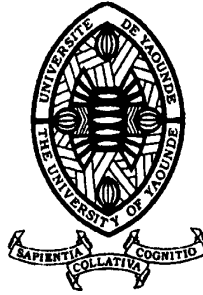


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DEPARTMENT OF DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN A SOCIOLINGUISTIC VARIABLE AND THE USE OF SOME PUNCTUATION MARKS

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Award of a Postgraduate Teacher's Diploma(DIPES II) in Bilingual Studies

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DEDICATION

To my parents, Mr FORLEMU Columbus and Mrs FORLEMU Evelyne.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I must confess that this work would have been a far-fetched dream without the contribution of some individuals, who need to be acknowledged. My gratitude goes, first and foremost, to my supervisor, Professor Aloysius Ngefac, for his constant assistance and guidance throughout this research period. The fervent contributions, advice and encouragement he provided during this research period contributed greatly to the completion of this work. His presence and patience helped me to work in favourable conditions. I am equally thankful to all the lecturers of the Department of English whose lectures and ideas made me who I am today. The financial and material support of the following people significantly determined the success of this work: Chief and Mrs R.N. Forlemu, Mr and Mrs Koupgang, Mr and Mrs Nkweteshing, Claudette Dongteh, Arnold Forlemu, Stael Forlemu, Rochelle Forlemu, Noella Chomba, Mercy Bojoh, Elvis Ojong, and Adolf Nangkeang. My sincere appreciation also goes to my classmates of Bilingual Letters, especially to my good friends, Sandrine Achu , Gisele Nsouli, Esperance Ngando, Maxime Fopa, Brenda Ekwei, and Cedia Fondap whose advice and constructive criticisms enriched my analysis. Finally, I wish to express my profound gratitude to Mrs Evelyne Forbi, Mr Clovis Fru, and Mr Idriss Takam for proofreading this work.

CERTIFICATION

I certify that this research endeavour, entitled “The Correlation between a Sociolinguistic Variable and the Use of some Punctuation Marks,” was carried out by Bernice Nchamba, a Level Five student in the Bilingual Studies Unit at the Higher Teacher Training College (ENS) Yaounde.

..... Date

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed at investigating the correlation between level of education and the use of some punctuation marks. In order to collect the data for this study, 90 EFL learners were selected from three classes (30 per class), which include Quatrième, Première and Level Two of Geography Department of the University of Yaounde I. They were assigned a series of sentences to be punctuated and the task to write an essay. The analysis of the data revealed many findings. It was, in fact, revealed that there was no significant difference in the performance of the three categories of students investigated. For instance, in the use of the comma, Quatrième students scored as high as 55%, Première and Level Two students scored only 53.5 % and 58.3 %, respectively, thereby showing no significant difference in their ability to use this punctuation mark. Furthermore, in the use of the semicolon, the results of Quatrième, Première, and Level Two were 11.7%, 10%, and 13.3%, respectively. These results and many others do not show any significant difference in the ability of the three categories of students in using punctuation marks. These results, coupled with the fact that many of the informants from the three classes showed lack of knowledge of some of the punctuation marks imply that the mastery of punctuations in the Francophone subsystem of education does not depend much on educational attainment.

RESUME

Cette étude porte sur le lien qui existe entre le niveau d'étude et les marques de ponctuation.

Ce travail était focalisé sur l'hypothèse suivante : Il y a aucun rapport entre le niveau d'étude et l'utilisation des marques de ponctuation. C'est-à-dire que le niveau d'étude n'influence pas la maîtrise des marques de ponctuation. Pour réaliser cette étude, nous avons mené une enquête auprès d'un échantillon de 90 élèves du sous-système Francophone. Ces élèves étudient l'anglais comme une langue étrangère. Nous avons choisi 30 élèves dans chacune des classes suivantes : Quatrième, Première et Niveau II (Géographie). Nous avons donné un test aux apprenants. Le test contenait des phrases et les apprenants étaient censés mettre les marques de ponctuation qui conviennent dans chacune des phrases. Dans la deuxième partie du test, ces apprenants devaient faire une rédaction de pas moins de 1000 mots sur le sujet « Mon pays ».

Au terme de cette recherche, nous avons constaté qu'il n'y a pas de relation entre le niveau d'étude et la maîtrise des marques de ponctuation. Parmi les cinq marques de ponctuation qui nous concernaient, Seul le point d'interrogation et le point ont montré la présence d'une corrélation entre le variable sociolinguistique et l'utilisation des marques des ponctuations. Cependant, la virgule, le point-virgule et les deux points n'ont pas eu de corrélation avec le niveau d'étude des élèves.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EFL: English as a Foreign Language.

ESL: English as a Second Language.

4^e: Quatrieme

1^{ere}: Premiere

Univ 2: University Level Two

ELT: English Language Teaching

CamE: Cameroon English

RP: Received Pronunciation

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Before the coinage of the term “sociolinguistics” in 1952, the predictable relationship that exists between language and society had not really caught the attention of many people. Given especially the fact that Hubbell (1950) had just concluded that there was no significant relationship between the speech of New Yorkers and their social status. But later sociolinguistic studies (e.g. Labov 1966 and Trudgill 1972) proved that language shares an unmistakable relation with social categories, such as level of education, gender, age, and ethnicity. Different sociolinguistic studies, especially those conducted in the Western world, have reported certain correlation patterns between these sociolinguistic variables and language. As concerns level of education, the unanimous view is that the more one is educated, the more he or she is likely to use standard linguistic features, and vice versa.

But after a keen observation of the way users of English in Cameroon in general and Francophone users of English in particular use punctuation marks, it was hypothesized that level of education may not correlate with the use of punctuation marks in the same way as reported in previous studies. This explains why this study set out to investigate the correlation between a sociolinguistic variable (level of education) and the use of punctuation marks. In other words, the purpose of the study was to investigate whether there is any progress in the use of punctuation marks as one climbs the educational ladder with regard to the use of punctuation marks.

Given the sociolinguistic realities of Cameroon that are very different from those of the West, sociolinguistic variables and language use may not correlate in the same way as reported in previous studies, especially studies conducted in the Western world.. Cameroon, in fact, displays a complex sociolinguistic situation, given that many languages co-exist in this context. For instance, English and French, ex-colonial languages, are used for all official transactions. English serves as a second language to English-speaking Cameroonians and as a foreign language to French speaking Cameroonians. French has the same status to Anglophones and Francophones. Furthermore, there are approximately 280 indigenous languages, which are used by speakers from different tribal backgrounds. In addition, there is Cameroon Pidgin English (also known as Kamtok), which is used mostly in informal situations. Finally, Camfranglais has asserted itself as one of the media of communication in Cameroon and it is spoken mostly by young people living in urban areas. Due to this complex

sociolinguistic situation, a language like English often displays linguistic peculiarities that are not attested in the variety or varieties spoken in the mother tongue country. Consequently, the pattern of correlation between English linguistic variables and sociolinguistic factors can hardly be the same as the one reported in studies conducted in the Western world.

Having observed that punctuation marks are challenging to many Francophone learners of English, the hypothesis of this investigation is obvious. The work is, in fact, based on the hypothesis that the use of punctuation marks is very challenging to Francophone learners of English, irrespective of their level of education. In other words, the work is based on the premise that level of education does not correlate with the speakers' ability to use punctuation marks, implying that as one climbs the educational ladder in the Francophone subsystem of education, his or her ability to use punctuation marks does not improve, as one would normally expect.

The investigation was guided by the following research questions:

1. Is there a correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks?
2. Which punctuation marks correlate with level of education?
3. Which punctuation marks show no correlation with level of education?
4. What are the possible pedagogic and sociolinguistic implications of the findings of the study?

This work is significant in many ways. First, it investigates, in a postcolonial context, the correlation between language and society or between a sociolinguistic variable, namely level of education, and linguistic variables, namely punctuation marks. It is worth pointing out that most previous studies on the correlation between language and society have been carried out in the Western world (e.g. Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972, Trudgill 1974 and Chambers 1995), and very few of such studies have been conducted in Cameroon. The few studies on correlation conducted in Cameroon that could be found include Ngefac (2008a), Ngefac (2008b), Kouam (2015), and Ngwa (2015). Works on the correlation between different linguistic aspects and sociolinguistic variables carried out in postcolonial contexts, like Cameroon, are necessary for a full appraisal of the correlation patterns reported in the Western world. Second, most previous studies on correlation (e.g. Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972, Trudgill 1974, Chambers 1995, Ngefac (2008a), Ngefac (2008b), Kouam (2015), and Ngwa (2015)), irrespective of where they were carried out, focus on phonological variables, but not

on punctuation, as is the case in this study. This implies that a study on the correlation between a sociolinguistic variable and punctuation, like the present work, is an innovation in sociolinguistics, given that its linguistic scope is not phonology as is the case in previous studies. Third, the work has an interdisciplinary significance, given that it combines sociolinguistics and applied linguistics. It should be noted that the area of correlation constitutes the core of sociolinguistics and studying Francophone learners' use of punctuation marks is an applied linguistic attempt to investigate the impact of pedagogic efforts on learners' performance. Fourth, a work of this nature is a concrete attempt to investigate and identify English Language areas that pose problems to learners. It should be noted that writing in general and punctuation in particular constitute a serious challenge to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, but in assessing learners' output in English Language, the emphasis is most often on grammatical categories and pronunciation. Fifth, the study will show to what extent Standard British English, officially recommended in the English Language teaching industry, is gaining ground in Cameroon, a postcolonial nation.

It is important to define the sociolinguistic and linguistic scopes of the work. The linguistic scope involves the use of punctuation marks. In effect, our concern was on such punctuation marks as the comma, the full stop, the question mark, the colon, and the semicolon. As concerns the sociolinguistic scope, the focus is on the correlation between an extralinguistic variable (level of education) and the use of punctuation marks. As far as level of education is concerned, informants were students of Quatrième, Première, and Level Two (Geography Department, University of Yaounde I).

As concerns the structure of the work, it has four chapters, excluding the General Introduction and the General Conclusion. The General Introduction provides the background to the study, the purpose of the work, the hypothesis, the research questions, the significance, the scope, and the structure of the work. Chapter One presents the theoretical framework and review of related literature. Chapter Two describes the methodology used for data collection and data analysis. Chapter Three presents, analyses, and interprets the findings of the investigation. Chapter Four discusses the major findings as well as their pedagogic and sociolinguistic implications. The work ends with the General Conclusion, followed by some recommendations for further research.

CHAPTER ONE

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1.0. Introduction

This chapter describes the theoretical frameworks and conceptual issues necessary for the study and reviews related literature. With regard to these theoretical issues, the focus is on the sociolinguistic theory, error analysis, and punctuation-related issues. The sociolinguistic theory or correlation framework is relevant for the work because the study investigates the correlation between a sociolinguistic variable and an aspect of language. The importance of the error analysis framework lies in the fact that punctuation-related characteristics of the informants' written language were investigated from the perspective of errors and standard punctuation features. As concerns literature review, the focus is on the notion of New Englishes, the identification of Cameroon English, and Cameroon English writing and punctuation marks. In addition, the contribution of the work is highlighted.

1.1. Theoretical frameworks and conceptual issues

As mentioned above, the two main theoretical models which guide this investigation are the sociolinguistic theory and error analysis, besides some conceptual issues related to punctuation.

