



## รายงานการวิจัย

### เรื่อง

การศึกษาความสามารถในการใช้เครื่องหมายจุลภาค (Comma) เครื่องหมายจุดคู่ (Colon)  
เครื่องหมายอัฒภาค (Semi-colon) ของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรี ชั้นปีที่ 1  
มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลศรีวิชัย สงขลา

**The Study of the Abilities in Using Comma, Colon and Semi-Colon of the  
First Year Students at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla**

### โดย

นางสาวจุฑาภรณ์ ภารพ

การวิจัยครั้งนี้ได้รับทุนอุดหนุนโครงการวิจัยจากเงินผลประโยชน์ 2550 จากคณะศิลปศาสตร์  
มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลศรีวิชัย สงขลา

พ.ศ. 2551

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research was to study abilities in use of punctuation such as comma, colon and semi-colon by first year students Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla in the academic year 2008.

238 subjects from the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Liberal Arts were given a pre-test and a post-test to obtain data regarding students knowledge and use of punctuation. The data were analyzed in terms of standard deviation, mean and t-test.

Results of the study show that the biggest issue the subjects face was in the usage of a semi-colon, a colon and a comma, respectively.

Results of this research suggest it would be beneficial to add the functions of punctuation marks both internal and external to the content of English courses. This is a good method to prepare students for reading and writing course.

## บทคัดย่อ

จุดประสงค์ของการวิจัยครั้งนี้เพื่อศึกษาปัญหาในการใช้เครื่องหมายจุลภาค เครื่องหมายจุดคู่ และเครื่องหมายอัฒภาค ของนักศึกษาระดับปริญญาตรีชั้นปีที่ 1 มหาวิทยาลัยเทคโนโลยีราชมงคลศรีวิชัย สงขลา ปีการศึกษา 2550

โดยมีกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 238 คน จากคณะวิศวกรรมศาสตร์ คณะบริหารธุรกิจ และคณะศิลปศาสตร์ ข้อมูลที่ได้จากการทดสอบนำมาวิเคราะห์โดยการหาค่าเบี่ยงเบนมาตรฐาน ค่าเฉลี่ยและ t-test

ผลจากการวิจัยพบว่าปัญหาใหญ่ของนักศึกษาในเรื่องการใช้เครื่องหมายทั้ง 3 เครื่องหมายคือเรื่องการใช้เครื่องหมายอัฒภาค เครื่องหมายจุดคู่ และเครื่องหมายจุลภาค ตามลำดับ

ผลจากการวิจัยที่ได้จึงควรมีการเพิ่มเนื้อหาในรายวิชาภาษาอังกฤษเกี่ยวกับการใช้เครื่องหมายวรรคตอน ทั้งเครื่องหมายวรรคตอนภายในและภายนอก ซึ่งจะเป็นการดีในการเตรียมนักศึกษาสำหรับรายวิชาการอ่านและการเขียนต่อไป

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This research will not be complete without the great help from these persons. First of all I would like to give special thanks for the financial support provided by the Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla. I also would like to express my great appreciation to all students who devoted their time to do the paper tests.

Furthermore, my greatest appreciation goes to Assistant Professor Phawana Markmuk and all of my English staff for their moral support.

Also, I would like to give so much thanks to Ajarn Somporn Maneechote for being my forever friend and younger sister who always devoted her time to be my commentator.

Additionally, I would like to express my appreciation to Ms. Erika Stvenson and Mr. Neil C. Cuthbertson for being my native proofreaders.

Last but not least, thank you very much for patience, kindness and understanding from my beloved mother, my brothers and sisters and my dearest father for their moral support, throughout of my life.

