, according to one sign. However, if the author would not have inserted a comma between the word “no” and “smoking,” the intended meaning shifts. The sign no longer explains to people not to smoke at this area, since it is forbidden; rather explaining that it is completely forbidden for smokers to smoke at the location of the sign.

“Goats cheese salad ingredients: lettuce, tomato, goats, cheese” (Oxbridge editing, 2018)

In the example above, one would need goats to make a goats cheese salad. What the writer meant to write is, "Goats cheese salad ingredients: lettuce, tomato, goats cheese,” however, the meaning in what the writer wrote implies that one would need goat meat to make the goats cheese salad. If the writer would not have used the extra comma, the sentence would instead mean that one requires goats cheese in order to make the goats cheese salad.

“Stop clubbing, baby seals” (Cybertext consulting, 2012)

Ever seen a seal on the dance floor? Chances are most people have not. However, if the writer of this sentence would have a say, he or she must have seen plenty of seals dancing the night away on the dancefloor. Since the writer incorrectly (if not intended) placed the comma between the word “clubbing” and “baby,” the statement suddenly changed the meaning. What the author presumably meant to write is: “stop clubbing baby seals,” which would give the sentence a more horrific but trues meaning. Instead of baby seals going clubbing, the true meaning behind the statement would be that people should stop clubbing baby seals to death.

“Well done, steak” (Buzzfeed, 2018)

In the example above, the sentence paints the scene of a steak gets congratulated and told “well done.” However, the chances are that the author did not intend to write the sentence as is; instead meant to write “well-done steak,” implying that the steak is well done and not congratulated.

Comma splicing

“Koala bears are not actually bears, they are marsupials” (Grammarly, 2021)

A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined together by a comma, without a conjunction creating a coherent grammatical sentence. In the example shown above, there are clearly two independent clauses joined together. In order to make this a correct grammatical sentence, the two clauses need to be joined together by a conjunction or separated by a full-stop.

Examples of Error in Usage of Colon

Incorrect use of Colon

“People move to Florida for: the warmer weather, the beach, and the theme parks.” (Authority pub, 2018)

In the example above, the author has misused colon. People do not just move to Florida because of the warm weather, the beach, and the theme parks. There are many reasons as to why one could move to Florida. If the author instead had written: “People move to Florida for three reasons: the warm weather, the beach, and the theme parks,” the sentence would have been correct. The reason why the sentence would have been correct is that a colon is used after a
complete sentence, this in order to introduce a list, a phrase, and a clause which explains the preceding sentence.
Appendix 3
Student questionnaire

Question 1

unpunctuated text: “I must have paid over £48 000 for my house”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “I must have paid over £48,000 for my house”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zero student knew where to place the punctuation in the first question. Examples of students’ answers are “I must have paid over £48;000 for my house”, “I must have paid over £48 000; for my house” and “I must have paid over, £48 000 for my house”. However, most students left the sentence unamended, without inserting punctuation into the sentence. (The correct use of punctuation requires a comma in between the numbers 8 and 4, making it “£48,000” and not “£48 000”).

Question 2

Unpunctuated text: “I said to her before she left that she must in the future give me back my hairclip my makeup my hair straighteners and everything else she has borrowed from me”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “I said to her before she left that she must, in the future, give me back my hairclip, my makeup, my hair straighteners and everything else she has borrowed from me”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13%</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 13% of the student managed to place the required punctuation correctly. Examples of the incorrect students’ answers are:

“I said to her before she left that she must in the future give me back my hairclip, my makeup, my hair straighteners and everything else she has borrowed from me”

“I said to her before she left that she must in the future give me back my hairclip, my makeup, my hair straighteners, and everything else she has borrowed from me.”

Furthermore, several students chose to leave the sentence as is, shown above — meaning that they did not see the need to put in punctuation into the sentence. The correct use of punctuation would require commas in between the pronoun “her” and the subordinating conjunction “before”, the verb “left” and the subordinating conjunction “that” are required to make a correct structured sentence. Short items in a list are also separated by commas. In this
case in places such as in between “my hairclip”, “my makeup” and “my hair straighteners”.

Question 3

Unpunctuated text: “There are many things I like about watching television I have to say the commercials is not one of them”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “There are many things I like about watching television; I have to say the commercials is not one of them”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 17% of all students managed to place the required punctuation correctly. One frequent incorrect answer was: “There are many things I like about watching television, I have to say the commercials is not one of them”. For the sentence to be correct, there should be a semicolon in between the noun “television” and the first person singular “I.” This correcting and changing the sentence to, “There are many things I like about watching television; I have to say the commercial is not one of them.”. A full stop would also have sufficed, making two distinct sentences. A comma, however, would have been incorrect as this would have been a comma splice.

Question 4

Unpunctuated text: “When I visited Las Vegas last year I won a lot of money”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “When I visited Vegas, last year, I won a lot of money”. The sentence would be also be correct using only the comma between the words “year” and “I”. Therefore, both options will be considered correct.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 30% of the participants managed to place the correct punctuation in the sentence, shown above. A majority of the students chose to leave the sentence as is, shown above — meaning that they did not see the need to put in punctuation into the sentence.