1.1.1. The sociolinguistic theory

The sociolinguistic theory establishes the relationship between language and society. It looks at the variation in language use in society and captures the relationship between social variables, like level of education, gender, age, social class, mood, and occupation, on the one hand, and linguistic variables, on the other hand. This approach was first reported in Labov (1966), which revealed, among other findings, that language is significantly graded according to the social status of the speakers, thereby maintaining that social hierarchy is necessarily reflected in linguistic hierarchy. Labov (1966) demonstrated that the frequency of prestige or standard linguistic features increases as one climbs the social ladder. His findings led him to

propound the sociolinguistic theory, or what has also been referred to as the Labovian theory, which says that language is necessarily a reflection of social stratification. The sociolinguistic theory has, in fact, proven that there is an unmistakable relationship between sociolinguistic variables (e.g. social status, gender, level of education, age, occupation, and ethnicity) and language use, as confirmed in similar studies conducted in different parts of the world (e.g. Trudgill 1974 and Chambers 1995).

As concerns the correlation between level of education (the sociolinguistic variable investigated in this study) and language use, opinions tend to vary. Many studies have asserted that the higher one's level of education, the higher the possibility for his or her speech and writing to approximate the standard norm (Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972, 1974, and Macaulay 1976). This explains why most people believe that some professors talk like a book. However, some scholars are of the opinion that level of education does not always correlate predictably with the ability to use standard linguistic features. Jibril (1992), for example, argues that it is not a speaker's level of education that determines his or her linguistic ability, but rather the amount of training which can influence his or her performance. In other studies, the argument is rather that speakers with a high level of education would produce more of hypercorrect features than standard features (e.g. Ngefac 2008a and Ndisom 2012).

Whatever the case, the sociolinguistic theory clearly establishes that language and society share a predictable relationship. Since this study investigates the correlation or the relationship between one of the sociolinguistic variables, namely level of education, and the use of punctuation marks, this theoretical framework is indispensable in this work. In other words, the sociolinguistic theory or the correlation paradigm provides the main perspective from which this investigation is carried out. With regard to the use of punctuation marks, this study will confirm or refute previous studies on the correlation pattern between level of education and this language aspect, namely use of punctuation marks.

1.1.2. Error Analysis Framework

Besides the sociolinguistic theory, error analysis also defines one of the perspectives from which this investigation is carried out. It came to existence after contrastive analysis had failed. Contrastive analysts said that second language learners' errors came from the differences that existed in the two language systems (that of the learners first language and that of the target language) being learned. This caused many researchers to investigate what

really accounted for second language learners' errors. It is in this light that Corder, after investigation, came up with the findings that not all errors made by second language learners can be justified by the interference of the first language in the language they are learning. He therefore came up with the term *error analysis*. For him, errors are significant in many ways.

First, [they tell the teacher] how far towards the goal the learner has progressed and what is left for him to learn. Second, they provide to the researcher evidence of how language is learned and of strategies the learner employs in his discovery of language. Third, the most important aspect is that errors are indispensable to the learner himself because we can regard the making of errors as a device the learner uses in order to learn. It is a way the learner has of testing his hypothesis about the nature of the language he is learning (CORDER 1967:167).

It is often argued that error analysis presents a major shortcoming, deriving from the great emphasis it lays on learners' errors. In ELT situations, too much insistence on learners' wrong answers can produce very bad effects. They argue that it is mainly because the teacher will tend to focus almost only on learners' errors and, consequently, their good utterances will go unnoticed. When this situation occurs, learners feel that they do not know anything, and such a feeling generally causes them to lose motivation. But one can also argue that too many errors can mar communication and even challenge the purpose of language learning. Another pitfall of error analysis, according to Celce- Murcia et al. (1996), is that it provides the learner with possibilities to apply the *avoidance strategy*. This strategy consists of learners avoiding difficult forms that they do not master, in favour of alternative forms which are easy to them.

Error analysis is, therefore, necessary in this work because it provides one of the perspectives from which the investigation is carried. This consists in analyzing the writing of different categories of speakers in terms of wrong and correct use of punctuation marks. In other words, the relevance of error analysis in this study does not consist in pitting its principles and characteristics against those of students' writing, as is the case in studies in second language acquisition, but it consists in conducting an investigation on the punctuation infelicities or errors that characterise the writing of some English language users within the prescriptive framework, which is the main thrust of the error analysis paradigm.

1.1.3. The concept of punctuation

The word “punctuation” derives from the latin word “punctus,” meaning “point”. In this light, the Encyclopaedia Britannica points out that “punctuation is the use of spacing conventional signs and certain typographical devices as aids to the understanding and correct reading , both silently and aloud, of handwritten and printed texts”. In spite of this definition, scholars tend to have different opinions on the way the concept should be defined. In effect, it is defined differently from one grammar book to the other. In Cook (2004: 91), it refers to “the rules for graphically structuring written language by means of conventional marks”. He, therefore, considers punctuation as the “use of additional marks to the letters of the alphabet”. Sala (2009), thinks that, punctuation is not the simple straightforward way of segmenting written material into meaningful units, but a unique means of expressing man’s wordless thoughts. He also says that they are a way of representing pauses, changes in tone, gestures and facial expressions often used during speech. He says

Punctuation marks are signals just like the side lamps of a vehicle or the traffic lights on the street junction. These signals are meant to help the reader, warning him of curves of the thought ahead and important ideas he is about to meet. Their essence is to make messages clearer and unmistakable.(SALA 2009:33)

Moreover, (Gowers, 1988:14) quotes Aldus Manutius to have once noted that

If ideas that are difficult to understand are properly separated by punctuation marks, they become clearer. On the other hand through defective punctuation, many passages are confused and distorted to such a degree that sometimes, they can with difficulty be understood or even cannot be understood at all. (GOWERS, 1988:14)

From the above definitions, it is obvious that the main aim of punctuation is to render meaning clearer for better understanding.

1.1.3.1 Functions of punctuation marks

Punctuation has several functions which are worth discussing in this study. Crystal (2003) identifies four important functions of punctuation in modern writing.

1.1.3.1.1 The grammatical function

According to Crystal (2003), the primary purpose of punctuation is “to enable stretches of written language to be read coherently by displaying grammatical structure.” He goes further to point out that this function is assumed by sentence-ending points, clause dividing commas, and paragraph- marking indentation. This view is shared by Cook (2004), who affirms that “English uses punctuation such as the full stop (.) and the comma (,) to aid reading aloud and to show the grammatical structure.”

The grammatical function of punctuation finds its origin in the golden age of oratory in ancient Greece, a time when the need to capture spoken language in writing was crucial. Schiffrin et al. (2003) give the details of these historical facts in the following excerpt:

During the fourth century BC, when the idea of eloquence was central, writing was viewed as a record of the ‘spoken language’. Punctuation marks came to be added to early texts by teachers and educated readers in order to clarify structure and facilitate oral performance (SCHIFFRIN et AL. 2003:338).

This excerpt implies that punctuation is an integral part of language structure, which is necessary for effective communication.

1.1.3.1.2 The prosodic function

Another function of punctuation is to represent the intonation and emphasis of spoken language. Crystal (2003) indicates that punctuation “gives the reader clues about the prosody with which a piece of writing can be read aloud, through such features as question marks and

exclamation marks. Givon (2001) describes punctuation marks as a “weak replica of intonation”. The implication is that punctuation marks play the role of prosodic features in written language.

1.1.3.1.3 The rhetorical function

As concerns the rhetorical function, it is worthy to note that punctuation serves the purpose of highlighting semantic units or contrasts present in a text; however, it is not directly related to its grammatical structure. This function can be illustrated by the choice of colons versus semicolons to show the rhetorical structure of a complex sentence, and the use of line divisions and stanzas in poetry. The rhetorical function of punctuation is also discussed by Brown and Yule (1983) who think that punctuation marks such as the colon and the semicolon ensure cohesion within a text by indicating “a relationship between what has been said and what is about to be said”.

1.1.3.1.4 The semantic function

The last function which Crystal assigns to punctuation is that it indicates semantic nuances. Indeed, punctuation marks can be used as a means of marking a semantic dimension which would be difficult or impossible to read aloud. For instance, the use of quotation marks show that a word has a special sense whereas capital letters may be used to draw the reader’s attention to what Crystal (2003) refers to as a ‘Very Important Point.’

From the above functions, we are able to draw a clear-cut line between the various functions of punctuation which can be a centre of interest to researchers.

1.1.3.2. Types and uses of punctuation marks

Punctuation marks can be divided into two groups according to their position in the sentence: end marks and middle stops. The other signs, such as the apostrophe and the hyphen belong to the domain of spelling, and are considered part of Mechanics. The end marks include the full stop, the question mark and the exclamation mark. The middle marks include the comma, the semicolon and the colon. (See Mulderig and Elsbree 1980, Nadell et al. 2000, and Sala 2009). The following punctuation marks are of interest to this work: the full stop, the comma, the question mark, the colon and the semicolon.

1.1.3.2.1 The end marks

The end marks comprise the full stop and the question mark.

1.1.3.2.1.1 The full stop

The full stop is the basic essential of all punctuation marks. It is the least complicated to use, but failure to use it where it is necessary can be ranked as the gravest punctuation error.

The full stop has many uses.

First, it can be used after a declarative or a mild imperative sentence. The following are examples:

- A declarative sentence, like this one, ends with a full stop.
- The students have finished writing the exams.
- John ran away.
- Peter saw a snake yesterday.

Second, it can be used after an indirect question or polite request. Examples include the following:

- I wonder how many people would know that this is an indirect question.
- I do not understand why this food is still here.
- The teacher is still to know where the students the students are.

Third, a full stop is used in abbreviations. Consider the following examples:

- Rev. (Reverend)
- Dec. (December)
- B.A. (Bachelor of Arts)
- M.A.(Master of Arts)
- Mon. (Monday)

1.1.3.2.1.2. The question mark

The question mark is one of the end marks. Generally speaking, a question mark is used for two purposes: closing questions and indicating doubtful information. Specifically, it has many functions.

First, a question mark is used to end a direct question or short questions in series, as seen in the following examples:

- Is this not the kind of question that must end with a question mark?
- Why is the classroom still dirty? Who is in charge of keeping it clean?
- What is a decent man? And what is a decent woman?
- Where is the baby's food?

Second, it is used to end a question with an abbreviation that includes a full stop. In this case, the question mark does not replace the full stop, but follows it, as seen in the following example:

- Did the invitation say **R.S.V.P.**?
- Does that man even have a **B.A.**?

Third, a question mark is equally used in parentheses to indicate that the information you provided in a sentence is of doubtful accuracy. Consider the following examples:

- The president has ordered (and who am I to question it?) your arrest.

1.1.3.2.2 The Middle Stops

The middle stops consist of the comma, the semicolon, and the colon.

1.1.3.2.2 The comma

Of all the middle stops, the comma is the most complex and the most used; though, it is also the most frequently abused. Besides the fact that its main role is to mark a brief pause, it has many uses.

First, a comma is placed before a conjunction introducing an independent clause. An independent clause is one that can stand on its own and make full sense. It is often introduced by a coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so). The following are examples:

- The situation is difficult. There is still one chance of survival. If we join the above simple sentences using a conjunction, we will have: “The situation is difficult, but there is still one chance of survival”.
- “The company is facing a liquidity problem, and workers’ salaries cannot be paid for this month”.

Here, the comma tells the reader that the one simple sentence has ended and the other one has started. If there was no comma, the reader could treat liquidity problems and workers’ salaries as coordinate terms.