**Jutaporn Parapob**

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

	<b>PAGE</b>
Abstract (THAI)	(1)
Abstract (ENGLISH)	(2)
Acknowledgements	(3)
Table of Contents	(4)
List of Tables	(5)

## **CHAPTERS**

<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 Background of the Study	1
1.2 Statement of Purpose	2
1.3 Hypothesis	3
1.4 Limitation of the Study	3
1.5 Scope of the Study	3
1.6 Definitions of Terms	3
 <b>2 LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	 <b>4</b>
2.1 Role of Punctuation Marks	4
2.2 Functions of Selected Punctuation Marks (Comma, Colon and Semi-colon)	6
2.3 Advantages of Knowing How Punctuation Marks Work	12
2.4 Teaching Methods of Improving Punctuation Skill	13
 <b>3 METHODOLOGY</b>	 <b>15</b>
3.1 The Subjects	15
3.2 The Instruments	15
3.3 The Pilot	16
3.4 Data Collection	16
3.5 Data Analysis	17

	<b>PAGE</b>
<b>4 Results of the Study</b>	18
4.1 The Symbols Using in Data Analysis	18
4.2 Results of Data Analysis	18
<b>5 SUMMARY AND SUGGESTION</b>	22
5.1 Summary of the Study	22
5.2 Suggestions for Improving the Content of the English Course	23

## List of Tables

	<b>PAGE</b>
Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of Part A	18
Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of Part B	19
Table 3: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of the overall test results	19
Table 4: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of scores on comma use	20
Table 5: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of scores on colon use	20
Table 6: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of scores on semi-colon use	20

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

In current society, English acts as the universal language. There are many countries using English as their first language, namely: United State, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, Guyana, Jamaica, Haiti and Puerto Rico. While some other countries use English as an official or second language, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, Burma, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Brunei. It's clearly proved that English is used by nearly half of the world population. That is, we use it as a central language to interact with people from all over the world. In addition, there are 5 languages namely French, Russian, Chinese, Spanish and English which are used in U.N. Of all these 5 languages English is used the most. Japan and Germany are example of leader counties in commercial and industrial which use English for communication, advertising and giving instruction on their products (Kesorncam, 2008). Moreover, in the world of technology, English has an important role in the language that is presented on the internet. Google is an example of a popular web site for searching for information. Knowledge of English leads to more gains in information. Moreover, international-businesses use English through the internet as a medium language. Newly graduated students can use English for job applications. In job advertisements, good companies with good positions and good salary require persons who have good command in listening, speaking, reading and writing English. Therefore, the Ministry of Education regards English as an important foreign language. Also, it is a compulsory subject in Thailand's curriculum that all students have to study (Ministry of Education, 2005). In primary school, Prathom 1- 3 students have to study English 40 hours per year and 80 hours per year for Prathom 4 – 6. In secondary school students have to study English for 120 hours per year and 240 hours per year for M. 1 – 3 and M. 4 – 6, respectively. For university students, the English that they have to study is 120 hours per year (<http://www.banbangkapi.ac.th/curri/หลักสูตร>).



Even though Thai students must study English in primary school to university, their English abilities are still at a low level. It can be seen that one of the serious problems of Thai students is in punctuation. According to a research of Khemthong, English Teaching Major Students at Ramkhamhaeng University had most errors in punctuation (Khemthong, 1981). As a researcher who is responsible for teaching Fundamental English 1, Fundamental English 2, English 1, English 2 and Technical English 1 for diploma and bachelor's degree students, I have found that most of the English content focuses on listening, speaking and grammar. In terms of reading and writing, there are only few content areas. The support content that helps to improve reading and writing ability is about how to use punctuation. The primary purpose of punctuation is to make the writing clear and readable. It clarifies the structure of each sentence, separates and groups words. It guides and gives the understanding for readers (Gibaldi, 2003).

However, the contents of the five subjects mentioned above do not provide the content about the use of punctuation: comma, colon and semi - colon. Therefore, students will lack the knowledge of how to use them. Thai language, spaces to separate words in stead of using the three punctuations. Therefore, it is difficult for students to notice the differences between the use of those three punctuations that help to improve their reading and writing abilities.

## **1.2 Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this research is to study the abilities in using comma, colon and semi-colon of the first year students at RMUTSV. The results of the study will provide useful information as sources or positive guides for the teachers in improving the content of a coursebook. Moreover, these results will help in developing students' reading and writing skills.

## **1.3 Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this study is that the first year students at RMUTSV cannot use a comma, colon and semi-colon perfectly.

## 1.4 Limitation of the study

The study was limited to studying the abilities in using comma, colon and semi-colon of first year students who studied English in the 2008 academic year at RMUTSV. Thus, the results of the study are applicable to this group of students only.