Question 5

Unpunctuated text: “The car had been to Rome Italy Sydney Australia Stockholm Sweden Copenhagen Denmark”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “The car had been to Rome, Italy; Sydney, Australia; Stockholm, Sweden; Copenhagen, Denmark”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
None of the students managed to insert the correct punctuation in the correct place. Examples of student answers are: “The car had been to: Rome Italy Sydney Australia Stockholm Sweden Copenhagen Denmark” and “The car had been to: Rome, Italy, Sydney, Australia, Stockholm, Sweden, Copenhagen, Denmark”.

**Question 6**

Unpunctuated text: ”This was unfortunately a very bad idea”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “This was, unfortunately, a very bad idea”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the sentence to become grammatically correct, the sentence would have to be changed from “This was unfortunately a very bad idea” to “This was, unfortunately, a very bad idea.” The students did not seem to know that the word “unfortunately” is an imbedded element which requires two commas, one before and one after the word.

**Question 7**

Unpunctuated text: “I had stopped being her friend for many reasons she never returns the things she has borrowed from me she never stays over for dinner she never sits with me in school anymore and she never replies to my messages.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “I had stopped being her friend for many reasons; she never returns the things she has borrowed from me; she never stays over for dinner; she never sits with me in school anymore and she never replies to my messages.”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

None of the participating students managed to place the correct punctuation. For the sentence to be grammatically correct, semicolons would have been used to separate the items in the list as these comprised complete clauses rather than just words or phrases.

**Question 8**

Unpunctuated text: “Because of my back pain I cannot stand up for more than 10 minutes”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Because of my back pain, I cannot stand up for more than 10 minutes”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 39% of the participants accurately punctuated this sentence.
Question 9
Unpunctuated text: “Then I said to him I am very good at planning things “. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Then I said to him, ‘I am very good at planning things’”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 13% of the participating students inserted the correct punctuation in the right place.

Question 10
Unpunctuated text: “He never understood the question nor did he understand what to do”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “He never understood the question, nor did he understand what to do”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A total of 52% were correctly punctuated. Examples of participating students’ answers are: “He never understood the question nor did he understand what to do” and frequently occurring, leaving the sentence untouched.

Question 11
Unpunctuated text: “The teacher was determined to teach the students the correct use of grammar she did not plan for all students to be home ill.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “the teacher was determined to teach the students the correct use of grammar; she did not plan for all students to be home ill”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Only 4% of students correctly punctuated this. An example of the most frequently occurring answer is: “The teacher was determined to teach the students the correct use of grammar, she did not plan for all students to be home ill.” (Student answer).

Question 12
Unpunctuated text: “Happily I could answer all the questions correctly”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Happily, I could answer all the questions correctly”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 35% of the participating students managed to correctly place the missing comma, while most who did not simply fail to add any punctuation, leaving the sentence untouched.

Question 13
Unpunctuated text: “The thief had burgled the store yet he had not taken all the jewels.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “The thief had burgled the story, yet he had not taken all the jewels”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 52% of the participants inserted the appropriate punctuation in the correct position. Of the remaining 48%, one frequently occurring answer showed the same mis-placement of a comma: “The thief had burgled the store yet, he had not taken all the jewels” (student answer).

Question 14
Unpunctuated text: “She needs to return my phone charger my headphones and my backpack.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “She needs to return my phone charger, my headphones and my backpack”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 87% of participants managed to insert the missing comma correctly. The most frequent incorrect answer given by the students is them leaving it untouched.

Question 15
Unpunctuated text:” I expected this to happen because I had not studied for the test.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “I expected this to happen, because I had not studied for the test”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Just 17% of the participants correctly inserted the punctuation. While some left the sentence untouched, incorrect punctuation was offered such as: “I expected this to happen; because I had not studied for the test” (student answers).
Question 16
Unpunctuated text: “Furthermore this was an interesting conversation.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Furthermore, this was an interesting conversation”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A total of 39% of the participating students correctly added the missing punctuation, with a majority of the remainder not amending the sentence at all.

Question 17
Unpunctuated text: “Yes that was an amazing dog.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Yes, that was an amazing dog”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In total, 61% of participants accurately added the comma after the adverbial, while most of the remainder left the sentence unaltered.

Question 18
Unpunctuated text: “There is one type of candy I cannot eat liquorice!”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “There is one type of candy I cannot eat: liquorice!”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A mere 9% of participants accurately added a full colon, while most of the remainder left the sentence unaltered.

Question 19
Unpunctuated text: “Note the third instruction only applies to students studying English.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Note: the third instruction only applies to students studying English”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Again, a mere 9% of participants accurately added a full colon after the imperative, while most of the remainder left the sentence unaltered.
Question 20

Unpunctuated text: “Suddenly the students all started singing ‘schools out’.”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “Suddenly, the students all started singing: ‘school’s out’”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A mere of 9% correctly added the missing punctuation, with a majority of the remainder not amending the sentence at all.

Question 21

Unpunctuated text: “The stuffed animal was hers it had belonged to my niece when she was younger”. This can be contrasted with the accurately punctuated text as follows: “The stuffed animal was hers; it had belonged to my niece when she was younger”.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Correct use of punctuation</th>
<th>Incorrect use of punctuation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 4% of the participants correctly added the missing punctuation, with a majority of the remainder not amending the sentence at all.