Second, a comma is used to set off an introductory word or word group. Introductory words usually emphasize a point of view. Introductory word groups could be clauses and phrases functioning as adverbials. They usually tell the reader when, where, how, why or the conditions under which the main action of the sentence occurs. The essence of the comma here is to announce the end of the introductory phrase, as well as the beginning of the main sentence. The essence is also to show that the adverbial expression is not in its natural place, which is the end of the sentence. Examples include the following:

- Of course, James isn’t qualified for the job.
- Yes, we will travel to Douala tomorrow

Third, a comma separates elements in a series. The “serial” comma is the most commonly known use of the comma. When three or more items are presented in a series, they should be separated from one another with commas. Items in a series may be words, phrases or clauses. Examples include the following:

- Books, papers, and pens were sold in this shop.
- You can choose to stay here, go back to your job site or go home altogether.
- Mary bought a pair of shoe, an expensive gown and a beautiful necklace.

Fourth, a comma is used between coordinate adjectives not joined by “and”. Coordinate adjectives are two or more adjectives that qualify the noun “separately”. They can either be

joined by “and” or scrambled. When they are scrambled, they need commas. The following are examples:

- After the crisis, my mother has become a dedicated, faithful, godly woman.
- This woman gave birth to handsome, intelligent, clean boys.

Fifth, a comma is used to mark off a phrase or a noun in apposition. Apposition is a situation where two grammatical entities referring to the same person or thing are juxtaposed, that is, placed side by side. Consider the following examples:

- Peter, my brother, has travelled to Dubai.
- Chomsky, the famous linguist, has come up with another interesting book.
- Yesterday, we buried Solomon T. Muna, the former speaker of the National Assembly.

Sixth, a comma is used to set off parenthetical elements. The word “parenthetical” derives from “parentheses” or “brackets”. When you put something in parentheses, it means that it can be left out, which means that it is not obligatory. Any grammatical element that is optional is not very necessary for grammaticality. Parenthetical expressions can take the following forms:

They could be anything that is added for any purpose within a sentence without relating directly to a part of that sentence. For example

- Mr Jim, if you remember, got married this very day last year.
- You and your family, I have not forgotten, were very kind to me.
- The best way to discover landscape, unless you are pressed for time, is to go on foot.
- A petty woman, if she isn’t chaste, is like a gold ring stuck on a pig’s nose.

Single words known as conjunctive adverbs (however, therefore, moreover) are parenthetical, and may be set off by a pair of commas. Examples include

- This is not, however, the only solution.
- She is, moreover, pregnant and needs rest.

Again, a name or a title in direct address is in parenthesis and should be set off by commas. For example

- Well, Vivian, I must go.
- If, sir, you insist, I will go for my assignment.
- Madam, I have brought your food.

Contrasting or comparative elements also need to be set off with commas. They are usually phrases beginning with “not” and “unlike”. The following are examples:

- The man, not his wife, is the person we are looking for.
- John, unlike my other neighbours, is very unfriendly.
- The higher you go, the colder it becomes.
- The more demand rises, the more prices increase.

Seventh, a comma is used to set off non-defining clauses from their heads. Adjectival clauses are either defining or non- defining. Consider the following sentences where meaning is distinguished through the use of commas.

- The students *who passed their exams* went to the University. (defining)
- The students, *who passed their exams*, went to the University. (non- defining)

The sentences above are different in meaning, and there is no other way of showing it than through the use of the comma. In the first sentence, there are no commas because the italicized clause (called an “adjectival clause” because it stands in for an adjective) is defining in nature. If one were to find out the students who went to the University, it would be obvious that they are strictly those who passed their exams. This means that those who failed the exams did not go to the University. Since the adjectival clause helps us to know the students who went to the University, it is said to be defining. If the defining clause is removed, the sentence will be affected. In the second sentence, “which students went to the University?” is not important because all students went to the University. By implication, all students passed the exams. The writer is just stating the fact as additional information. The proof is that, if the adjectival clause is taken away, no great harm will be done to the meaning of the sentence. So, the adjectival clause in this sentence is non- defining.

Eighth, commas are used with dates, addresses and numbers. The following are examples:

- Sandy was born on Monday, April 27, 1991, in Bamenda, Cameroon.
- She has lived in Lagos, Nigeria, for several years.

Ninth, a comma sets off words identifying the speaker of a direct quotation. Examples include

- “When I was in Africa,” Brad said, “I learned a great deal about the plight of elephants.”
- “I will travel next week” the History teacher said, “I need to visit my family.”
- “You are not sick” said the History teacher, “stop pretending.”

Tenth, a comma is used to indicate the omission of the predicate in “zeugmatic” expressions. A zeugmatic expression is one in which the predicate is omitted (because it is understood in context) to save the reader the boredom of having the same predicate repeated over and over in the series. Some examples are

- To err is human; to forgive, divine.
- My daughter is a teacher; my son, a lawyer.
- Discussion is the exchange of knowledge; argument, the exchange of ignorance.

1.1.3.2.2 The semicolon

The semicolon is one of the middle stops. In terms of breaks, the semicolon is in-between the comma and the full stop. It has many uses.

First, it connects independent clauses which are not joined with a coordinating conjunction, as seen in the following examples:

- I’m not saying that these stories are untrue; I’m just a bit doubtful about your source.
- You trust Terry; I don’t.
- Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. (Oscar Wilde)

Second, it separates two independent clauses linked by a conjunctive adverb such as consequently, however, moreover, nonetheless, then, or therefore. Consider the following examples:

- Our plan was to sail Nalpes to New York; however, an emergency at home forced us to fly back instead.
- We woke up early and walked fast; however, we did not reach the forest at the foreseen time.
- John did not write the test because he came late; besides, he did not pay his school fee.

Third, another role of the semicolon is that it separates elements in a series that contain internal punctuation, as seen in the examples below:

- The parents' day discussion was led by Mr Joseph, the Chaplain; Ms Smith, a French instructor; the dean; and the assistant.
- We will wear our old uniforms, which are worn out, for the last time; and the new uniforms, which were bought last week, will be worn during the end- of- year party at the end of the month.

Fourth, a semicolon balances two opposite ideas. Examples include

- Tough times don't last; only tough men do.
- Do not ask what your country has done for you; ask what you have done for your country.
- He who works hard succeeds; he who succeeds lives comfortably.

1.1.3.2.2.3 The colon

It also falls in the category of middle stops. Its primary use is to call attention to the words that follow. This is why it is usually used after *as follows*, *the following*. These expressions that make the reader expect a list. In this role, the colon acts as a pointing finger, warning the reader about a statement or a list ahead.

First, a colon is used after an independent clause to direct attention to a list, an appositive or a quotation. The following are examples:

- As a young man, he dreamed of two professions: driving and teaching.
- There are three reasons that make our hotel outstanding, namely: good spacious rooms, a well trained staff and excellent food.

- Nature granted women three things: lies, tears and spinning.
- Idi Amin is remembered for thanking his benefactor in the following statement:
“Thank you for your hostilities. I shall retaliate.”

Second, a colon is used between independent clauses if the second summarizes or explains the first. Examples include

- Power is like drowning: it corrupts you even against your will.
- The young today blame the old and vice versa: both generations are in conflict.

Third, a colon is used after the salutation in a formal letter, to separate hours from minutes, and to show proportions, as seen in the examples that follow:

- Dear Sir:
- Dear Madam:
- 5:30Aa.m. (read as half past five or five thirty).
- The ratio of boys to girls in our school is 2:1 (read as two is to one).

Fourth, a colon is used in dissertations between a title and a subtitle of the work, to separate place of publication from publisher and the year of publication from the page number. The following are examples:

- English Morphology and Syntax: Current Trends in Cameroon English in Action.
- “The Scope of Categorisation in African Englishes: Some Sociolinguistic Considerations”
- Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Ettia (1999:47)

Fifth, a colon is used as an alternative way to introduce a passage in direct speech or a quotation, especially if they are long. Some examples are

- I was suddenly called by the harsh voice of the night watchman: “Lay down the bucket and come here or I will shoot you!”
- Each time I am tempted to say something limited, I remind myself of pope’s line: “A little learning is a dangerous thing”.

Sixth, a colon can introduce a conclusion. Consider the examples below:

- After getting married five times, she was sure of one thing: men are not trustworthy.
- Children who grow up in a tensed environment are often misfits: they have learnt to treat even jokes too seriously.

1.2. Literature review

In this section, a review of previous works is provided and the focus is on the notion of New Englishes, the identification of Cameroon English, and Cameroon English writing and punctuation marks.

1.2.1 The spread of English and the Concept of New Englishes

The term “New Englishes” refers to the fact that the English language, which was originally restricted to a few countries such as Britain, United States of America, and Australia, has crossed many national and international boundaries through colonialism, imperialism and other routes to emerge as a global language (Plat et al.1984, Kachru 1986, Anchimbe 2006, and Ngefac 2008). That is, the language has been transported from its original site to postcolonial contexts, otherwise known as the new nations. In these contexts, the language has been adopted and adapted according to the contextual realities of these new contexts. This is seen in expressions as “Global English”, “World Englishes”, “International English” and “New Englishes” (Ngefac 2008a). From this, it is obvious that the language has sacrificed its homogeneity due to the unique ecological and sociolinguistic realities of the different contexts where it is used.

Kachru (1985 and 1986) classifies the different types of English- speaking societies found in the world and discusses the spread of English across the globe in terms of three concentric circles: the Inner Circle, the Outer Circle and the Expanding Circle. These circles represent the “types of spread, the patterns of acquisition and the functional domains in which English is used across cultures and languages” (Kachru 1985 and Ngefac 2008a). According to Kachru, the Inner Circle is made up of countries where English is a native language. In this case, reference is made to countries such as the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. The Outer Circle includes former British colonies like Cameroon, Nigeria, Liberia, Ghana, Kenya and India. In these countries, English usually exists with

many other languages and it is often assigned a very high status such as official or co-official language. It is also used as a medium of instruction and a language of administration. Concerning the Expanding Circle, it regroups countries that use English mainly because of its status as first international language. In this case, English is used predominantly for international communication and for other specific purposes. In this Circle, we have countries like China, Japan, Tunisia and Russia.

From the classification above, it appears that the label “New Englishes” is generally meant to designate Outer Circle Englishes. It is in this Circle that the domestication of English is mostly observed. Ngefac (2008b) notes that the nativisation of English in new ecological settings is seen in the fact that each postcolonial nation is now claiming its own Standard English. This clearly explains why we have such labels as “Nigerian Standard English”, “Ghanaian Standard English” and “Cameroon Standard English”.

But it can be argued that there is still no consensus on features that should be included in, and excluded from, the so-called the standard varieties of these New Englishes. In other words, it is difficult, at this point in time, to claim that the New Englishes already have their standard varieties, as some scholars are already claiming. However, the New Englishes exist and display linguistic peculiarities at all linguistic levels, as exemplified in many previous works. Phonologically, they are said to be characterized by such phonological processes as the reduction of long sounds to short ones, the monophthongisation of diphthongs, the replacement of RP features with indigenized ones, etc. Lexico-syntactically, they are characterized by many linguistic peculiarities, some of which include the replacement of Inner Circle prepositions with context-specific ones, a sentence structure that reflects that of indigenous languages, the use of many lexical items that are borrowed from the indigenous languages and other languages spoken in such contexts, etc. The writing style of many people in such indigenized English contexts differs significantly from what obtains in Inner Circle Englishes. This explains why many previous studies are couched in Kachru’s (1985) World Englishes theoretical framework. But this study recognizes the existence of Cameroon English, but does not consider that the standard variety of this New English already exists. This explains why punctuation features of Cameroon English are analysed in this study in terms of the prescriptive norms of Standard British English, even though Cameroon English exists, as shall be illustrated below.