## 1.5 Scope of the study

**Population:** the first year students who studied English in the 2008 academic year at RMUTSV. The total number was 1,049

**Subject:** sample students from RMUTSV. The total number is 238. Stratified sampling technique was used to get the number of the sample students.

**Independent variable:** the punctuation in terms of comma, colon and semi-colon.

**Dependent variable:** the abilities in using comma, colon and semi-colon of the first year students at RMUTSV.

## 1.6 Definitions of Terms

1. **Student** refers to the first year students who studied English<sup>1</sup> in the 2008 academic year at RMUTSV
2. **The paper test** refers to the test about comma, colon and semi-colon.
3. **RMUTSV** refers to Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter reviews related literature about the role of punctuation marks, functions of selected punctuation marks (comma, colon and semi-colon), advantages of knowing how punctuation marks work, and teaching methods of improving punctuation skill.

#### **2.1 Role of Punctuation Marks**

Punctuation marks are used as signals of ideas for a reader's better comprehension. In speaking, speakers can pause, stop or change their tone of voice as signals to show their feelings or what they want to indicate to their listeners. Likewise, in writing, writers use punctuation marks as signals from writers to readers. The writers use these marks to emphasize and clarify the meaning of their written works (Pollock, 1973). Also, punctuation marks work as roadmaps to tell readers how to arrive at writers' meaning. Good writers can attract and keep readers' serious attention and impression by using punctuation marks correctly (Wood, 2006). Therefore, if you want your readers to understand all the true meaning that you really want to say, you must give them the right signals of punctuation marks. Punctuation marks really have an important role in reading. They give and guide readers along the ways of reading.

Writers use a comma to indicate a pause that is less strong than a pause indicated by a semi-colon or a full stop ([http:// www. dooyoo.co.uk/discussion/English-grammar-and punctuation/1159169](http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/discussion/English-grammar-and-punctuation/1159169)).

For example:

*The court dismissed the first, second, and third courts of the complaint.*

In the above sentence, the use of the comma is only to slow readers down as follows: "The court dismissed the first (pause) second (pause) and third courts of the complaint." Without the last comma, the pacing is faster: "The court dismissed the first (pause) second-and-third courts of the complaint (New Jersey Law Journal, 2004)."

On the other hand, proficient writers must know the rules of how to use punctuation marks. The basic reason to use punctuation marks in writing is to clarify the message or to make sure that readers can go along what writers are trying to present.

For example:

- *The complaint alleged tortuous interference with prospective economic advantage, intentional infliction of emotional distress and defamation.*

The lack of comma after “distress” is confusing to readers. They can read it as “intentional infliction of defamation (New Jersey Law Journal, 2004).”

Good writers must pay attention to each little symbol of these punctuation marks because each symbol is an agreement between readers and writers (Jefferson cited in Wood 2006). For example, writers will use quotation marks (“ ”) to show that they are quoting directly the exact words of a speaker or writer.

- *“Shut the door,” the cook yelled, “before you let in all the files!”*
- *“Stop!” said the cop. The woman threw herself onto the ground beside the horribly wounded man and sobbed, “Frank!” “Don’t die please don’t die.”*

(<http://www.say-it-in-english.com/Lesson> 18 html)

Writers who ignore all the uses of punctuation marks are hardly able to be good writers. Moreover, readers who pay no attention to these marks are really not able to be good readers. Punctuation marks help to support in both reading and writing.

## 2.2 Functions of Selected Punctuation Marks (Comma, Colon and Semi-colon)

Punctuation marks can be divided into two groups: external and internal punctuations. The external punctuation consists of period or full – stop ( . ), question mark ( ? ), exclamation point or exclamation mark ( ! ), and quotation mark ( “ ” ). The internal punctuation includes comma ( , ), colon ( : ), semi-colon ( ; ), hyphen ( - ), dash ( — ), apostrophe ( ’ ) and italics ( *I* ), or underlining ( U ) (Kesorncam, 2008). This research will study only about the internal punctuation in terms of comma, colon and semi-colon. As these three marks help students in reading and writing. However, internal punctuation are quite difficult for Thai students. As in Thai language, these three punctuation marks are not used commonly. That makes students confuse with the system of Thai language. The functions of these three punctuations marks are as follows.