1.2.2 Identification of Cameroon English

The term “Cameroon English” (CamE) has been the concern of many scholars today. Simo Bobda and Mbagwana (1993) hold that the term “Cameroon English” is meant to contrast with four main kinds of speech. Firstly, it contrasts with Pidgin English which is extensively used in Cameroon. Secondly, it contrasts with the speech of uneducated speakers of English in Cameroon, though they claim that it is often synonymous with Educated English. Thirdly, CamE contrasts with the speech of Francophone Cameroonians. They further explain that some of these speakers may have a high command of English, but they are looked upon as users of a performance variety and can hardly serve as a reference. Lastly, they posit that Cameroon English excludes the speech of a handful of Cameroonians who have been influenced by other varieties (RP and American English), given that they are not regarded as representative of the English spoken in Cameroon. They also specify that CamE “is often synonymous with Educated English,” thereby agreeing with Masanga (1983), who places Cameroon English “between the speech of secondary school leavers and that of university graduates”. According to Mbangwana (1992), Cameroon English is “the type of English that is used over the Cameroon Television, in radio (CRTV), Cameroon Tribune, “Cameroon Post”, literary works, education, government and so forth” (Mbangwana 1992, quoted in Nunyonga 2012).

However, defining CamE from the perspective educational attainment has been received with some reservation. Sala (2006), for instance, thinks that defining CamE from the perspective of educational attainment prioritizes Institutional English to the detriment of Community or Mainstream English, which he thinks, is the variety used by the majority of speakers with least effort. Ngefac (2008) agrees with this view that mainstream is a variety spoken by a majority of speakers but disagrees that speakers require no formal education and effort to be able to speak it. He observes that at the level of phonology, uneducated speakers are likely to produce only basilectal features, which cannot be considered features of CamE. Moreover, Ngefac (2010) points out that “Cameroon English pronunciation features which needs to be standardized should be those that speakers need to work hard through formal schooling to be able to utter.” All in all, the author is of the opinion that what can be presented as CamE features should be mainstream Cameroonianisms which reflect the sociocultural and multilingual realities of Cameroon in a predictable and logical manner.

Even though many scholars appraise CamE from the viewpoint of educational attainment, they acknowledge the challenge of stating exactly what level of education a speaker should have to be referred to as educated. Even Masanga (1983), who puts CamE between the speech of secondary school leavers and university goers, recognizes that it is not absolute considering Cameroon Standard English as that variety of English spoken by Anglophone Cameroonians who have completed secondary school education. He emphasizes that it is not necessarily every Anglophone Cameroonian who has attained this level of education who automatically speaks Cameroon English. At the same time, he upholds that it will be wrong to think that none of those with level of education below secondary school will speak Cameroon Standard English.

Following the different views examined so far, Cameroon English ranges from what Sala (2005) refers to as Community English, through mainstream English, to Institutional or Educated Cameroon English.

1.2.3 Cameroon English writing and punctuation

Over the years, characteristic features of CamE have been identified and described. In writing and the use of punctuation marks, it has been exemplified in different research works that Cameroonian users of English, especially students, display certain peculiarities that contradict the norms of Inner Circle Englishes. First, students' essays often lack a logical organizational and structural pattern (Mankah 1994), given that there is the absence of a well-structured introductory paragraph that logically introduces the essay and that contains a well-constructed thesis statement. In order to help students to improve their writing ability, it has been suggested that organizational skills and other writing skills should be taught in school (see Mankah 1994).

Second, many writers delve into the craft of writing without having taken time to read samples of good writing and how to write well. This explains why many writers do not know that a paragraph has its own structure, as is the case with a term paper or an essay. The notions of topic sentence, developing sentences and terminating sentence are not known by many writers. In addition, many writers do not know that a paragraph is the whole essay in miniature, given that it has its own introduction called topic sentence, a body called developing sentences, and a conclusion called a terminating sentence. Those who have read many samples of good writing, therefore, know that a paragraph is not written haphazardly.

This explains why Ajeegah (1997) in his investigation into the problems encountered by secondary school students learning English writing skills says that students who frequently read extensively perform better in writing exercises than those who rarely read extensively. This shows that extensive reading and the frequent use of the language in writing activities is likely to enhance learners' writing skills. He recommends that students should constantly participate in creative writing and read widely to be better writers.

Third, there is a gross misuse of punctuation marks (Anchimbe 1998, Wanchia 1999, Simo Bobda 2002, Kouega 2004, and Sala 2008). In fact, there is the tendency for Cameroonian users of English, especially students, to construct sentences in which "two or more complete sentences are punctuated as one" (Kouega 2004). This phenomenon, known as run-on or loose sentences, results in ambiguities (Anchimbe 1999). It is not surprising that Simo Bobda (2002) observes that the rules that govern the uses of the various punctuation marks are often broken by students and this makes their productions incomprehensible. Although the punctuation mark that Sala (2008) is concerned with is the comma, his findings go a long way to confirm Simo Bobda's (2002) conclusion. In fact, Sala (2008) also points out that students misuse punctuation marks. His findings reveal that students failed to comply with the following rules governing the use of the comma: (1) do not join independent clauses with a comma, (2) do not use a comma to break up natural relations between words and groups of words in a sentence, (3) do not use commas to separate defining elements from their heads, (4) do not use a comma to set off a concluding adverb clause that is essential to the meaning of the sentence, (5) do not use a comma after "such as" or "like", (6) no comma before "than", (7) no comma before a parenthesis, (8) no comma with a question mark or exclamation mark in direct speech punctuation, (9) no commas after subordinating conjunctions such as "that", "although".

Fourth, the use of complex sentences is preferable to the use of simple sentences and this often results in ambiguities. This explains why Anchimbe (1998) maintains that students "go in for longer and more complicated sentences into which they condense or choke-up their ideas." "This condensation often leads to structural ambiguities" (Anchimbe 1998). He illustrates this observation with the fact that in his investigation there was a sentence consisting of 48 words, one comma, and three linking words.

Following the above discussion, it can be maintained that research on writing in general and punctuation in particular has received very little scholarly attention as far as

Cameroon English is concerned. The case of punctuation is very unique, given that the investigation did not come across studies that investigated the different punctuation marks considered in this study, let alone works that investigate the correlation between punctuation marks and level of education. The above-mentioned studies either focus only on a single punctuation mark or address punctuation marks from the perspective of what should be in Standard British English. Others simply make general statements on the use of punctuation marks by Cameroonian users of English, especially students. Such general statements do not provide a clear picture of the extent to which the different punctuation marks are actually misused in Cameroon and how such a misuse correlates with educational attainment.

1.2.4. The Correlation between language and Level of Education in Cameroon

The question of whether there is any significant relationship between language use and level of education has not only been the preoccupation of studies conducted in the Western world, as exemplified in 1.1.1. In the Cameroonian context, a number of researchers have equally been concerned with the type of relationship linguistic variables share with level of education (see, for instance, Ngefacs 1997, Ngefacs 2008b, Kouam 2015, and Ndepe 2015). Interestingly, most previous studies maintain that the choice of Standard British English (SBE) linguistic features does not very much depend on educational attainment. For instance, in Ngefacs's (1997) study, as low as 26.66 % of Upper Sixth students approximated SBE features, as opposed to 6.66 % of Form One students who produced such features. Even though the difference between the performance of the two categories of speakers appears much, one would have expected the performance of students who have spent many years in secondary school to be more significant than the performance of those who have just left the primary school.

In a separate investigation (see Ngefacs 2008b), level of education tends to have a greater impact on speakers' ability to choose SBE features, even though the correlation pattern that emerged is largely inconsistent. The features were categorized into basilects, mesolects, and hypercorrect features many speakers assumed to be acrolectal in nature. Even though basilectal features dominated the speech of speakers with little or no significant formal education, the speech of very educated speakers were characterized by standard features, as one would expect. As mesolectal features or what he also called as mainstream features dominated the speech of most of the educated speakers, the speech of speakers with a very

high level of education was rather characterized by hypercorrection. He, like Labov 1966 and Simo Bobda and Mbangwana 1993, defined this phenomenon as the tendency whereby speakers' attempts to produce standard linguistic features rather result in the production of deviant forms that are very different from the ones he or she targeted. In effect, therefore, speakers with a high level of education did not choose standard features in the same way as reported in studies carried out in the Western world.

The absence of a significant correlation pattern between level of education and linguistic variables is not only reported in Ngefac (1997) and Ngefac (2008b). In the investigation on the relationship between speakers' level of education and their ability to use SBE features, Kouam (2015) reports that the approximation of the stress pattern of words that originate from Romance languages does not very much depend on the level of education of the speakers. He actually discovered that only 11.75% of Form Five students produced the SBE stress of the words; only 17.5% of Level One students at the university were able to articulate the SBE variants of the words; and 18.25% of Master One students articulated the stress pattern of the words according to SBE norms. These results show no significant difference in the speech of the three categories of speakers. These results are confirmed in Ndepe (2015) who also reported that speakers chosen according to their level of education do not show any sensitivity to the state of the glottis. In other words, the articulation of voiced and voiceless sounds did not vary significantly according to the level of education of the speakers. This implies that educational attainment in a postcolonial context like Cameroon does not create the type of impact reported in previous studies conducted in the Western world.

It should, however, be noted that studies on the correlation between level of education and language use is still a serious necessity in a context like Cameroon, because of a number of reasons. First, most studies that have investigated the correlation between this sociolinguistic variable and language use in Cameroon have focused phonology and other linguistic levels and skills have received little or no attention. Second, writing has received very little scholarly attention and, so far, no previous study on the way it correlates with level of education was identified. Third, previously reported findings need to be tested in a context, like Cameroon, in order to assess whether level of education actually correlates with language as is reported in the Western world, which is significantly different from the Cameroon.

1.3. Gaps and Contribution

In spite of the different works that have been carried out in the areas of correlation and writing skills, this work is significantly different in many ways. First, it studies the correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks in the Cameroonian context. It should be noted that most previous studies that have investigated the correlation between sociolinguistic variables and linguistic variables have been conducted in the Western world (e.g. Labov 1966, Trudgill 1972, Trudgill 1974 and Macaulay 1976), which is significantly from a context like Cameroon. Second, this study focuses on level of education and the use of punctuation marks, unlike similar studies that have been conducted in Cameroon, which are either concerned with sociolinguistic variables other than level of education or are concerned with the correlation between level of education and phonological variables (e.g. (Ngefac 1997, Ngefac 2008a, Kouam 2015, and Ndepe 2015). In other words, no previous attempt has been made in Cameroon to study the correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks. Third, this study is carried out from a descriptive perspective, by describing the actual use of punctuation marks in Cameroon, instead of describing how punctuation marks should be used in Standard British English, as is the case in Sala (2008) and similar studies. Fourth, this study is concerned with the use of punctuation marks, not with other aspects of writing like organization skills, use of connectives, and ability to write topic sentences and thesis statements discussed in works like Alobwede (1987), (Ajeegah 1997), Anchimbe (1998), Wanchia (1999), and Kouega (2004).

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

2.0. Introduction

This chapter describes the methodology used to conduct the investigation. In this light, it describes the research designs, the geographical context of the study, the informants, the instruments used for data collection and the method used for data analysis. This chapter equally describes some difficulties faced in the course of collecting data for the present study.

2.1. Research Design

Kerlinga (1986) defines research design as “the plan and structure of investigation so conceived as to obtain answers to research questions”. In this light, the research design adopted for this study was a survey. A survey is a type of research in which either a group of people or items are studied by collecting and analyzing data from a subsection of a population or items, considered to be representative of the entire group (Mamo 2014).

2.2. Setting of the Study

This investigation was carried out in the Centre Region of Cameroon, precisely in Yaounde, the capital city of Cameroon. Informants were taken from two institutions: Government Bilingual High School Nkol-Eton and the University of Yaounde I. The city of Yaounde and these institutions were selected because of the investigator’s familiarity with this city and these schools. The researcher did her teaching practice in GBHS Nkol-Eton; so, it was not too difficult to collect data in this school.

2.3. Population of Study

According to Hosker (2002), quoted in Bell (2006), the population of study can be defined as the “total number of subjects (which are not necessarily people) of one’s research and conform to a set of clearly defined characteristics”. In other words, the population of study is selected according to the type of research and according to the researcher’s objectives. Thus, in our case, the population for this study was made up of secondary school and university

students. These informants were selected according to their level of education, the sociolinguistic variable under study. In all, 90 informants were retained through a random selection. Random sampling was preferred to other methods because it avoids bias and gives an equal chance to everyone to be included in the sample. That is, those who constituted the informants are a representative of a larger population. The informants were 30 Quatrième students, 30 Première students and 30 Level Two of French-speaking students of the Geography Department.

Francophones were chosen for the study because the investigator, being a Bilingual Letters student, will be required to teach English to Francophones. So, she thought the findings would be of help to her in her future career. The table below presents the informants of the study.

Table 1: Presentation of the informants

Informants	Level	Number	Total
Students	Quatrième	30	90
	Première	30	
	Geography Level Two	30	

2.4. Instruments for Data Collection

The instrument used by the investigator was a test. The first phase of it consisted in punctuating sentences. As concerns the second phase, the same learners were requested to write an essay of not more than 1000 words on the topic “*My Country*”.

2.5. Method of Data Collection

As earlier mentioned, this research was carried out in GBHS Nkol-Eton in Yaounde and the University of Yaounde I. Given the fact that the investigator did her teaching practice at GBHS Nkol-Eton, where she taught English Language to Quatrième and Première students, it was not too difficult to administer questionnaires and tests to the learners of these classes. This was done with the help of her English trainer who accepted that the investigator could use her period to test the learners. She gave the informants a set of sentences to be punctuated. After that, she gave them the essay topic to write not more than 1000 words.

2.6. Method of Data Analysis

In order to analyse the data collected for this study, a simple statistical analysis was made and this consisted in simply calculating the frequency and percentages of the right and wrong uses of the different punctuation marks in sentence punctuation and essay writing. In addition, table and bar charts were used to capture the results.

The formula used in calculating percentages was as follows:

$$Z\% = \frac{n}{N} \times 100$$

Where:

Z%= Percentage count

n= Number of students

N= total number of sample

2.7. Difficulties Encountered

In the collection of data for this investigation, some difficulties were experienced. First, it was difficult to convince the students, especially those at the Geography Department of the University of Yaoundé I, to serve as informants for the study. Second, it was financially very demanding to visit the targeted schools several times before completing the process of data

collection, given the unavailability of some of the informants. Third, the scarcity of time was a major challenge, given that the investigator had a heavy teaching load during her practice teaching. In this situation, it was a matter of managing the time in such a way that neither the practice teaching nor the data collection nor the library research was given less attention. In spite of the above-mentioned challenges, the investigator did not relent her effort to overcome the difficulties.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has described the research design, the method of data collection, the method of data analysis, and the difficulties encountered in the course of the investigation. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of the investigation.

CHAPTER THREE

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF THE DATA

3.0. Introduction

This chapter presents analysis and interprets the data that emerged from the analysis of the data. It actually focuses on the correlation pattern that emerged between the level of education of the speakers and their ability to use punctuation marks. These data will be captured through the use tables and graphs, as indicated in the previous chapter.

3.1. The Correlation between Level of Education and the Informants' Ability to Punctuate Sentences

This study reveals interesting correlation patterns between level of education and the informants' ability to punctuate sentences using the different punctuation marks.

3.1.1. Level of Education and the Use of the Comma in punctuating sentences

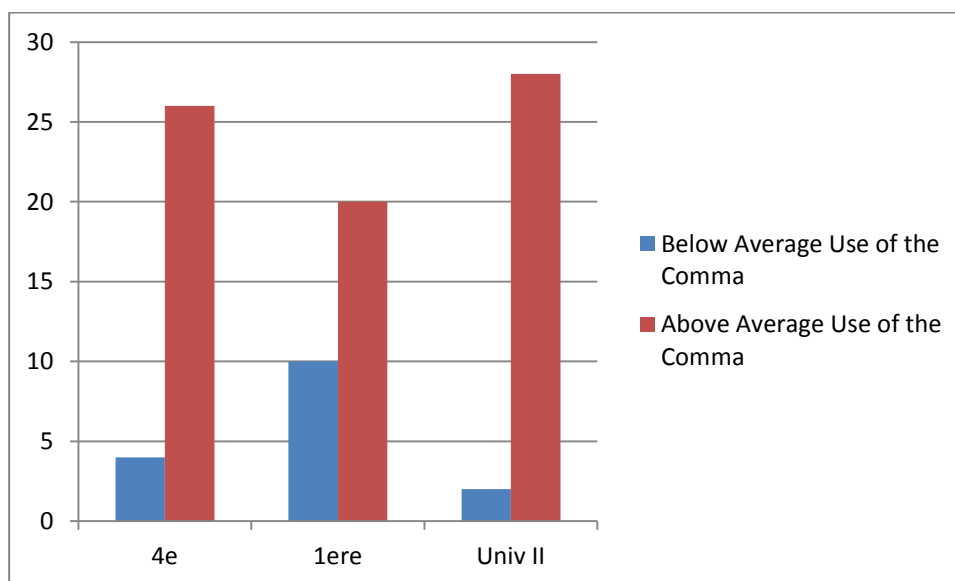
One of the main aims of the sentences given to students was to assess the informants' ability to punctuate sentences according to their level of education. The analysis of the data shows that there were informants who used the punctuation marks below average and above average.

As concerns the informants who used the comma below and above average, the following table and graph illustrate the performance of the three categories of students investigated.

Table 2: Level of Education and the Use of the Comma in punctuating sentences

Use of the Comma Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Comma		Above Average Use of the Comma	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	04	13.33%	26	86.7%
1 ^{ere}	10	33.3%	20	66.7%
Univ II	02	6.7%	28	93.3%

Graph 1: Level of Education and the Use of the Comma in punctuating sentences



As shown in the table and graph above, it is overt that “ Premiere” students , as compared to 4^e and level 2 geography students (Francophones) hardly use the comma correctly (of the 30 respondents, only 20 use it correctly that is 66.7% of this group). Although the 4^e students are just three years old in the secondary school, their use of the comma (86.67%) is better than that of their seniors who are the Premiere students (66.7%). The level Two Geography students demonstrated a mastery of this punctuation mark given that 28 students had above average making them score 93.34%. Given that there is no gradual amelioration in the mastery of the comma, (the case with Premiere) it is obvious that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of the comma. This is seen in the fact that 4e students use the comma better than 1ere students.

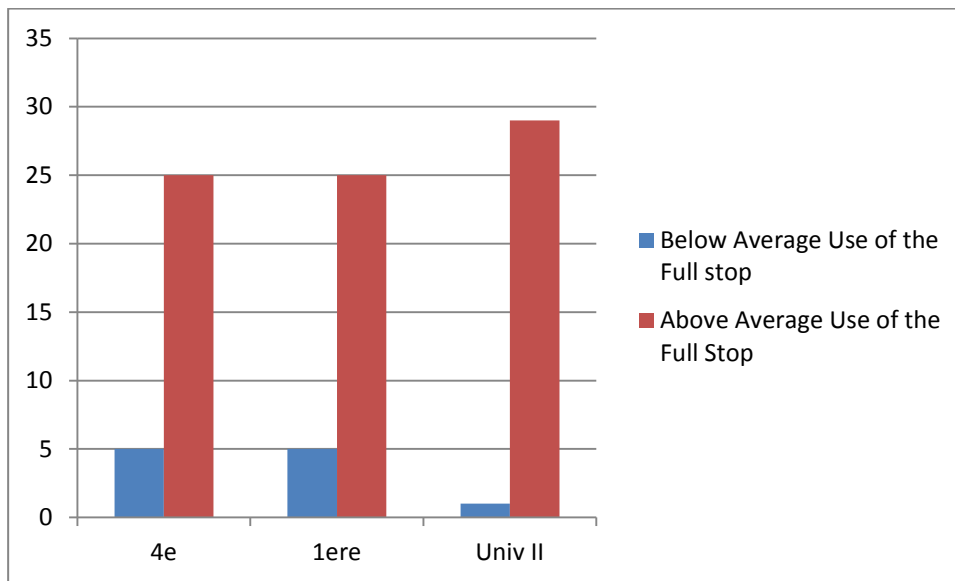
3.1.2: Level of Education and the Use of the Full Stop in punctuating sentences

The table and the graph below present the various informants’ use of the Full Stop in the sentences punctuated.

Table 3: Level of Education and the Use of the Full Stop in punctuating sentences

Use of Full Stop Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Full Stop		Above Average Use of the Full Stop	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	5	16.66%	25	83.4%
1 ^{ere}	5	16.66%	25	83.4%
Univ 2	1	3.3%	29	96.7%

Graph 2: Level of Education and the Use of the Full Stop in punctuating sentences



It can be seen from the above table and graph that 4e and 1ere students use the full stop at the same level. That is, 25 students have an above average use of 83.4 %. This shows that 1ere students are not better than 4e students in the use of the full stop which shows that they have not improved on the use of this variable. However, Level Two Geography students show a mastery of the full stop given that they came up with a percentage of 96.7. From this, one can say that these learners use of the full stop does not improve as they move ahead. Based on the fact that 1ere learners are at the same level with 4e learners, it is, therefore, clear that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of the full stop. In other words, learners' use of the full stop does not evolve as they climb the educational ladder.

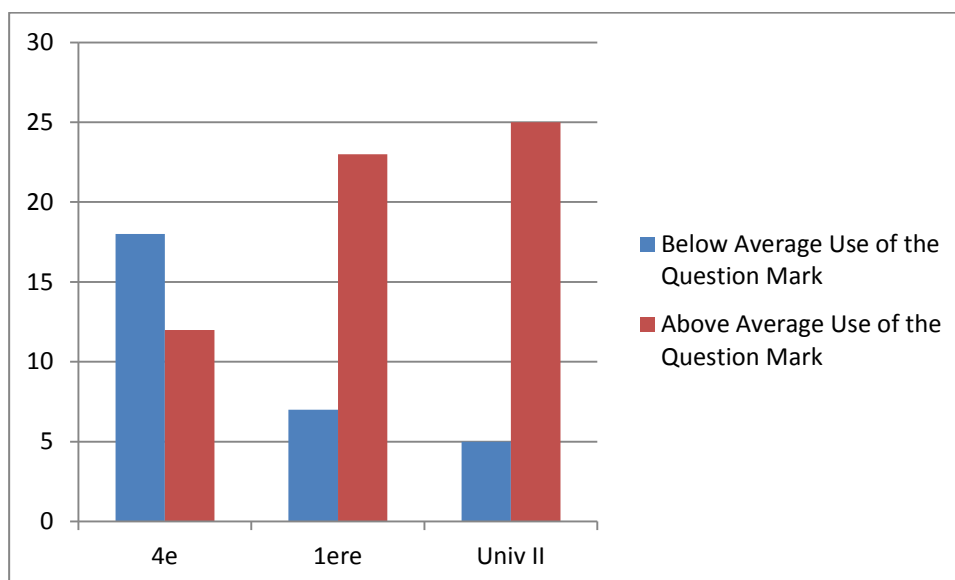
3.1.3. Level of Education and the use of the Question Mark in punctuating sentences

In the table and graph that follow, the informants' performance of the use of the Question Mark is revealed. This is done following the criteria of "the above average use" and "the below average use" of the Question Mark.