**A comma (,)** appears in English sentences with many usages.

1. A comma creates a pause for readers though the pause isn't as long as the silence created by a full stop or question mark. The pause of a comma is more of a half breath. In conversation, a speaker can change tone or add a bit of silence that is equal to a comma (Wood, 2006).
2. A comma is used to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series (Gibaldi, 2003).

For instance:

- *Boccaccio's tales have inspired plays, film, opera, and paintings.*
- *Alfred the Great established a system of fortified town, reorganized the military forces, and built a fleet of warships (Gibaldi, 2003).*

3. Also, a comma is used between two complete, long clauses (two subject and verb pairs) when conjunctions such as *and, or, but, for, nor* connect them.

For example:

- *I have painted the entire house, but she is still working on sanding the floors.*

4. If the clauses are short, a comma can be left out.

For example:

- *I painted and he sanded.*

5. If there is only one clause (one subject and verb pair), we do not use a comma in front of the conjunction.

For instance:

- *I have painted the house but still need to sand the floors.*

This sentence has two verbs but only one subject, so it has only one clause.

(<http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~shagin/punctestpracticeanswer.htm>)

6. A comma is used after gerund, participle and infinitive phrases that come in front of a main clause.

For example:

- *Fighting for his life, he used every bit of his brain.*
- *To do this properly, you have to follow the instruction.*
- *Frightened, the little girl.*

7. A comma is also used with transitional words to emphasize the sentence that comes after.

For instance:

- *Indeed, he repeated that sentence twice.*
- *Mary, by the way, received her degree last fall.*
- *He was fatally tired. He didn't give up, however.*
- *My car broke down, and I was late, accordingly.*

8. A comma is always used in front of “etc”.

For instance:

- *We shall need plates, bowls, cups, glasses, etc.*

9. A comma is occasionally used to separate a year and a month, a road and a city or a city and a country.

For example:

- *My birthday is September 12, 1985.*

- *He lives at 438 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y.*

10. A comma is also used as a part of quotation.

For example:

- *He said, “Come any day you wish.” or*

- *“Come any day you wish,” he said.*

Note A comma can change the meaning of a sentence.

For instance:

- *No price is too high.*

- *No, price is too high.*

The meanings of these two sentences are totally different. In the first sentence, a writer intends that everything is cheap and he can buy them. However, when there is a comma after “No” the meaning of the second sentence is changed. The writer refused to buy things because the price is too high for him to afford (Kesorncam, 2008).

**A colon (:)** is a signal used to tell readers that more information, an explanation, or an example of what was written before the colon will come.

1. A colon is most commonly used to introduce lists.

For example:

- *When they went on holiday they took very little luggage: a change of clothes;  
a first-aid kit and some toothpaste.*

2. Another use of colon is to separate two clauses in a sentence, where the second clause explains the first.

For example:

- *The boy went home early: it was too wet to play tennis.*

(<http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/discussion/English-grammar-and-punctuation/1159169>).

3. A colon can be used to separate chapter and verse in a religious book like the Bible or the Qur'an, or the volume and page number of a magazine.

For example

- *The Gospel of John 3:16.*

(<http://www.prep4success.ca/toolkit/83-85.pdf>)

4. Furthermore, the colon is quite useful in business writing and the setting of the salutation (Wood, 2006).

For example:

- *To Whom It May Concern:*

- *Dear Sir/Madam:*

5. Also, the colon is used to indicate clock time, unless the time is right on an hour

For example:

- *7:30 A.M. but 7 A.M.*

Writers occasionally need to be careful when using a colon. Never use the colon when the lists are the direct object of a verb or preposition or when the lists directly follow the verb "to be".