Table 4: Level of Education and the Use of the Question Mark in punctuating sentences

Use of Question Mark Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Question Mark		Above Average Use of the Question Mark	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	18	60%	12	40%
1 ^{ere}	07	23.3%	23	76.7%
Univ 2	5	16.7%	25	83.3%

Graph 3: Level of Education and the Use of the Question Mark in punctuating sentences



The above table and chart present the learners' use of the question mark. In 4e, 12 students used the question mark above average giving them 40%. In 1ere, 23 students used this variable well making them score 76.7% and in level Two, 25 students excelled in its use. With this, they came up with 83.3%. From this, it was realized that there was a measurable difference in the mastery of the question mark at the various levels. That is the learners' use of the question mark evolved as they climbed the educational ladder.

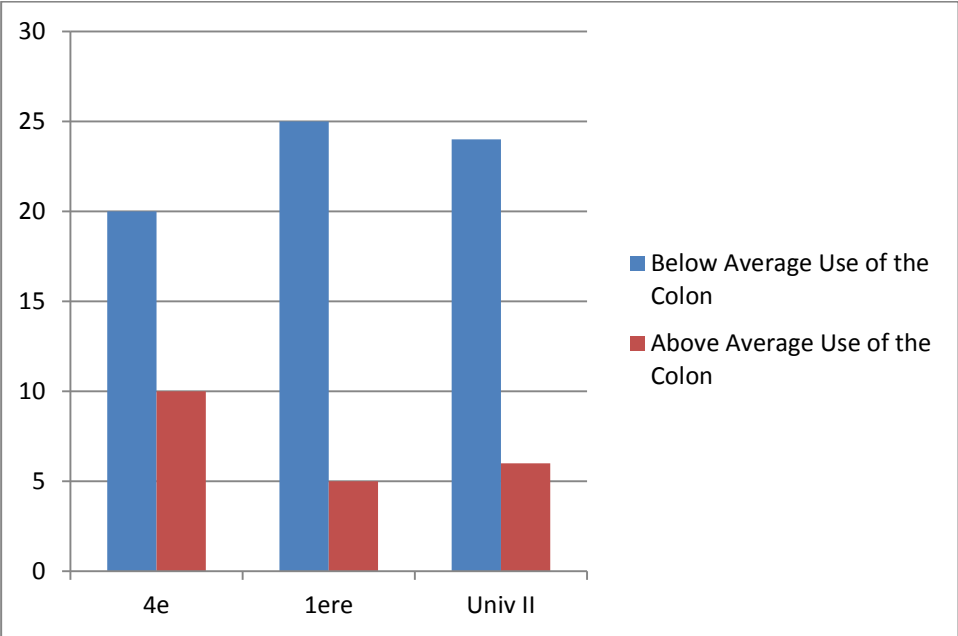
3.1.4: Level of Education and the Use of the Colon in punctuating sentences

Regarding the informants who used the colon below average and above average, a presentation of their scores is uncovered in the table and graph that follows.

.Table 5: Level of Education and the Use of the Colon in punctuating sentences

Use of Colon Level of Education	Below Average use of the Colon		Above Average Use of the Colon	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	20%	66.66	10	33.4%
1 ^{ere}	25%	83.33	5	16.7%
Univ 2	24%	80	6	20%

Graph4: Level of Education and the Use of the Colon in punctuating sentences



As shown in the table and graph above, all the levels registered a poor use of the Colon. Of the 30 respondents in 1ere, only 5 of them used the colon well giving them a percentage of 16.7. This was followed by the level Two Geography students who were at 20%. Surprisingly enough, 10 Quatrieme students were above average in the use of the colon and found themselves at 33.4%. It was surprising because they scored better than the other levels. So, it is evident that there is no relationship between level of education and the use of the colon. This is visible because there is no progress in the use of the Colon as one climbs the educational ladder. Again, from the figures revealed above, it is obvious that these respondents did not have mastery of this punctuation mark given their poor scores.

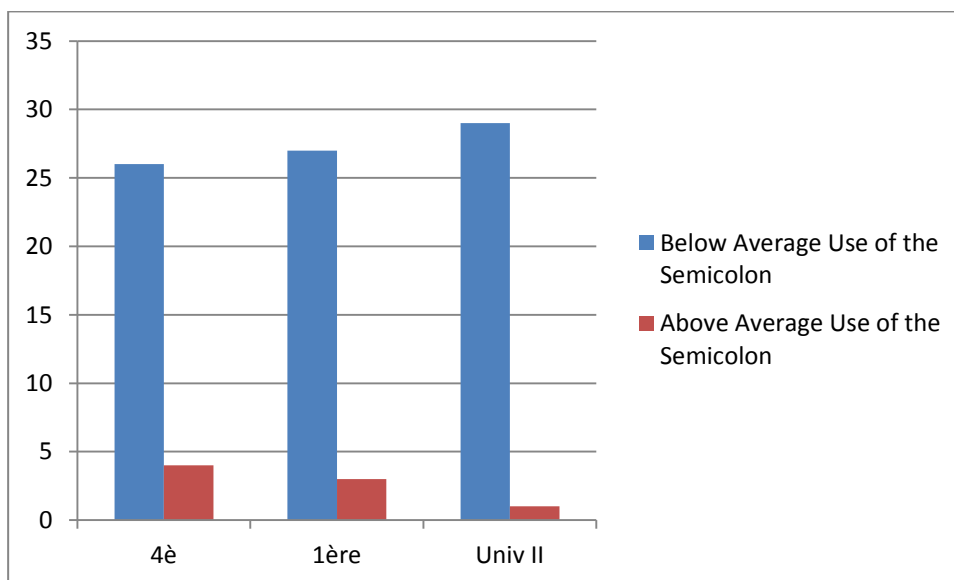
3.5.1. Level of Education and the Use of the Semicolon in punctuating sentences

The learners’ use of the Semicolon below average and above average is presented below.

Table 6: Level of Education and the Use of the Semicolon in punctuating sentences

Use of Semicolon Level of Education	Below Average use of the Semicolon		Above Average use of the Semicolon	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	26	86.6%	4	13.4%
1 ^{ere}	27	90%	3	10%
Univ 2	29	96.6%	1	3.4%

Graph 5: Level of Education and the Use of the Semicolon in punctuating sentences



The semi colon was another punctuation mark which was used with a lot of difficulties. From the above table, Level Two Geography students failed woefully in the use of the semi colon given that only 1 student had an above average use of this punctuation mark (3.4%) followed by 3 Premiere students who found themselves at 10%. The Quatrieme students used this

variable better (4 students) than the others. . From this, it is clear that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of the semi colon. It is also important to note that this linguistic item was used poorly. This inadequate use shows that these respondents do not have a mastery of this punctuation mark.

3.2 The Correlation between Level of Education and the Informants’ Ability to Use Punctuation Marks in their own sentences.

The essay writing was important because it aimed at evaluating the respondents’ skills in punctuating their personal sentences. The analysis of the data shows that there were informants who used the punctuation marks “below average,” “above average” and there was also the case of the “avoidance strategy”.

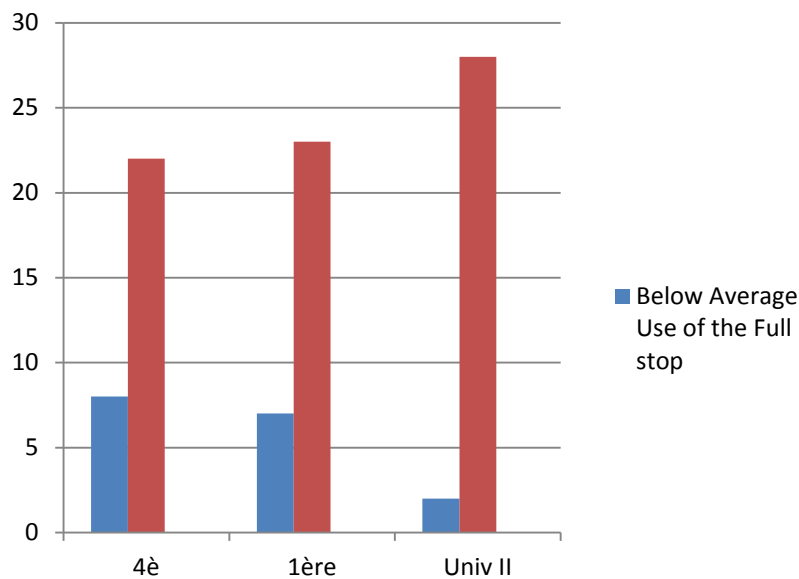
3.2.1: Level of Education and the Use of the Full Stop in the Informants’ sentences

The table and graph below illustrates the respondents’ use of the Full Stop. The three categories of students fell under the following criteria: “below average use,” “above average use” and “avoidance strategy.”

Table 7: Level of Education and the Use of the Full Stop in the Informants’ sentences

Use of the Full Stop Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Full Stop		Above Average Use of the Full Stop		Avoidance strategy Of the Full Stop	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	08	26.7%	22	73.3%	00	
1 ^{ere}	07	23.4%	23	76.6%	00	
Univ 2	02	6.7%	28	93.3%	00	

Graph 6: Level of Education and the Use of the Full Stop in the informants' sentences



From the above table and graph which are based on the learners' free production, it is obvious that 22 Quatrieme students' use of the full stop was above average (73.3%) followed by 23 Premiere students who were at 76.6% then 28 Level Two Geography students (93.3%). All the respondents used the full stop meaning there was no case of the avoidance strategy. After looking at this, one will say that there is a correlation between level of education and the use of the full stop. But this correlation is not measurable because only one student marked the difference in the use of the full stop in Quatrieme and Premiere. As concerns the 2nd year and Premiere students, there was a difference of only five students. Hence, it is obvious that there was no significant difference in the use of the full stop with level of education.

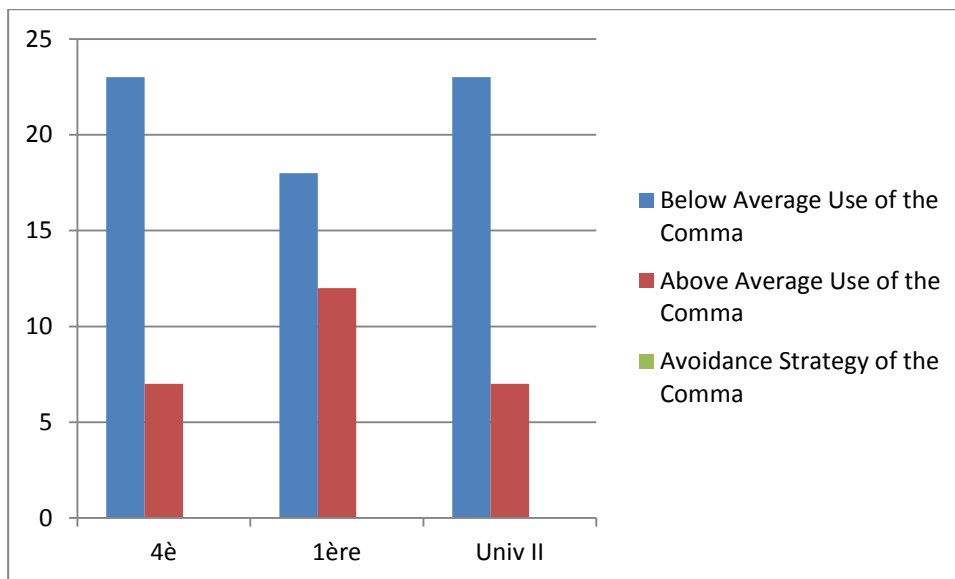
3.2.2. Level of Education and the Use of the Comma in the Informants' sentences

In the table and the graph below, the informants' performance in the use the Comma is clearly highlighted.

Table 8: Level of Education and the Use of the Comma in the informants' sentences

Use of the Comma Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Comma		Above Average Use of the Comma		Avoidance strategy Of the Comma	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	23	76.7%	7	23.3%	00	
1 ^{ere}	18	60%	12	40%	00	
Univ 2	23	76.7%	7	23.3%	00	

7: Level of Education and the Use of the Comma in the informants' sentences



The table and the graph present the results of the informants' use of the comma in their essay writing. Looking at this table, it can be observed that 12 Premiere students used the comma above average leaving them at 40%; whereas, 7 Quatrieme and Level Two Geography students used this same linguistic item above average and their percentage was 23.3. It is important to note that there was no case of the avoidance strategy in the use of the comma. The results above show that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of the comma. There is a great difference in the performance of the learners in the sentences given to them to punctuate and in their own personal productions. The results obtained in essay writing were much poorer than those found in the sentences given to them to punctuate.

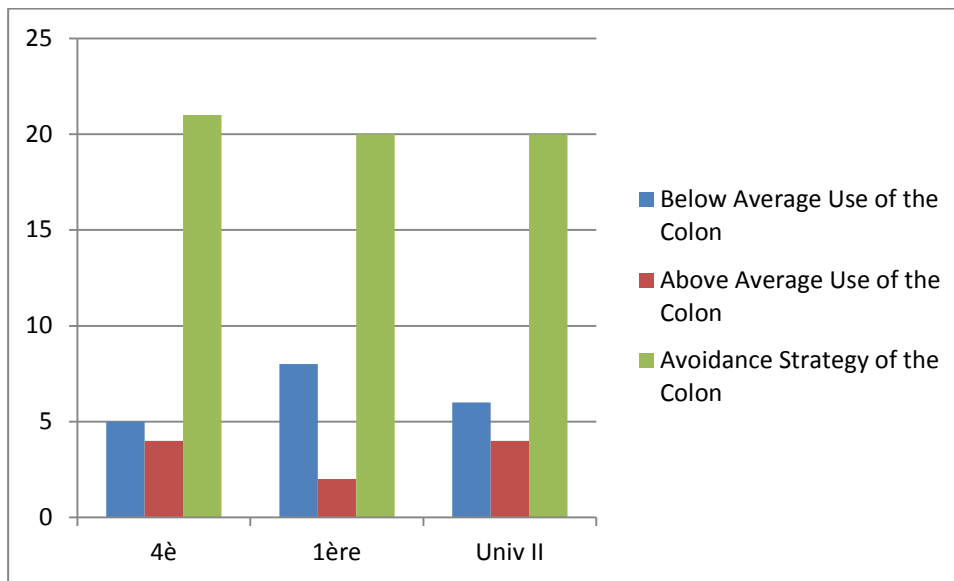
3.2.3. Level of Education and the Use of the Colon in the informants' sentences

Table 9 and graph 8 present the 3 categories of respondents who used the Colon below average, above average and those who avoided its use.

Table 9: Level of Education and the Use of the Colon in the informants' sentences

Use of the Colon Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Colon		Above Average Use of the Colon		Avoidance strategy of the Colon	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	5	16.7%	4	13.3%	21	70%
1 ^{ere}	8	26.7%	2	6.7%	20	66.6%
Univ 2	6	20%	4	13.3%	20	66.6%

Graph 8: Level of Education and the Use of the Colon in the informants' sentences



It appears from the above table and graph that only 2 Premiere students used the colon above average giving them 6.7%. 4 Quatrieme and Level Two Geography students used this same punctuation mark above average and they had a percentage of 13.3 each. The avoidance strategy was utilised by the majority of respondents. 20 Premiere and Level Two Geography students avoided using the colon. Therefore, they scored 66.6% in the category of the avoidance strategy. 21 Quatrieme students avoided the colon in their essay writing; so, they had a percentage of 70. This analysis shows that there is no relationship between level of education and the use of the colon. The fact that the percentages in the avoidance strategies were alarming was a sign that the students lacked knowledge of the colon.

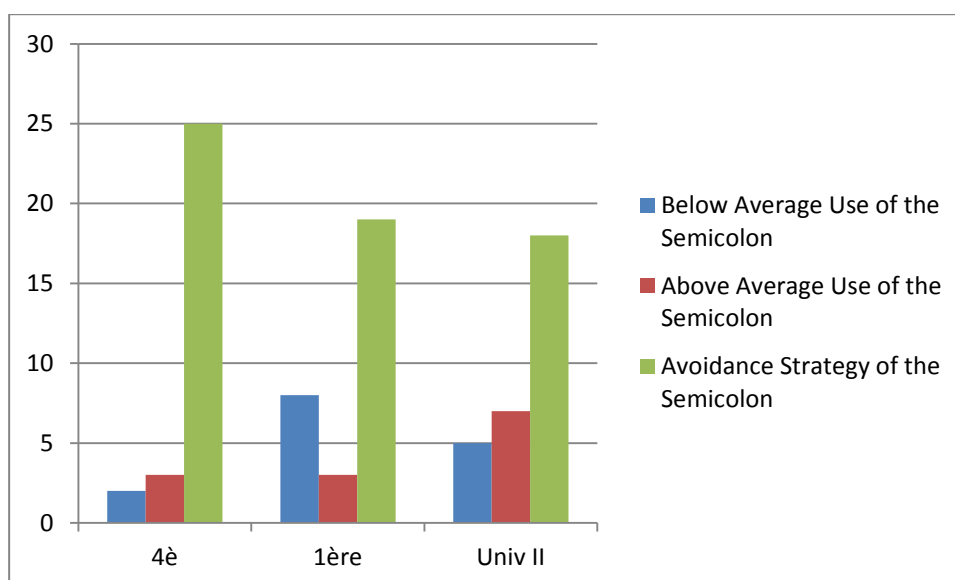
3.2.4. Level of Education and the Use of the Semicolon in the Informants' sentences

The findings got from the use of the semicolon and the 3 levels of education, which are the focus of this study, are indicated in the table and graph that follow.

Table 10: Level of Education and the Use of the Semicolon in the Informants' sentences

Use of the Semicolon Level of Education	Below Average Use of the Semicolon		Above Average Use of the Semicolon		Avoidance strategy Of the Semicolon	
	Number of students	%	Number of students	%	Number of students	%
4 ^e	2	6.7%	3	10%	25	83.3%
1 ^{ere}	8	26.7%	3	10%	19	63.3%
Univ 2	5	16.7%	7	23.3%	18	60%

Graph 9: Level of Education and the Use of the Semicolon in the Informants' sentences



All the respondents faced difficulties in using the semicolon. 3 Premiere and Quatrieme students had an above average use of the semi colon giving them 10%; while, 7 Geography level Two students used it acceptably giving them a percentage of 23.3. This variable was seriously avoided in the informants' productions. 25 Quatrieme students, 19 premiere students and 18 Level Two Geography students avoided the semi colon in their writing giving them a percentage of 83.3, 63.3 and 60 respectively. Looking at the use of the semicolon, it is clear that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of the semicolon.

3.3: The Overall Correlation Pattern of the “Above Average Use,” the “Below Average Use” and the “Avoidance Strategy” of all the Punctuation Marks and the Different Categories of learners

The table below presents a mean of the “above average use”, the “below average use” and the “avoidance strategy” of each punctuation mark and the various categories of students. Through this table, it will be easier and clearer to establish the correlation pattern that exists with level of education and the punctuation marks.

Table 11: The Overall Correlation Pattern of the “Above Average Use,” the “Below Average Use” and the “Avoidance Strategy” of all the Punctuation Marks and the Different Categories of learners

Punctuation Marks	Level Of Education	Mean of the Percentages Of the Above Average use	Mean of the Percentages Of the Below Average use	Mean of the Percentages of The Avoidance Strategy
Question Mark	4e	40	60	00
	1ere	76.7	23.3	00
	Univ II	83.3	16.7	00
Full Stop	4e	78.5	21.5	00
	1ere	80	20	00
	Univ II	95	05	00
Comma	4e	55	45	00
	1ere	53.5	46.5	00
	Univ II	58.3	41.7	00
Colon	4e	23.5	41.5	70
	1ere	11.7	55	66.6
	Univ II	16.5	50	66.6
Semicolon	4e	11.7	46.5	83.3
	1ere	10	58.5	63.3
	Univ II	13.5	56.5	60

3.3.1. The correlation pattern between level of education and the use of punctuation Marks.

The table above presents the mean of the percentages. The findings above revealed that there was a correlation between level of education and the use of the full stop and the comma. On the other hand, there was no correlation between level of education and the use of the comma,

the colon and the semicolon. It is important to note that, if only two punctuation marks correlated with level of education, out of the five punctuation marks, then one cannot talk of a correlation with level of education and the use of punctuation marks. These correlation patterns are discussed below.

3.3.1.1. The punctuation marks that correlate with level of education

Looking at table 11 above, one realises that there were some punctuation marks that correlated with level of education. That is to say that there was a difference in level of education and the use of some punctuation marks. These punctuation marks were the question mark and the full stop. As concerns the mean of the “above average use” of the question mark, it is clear that it revealed a measurable relationship with level of education. From the findings above, it is seen that the various categories of learners (Quatrieme, Premiere and Univ II) scored 40%, 76.7% and 83.3% respectively. In their essays, no respondent used the question mark reason why no table was drawn for that. But it was not seen as a problem because the essay topic did not require them to ask questions. One may say that this measurable relationship in the use of the question mark is because these learners use this variable often consciously or unconsciously in their day to day lives in writing and even orally. When it is used orally, the users tone changes and it becomes easy to know that it is a question mark that is required and not a full stop. Moreover, other indicators like the “WH” questions easily make learners differentiate a declarative sentence from an interrogative one.

As far as the full stop is concerned, there was just a slight relationship with level of education. This is obvious given the “above average use” of this punctuation mark. The scores were as follows: 78.5%, 80% and 95% for Quatrieme, Premiere and Geography Level Two respectively. Looking at this slight correlation, one may say that it occurred because the full stop, being an end mark, is the easiest punctuation mark used in writing. This view is justified by Sala (2009). Moreover, almost everyone knows that a full stop comes at the end of a sentence; so it is a reflex to students to put the full stop once the sentence is complete to show that it has ended.

3.3.1.2. The punctuation marks that do not correlate with level of education

It is worthy to note that most of the punctuation marks showed no relationship with level of education. Looking at the use of the comma in the guided and free productions of the students, it is evident that there was no relationship between level of education and the use of the comma since the scores of the “above average use” are as follows: 55% in Quatrieme, 53.5% in Premiere and 58.3% in Level Two Geography. Moreover, the “above average use” of the colon revealed that there was no correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks because after joining the percentages of the learners’ in the guided and free productions the following results came up: Quatrieme had 23.5%, Premiere had 11.7% while Level Two Geography scored 16.7%. There was equally no relationship between level of education and the use of the semicolon. This was evident in the findings got which were 11.7% for Quatrieme students, 10% for Premiere students and 13.5% for Level Two Geography students in their productions. This absence of correlation is seen in the fact that Quatrieme learners used most punctuation marks better than Premiere students. As earlier mentioned it is because these Quatrieme students are taught punctuation marks throughout their stay in the first cycle; whereas, the learners of Premiere and Level Two ignore the notion of punctuation marks. Also, some teachers neglect this linguistic items in these classes (premiere and level Two) claiming the students learned them when they were in the first cycle. However, the colon and the semicolon were poorly used at all levels. This is evident in the fact that the “below average use” of these punctuation marks were higher than their “above average use.” Looking keenly, one can say that most of the learners lacked knowledge of the colon and the semicolon. Again, the majority of students rarely used these punctuation marks in their productions reason why the “avoidance strategy” for the colon and the semicolon had the highest percentages which were as follows: 70, 66.6, 66.6 and 83.3, 63.3 and 60 in these categories of informants: Quatrieme, Premiere and Level Two students.

3.4. Conclusion

From the above analysis, there appear to be no relationship between the sociolinguistic variable and the linguistic variables, as it was hypothesized in the early part of our study. From the five linguistic variables under study, it was realized that only one of them (the question mark) correlated significantly (40%, 76.7% and 83.3%) with the various levels of education under study. The full stop on its part had just a slight correlation with level of education (78.3%, 80% and 95%). However, the other three linguistic variables (the colon, the semi colon and the comma) did not correlate at all with the sociolinguistic variable. With the comma, 55%, 53.5% and 58.3% were registered in Quatrieme, Premiere and Level Two respectively. The colon registered the following percentages: 23.5% in Quatrieme, 11.7% in Premiere and 16.5% in Level Two. The use of the semicolon was equally poor at all the levels. The scores were 11.7%, 10%, and 13.5% for these three levels: Quatrieme, Premiere and Level Two.

CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION OF THE MAJOR FINDINGS AND THE SOCIOLINGUISTIC AND PEDAGOGIC IMPLICATIONS

4.0. Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the major findings of the study. It equally underscores their sociolinguistic and pedagogic implications, followed by recommendations.

4.1. Discussion of Major Findings

A total of 90 students were selected and expected to use 5 punctuation marks correctly (to punctuate sentences given to them then write an essay). The objective was to investigate the relationship between level of education and the use of these punctuation marks. The following findings were got:

For the sociolinguistic dimension of the study, it was revealed that level of education did not have any impact on the use of punctuation marks. This went in the same light with Jibril (1982) who said it is not one's level of education that matters but the frequency of training and use of the linguistic item. This absence of correlation was seen in table 11 where Level Two Geography students led in most cases followed by Quatrieme students. Premiere students on their part came last most of the times. From this, it is clear that it is not how far one goes in education that makes him master linguistic items. Rather it is the continuous training and use that makes one versed with the linguistic item just as is the case with Quatrieme learners. The informants were grouped and discussed in three tendencies.

First, a linguistic item led to a significant difference with the sociolinguistic variable yielding figures that vary greatly from one category to another. That linguistic item which is the question mark showed a significant difference through the following figures: 40% for Quatrieme, 76.7% for Premiere and 83.3% for level Two Geography. From this example, it is observed that the higher the speaker's level of education was, the more the SBE features were present in them.

Second, a single linguistic item yielded a slight difference between the categories of informants. Irrespective of their level of education, students' average use of the full stop was quite alike. The figures obtained were as follows: 78.3%, 80% and 95% by Quatrieme, Premiere and Level Two Geography students respectively.

Third, three punctuation marks showed no correlation with level of education. They were the comma, the colon, and the semi colon and the scores were 55%, 23.5%, 11.7% respectively in Quatrieme, 53.5%, 11.7% and 10% respectively in Premiere and 58.3%, 16.5% and 13.5% respectively in Level Two. When one looks at these figures keenly, it is obvious that the lowest educational group (4e) used some punctuation marks better than their academic elders. This was the case of the colon and the semicolon. With the use of the comma, 4e students' score was better than that of 1ere students. This proves that level of education is not a guarantee for learners' mastery of linguistic variables.

It is important to note that students avoided using two punctuation marks (the colon and the semicolon) in their free productions. The avoidance to use these punctuation marks is a proof that these students lacked knowledge of these linguistic variables despite their level of education. The colon and the semicolon were lacking in the students productions at the following percentages: 70% and 83.3% respectively for Quatrieme students; 66.6% and 63.3% respectively for Premiere students and 66.6% and 60% respectively for Level Two Geography students. This escapist attitude is a clear indication that these learners did not have knowledge of these two punctuation marks.

4.2. Sociolinguistic Implications

The following Sociolinguistic implications were observed:

First, if Cameroonians, irrespective of level of education, are still ignorant about the use of punctuation marks, it means that their written productions will not be comprehended by any reader. This given the fact that one may make a sentence and put the wrong punctuation mark thereby making the sentence to be meaningless or mean some other thing.

Second, the fact that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks shows that students are taught punctuation marks but as they climb the educational ladder they forget what they learned in the previous classes. This therefore makes them passive because what they learn does not stick in their minds.

Third, the exceptionally high percentages obtained for the “below average use” and the “avoidance strategy” of the colon and the semicolon show that the standard use of these punctuation marks is far-fetched; while, the Cameroonian use is widespread.

4.3. Pedagogic Implications

The pedagogic implications were as follows:

To begin with, the fact that the percentage of the “below average use” was alarming in most of the students’ productions is an indication that Punctuation marks have to be taught and revised at all levels and students should be evaluated on this language item to verify understanding. This is because the wrong use of a punctuation mark only changes the meaning of the sentence. So, the notion of punctuation should be included in syllabuses at all levels of education and other didactic materials to serve as reference in its teaching and promotion.

Next, teachers should ensure that they give students essay topics regularly especially the upper classes so that they should be free to produce their own sentences and be creative enough to find suitable punctuation marks. It will be profitable that when correcting the scripts, the teachers indicate when the wrong punctuation is used; so that the learner will be able to identify the problem. Moreover, it is necessary that when doing corrections in class, a rapid revision should be done on punctuation. This will make the learners good users of punctuation marks.

Again, from the above findings, it is obvious that learners lack knowledge of the colon and the semicolon. It will be very important for teachers to always revise these two punctuation marks and also form their own examples using them. Teachers should equally push learners to use these punctuation marks regularly in order to know when and how to use them.

4.4. Recommendations

Given that the informants of this work were EFL learners, it is not strange that their productions don’t match those of SBE. So, the recommendations made are out to improve the performance of French speaking Cameroonians in the English Language.

4.4.1 Recommendations to the Ministries of Education

Given that, most of the decisions concerning education come from the ministries of education, it is necessary that the ministries be addressed. First, vital ameliorations need to be made as concerns English Language textbooks that are used by EFL learners. The authorities should make sure that the text books they put in the programme should have enough material that will permit learners to acquire knowledge and have a mastery of the concepts discussed in the books. It will be a great idea if the Ministry takes the notion of punctuation into account when producing syllabuses. That is, if they can include punctuation in the syllabuses at all levels of education, the difficulties that learners face in punctuation will be reduced. Second, the ministry should make it a duty to always send inspectors to the field to observe how the teachers progress in teaching the students. When these inspectors get to the field, they have to go through the logbooks to be sure that teachers actually teach what the syllabus gives. Besides, they need to interact with the learners to encourage them and from time to time tell them the importance of the English Language to them.

4.4.1. Recommendations to the teachers

It is the duty of teachers to constantly motivate learners to learn the English Language in general. This can be done through the kinds of activities the teacher encourages in class. For instance, if the teacher comes up with lively activities, most students will wish to be involved; hence, pushing them to use the language. Also, teachers should ensure that learners understand each language point that is taught before moving to the next. They can do this by ensuring that learners produce their own sentences. For example, when a teacher teaches punctuation, he/she should ensure that learners use the punctuation marks in their own sentences. When this is done, it will be easy for the learners to assimilate what has been taught to them. Moreover, it is necessary that teachers do revision of what they have taught. By doing this, slow learners will capture what was taught. Furthermore, teachers should try to group punctuation marks that are similar before teaching. For example, the middle stops like the colon and the semicolon, can be taught at once. The end stops like the question mark and the full stop can equally be paired. This is because their uses are not so distinct. With this, it will be easier for learners to grasp the notion of punctuation; thereby making them good users of punctuation marks.

4.4.1. Recommendations to students

Students are at the centre of all the research conducted by the ministries and the teachers. They have a lot to benefit as far as learning the English Language in general and punctuation marks in particular is concerned. So, they have to maximize their chances by doing their utmost best in constructing their knowledge. They need to be very attentive in class and ask questions whenever they don't understand what is taught. Moreover, it is advisable for them to read interesting novels in English and try their hand in writing any text of their choice. Through the novels they read, they will be able to see where each punctuation mark is used. Given that practice makes perfect, if the students try to produce a variety of texts, taking into consideration their use of punctuation marks, they will automatically be transformed in the process. Again, it will be important that students have a mastery of Information and Communication Technology. This will be profitable to them in the sense that, when they type a sentence and punctuate it wrongly, the computer will serve as the teacher by underlining the portion where the wrong punctuation mark has been used. With this, it will be easier for the learners to know where to put a particular punctuation mark.

This chapter focused on the summary and the discussion of the major findings of the investigation. Equally, the Sociolinguistic and Pedagogic implications of this study were discussed in this chapter; not forgetting the recommendations that were made.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to investigate the correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks. A set of sentences were given to students to punctuate followed by an essay that they were required to write. The essay was not supposed to exceed 1000 words. Level of education aimed at evaluating the performance of Quatrieme students and that of their seniors (Premiere and Level Two Geography students). This study was conducted based on the hypothesis that there is no relationship between level of education and the use of punctuation marks.

The findings revealed that that there is no correlation between level of education and the use of punctuation marks. From the five linguistic variables, two had a relationship with level of education. They were the full stop and the question mark. The rest of the punctuation marks did not correlate with level of education. They were the comma, the colon and the semicolon. The results presented above showed that students did not have a mastery of most of the punctuation marks under study reason why they made use of the “avoidance strategy” in the essay writing. The colon and the semicolon were greatly absent in the essays written by the students. From the above findings, it is necessary that the uses of the comma, the colon and the semicolon be taught and revised at all levels. This is because it is not an easy task to grasp their uses.

Suggestions for Further Research

This work studied the correlation between a sociolinguistic variable and the use of punctuation marks. However, it will be unfair to claim that the study has covered everything in its area. Further studies can be carried out to fill in other gaps. The present work limited itself to one sociolinguistic variable: level of education. Another study can be carried out to investigate the correlation between another sociolinguistic variable like gender, professional status and the use of punctuation marks. Also, given that there was an alarming rate of the wrong use of punctuation marks, a study can be conducted on the misuse of Punctuation marks in a particular class rather than its use. Again, this work did not cover all the punctuation marks. So, another work can be carried out on the influence of level of education

on the use of other punctuation marks that have not been treated in the present study. Another study could be conducted on the different functions of punctuation marks and their impact in the society.

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APPENDIXES

I am a student teacher of ENS Yaounde. This piece of work is exclusively for academic purposes. Please, answer these questions. Thank you for your cooperation.

1) Class:

Punctuate the following sentences using the appropriate punctuation marks from the list below:

(the comma (,), the (full stop (.), the question mark(?), the colon(:) and the semicolon(;))

- 1) Last Monday her father bought a new car
- 2) Mary went to the market and bought these food items banana pears groundnut pawpaw and rice
- 3) Paul Biya the president of Cameroon travelled to France
- 4) Where has the teacher gone to
- 5) It is necessary that you follow instructions they were not meant to be violated
- 6) He who works hard succeeds he who succeeds lives comfortably
- 7) These are the students who came late this morning James Peter Harrison and Paul
- 8) The youths today blame the old and vice versa both generations are in conflict

9) Who collected the text book from the cupboard

Test

Write an essay of not more than 1000 words on the topic "MY COUNTRY."