For example:



- *Wrong: When you attend the first meeting, you should have: one hand-cranked egg beater, two plastic fly swatters, etc.*

(The list is the direct object of verb “should have”)

- *Right: When you attend the first meeting, you should have one hand-cranked egg beater, two plastic fly swatters, etc.*

(<http://www.say-it-in-english.com/Lesson18.html>)

- *Wrong: Monday’s meeting is: scheduled to include these issues.*

(The colon should not be preceded by a form of verb to be)

- *Right: Monday’s meeting is scheduled to include these issues.*

(Wood, 2006)

- *Wrong: The cake consists of: flour, sugar and cream.*

(The colon should not be followed a preposition)

- *Right: The cake consists of flour, sugar and cream.*

(Wood, 2006)

**A semi - colon (;)** is equal to a conjunction like **and, but, or**, etc. That is, the semi-colon works as a connector between the two complete sentences in place of a conjunction ([http:// chuma.cas.usf.edu/~olson/pms/semicolon.html](http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~olson/pms/semicolon.html)).

As the semi-colon is used to join two sentences together, each of the sentences must be closely related.

1. A semi - colon works as a clue for readers to predict or gain more idea about what they read.

For example:

- *Jim is a good typist; he makes few mistakes.*

- *The AFC Corporation is an excellent company to invest in; investments have risen sharply and steadily over each of the last ten years.*

([http:// chuma.cas.usf.edu/~olson/pms/semicolon.html](http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~olson/pms/semicolon.html))

- *The night sky was the deepest sapphire; Claire realized she had not observed its beauty until now.*

([http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyskills / study\\_resources/study\\_guides/punctuation](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyskills/study_resources/study_guides/punctuation))

2. A semi - colon can separate longer items in a list.

For example:

- *We were asked to bring three dozen paper clips; two ball of string; one small and one large pair of scissors; a tube of glue suitable for sticking paper; a small notepad; and a ballpoint pen.*

([http:// www. dooyoo.co.uk/ discussion/English-grammar-and punctuation/1159169](http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/discussion/English-grammar-and-punctuation/1159169)).

3. Also, a semi-colon can be used to separate units of a series, when one or more of the units contain commas.

For example:

- *People at the conference have come from Montreal, Quebec; Halifax, Nova Scotia; and Vancouver, British Columbia.*

([http://www.prep4 success.ca/toolkit/83-85 pdf](http://www.prep4success.ca/toolkit/83-85.pdf))

## **2.3 Advantages of Knowing How Punctuation Marks Work**

According to the function in using punctuation marks in term of comma, colon and semi-colon, readers need to know the function of punctuation marks. As these marks work as keys for readers to understand and appreciate what they read. However, each of the punctuation marks has different meanings in use. All of these marks will be useless if readers don't know about the function of each mark. It would be like having a modern mobile phone with multi functions but not knowing how to use it. So it would be useless and a waste of money to have the newest mobile phone

with a variety of functions. Similarly, if a writer uses a lot of punctuation marks as a guide line or clue to present his/her ideas to readers, but reader doesn't know what each punctuation mark means, it would be hard for the readers to touch the real meaning that the writer is trying to tell them. Furthermore, readers can't appreciate what they read. In order to reach the real intended meaning, good readers must know a lot about the functions of punctuation marks. Also, good writers must have good knowledge in using punctuation marks so that they can present their writing in a correct and good way that they want the work to be. Knowing punctuation marks is very advantageous for both writers and readers.

## **2.4 Teaching Methods of Improving Punctuation Skill.**

Because these three punctuation marks (comma, colon and semi-colon) are important not only for writers but also for readers, it is really necessary to know methods of improving how to use them. There are three research papers that investigate punctuation practice.

The first effective way to help students know how to use punctuation marks is the use of the Intelligent Teaching System. A study was conducted on Dutch university students who were studying at the faculty of Mathematics and Computer Science, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, The Netherlands. The aim of the work was to improve the use of punctuation in writing and editing texts for Dutch university students. It offered students texts in which they would check for the correct use of punctuation marks and make corrections if necessary. The system analyzed the answer of each student and the differences with respect to possible correct solutions. It also gave specific feedback based on these analyses. The evaluation indicated that it had some advantages over using textbooks because this system allowed students to better understand the way punctuation actually works, rather than teaching structure or rules of how to use punctuation from text only (Bouwer, 1998).

Work by Calkins and McCormick, made observations and interviews with the children in two third grade classrooms. One classroom of students wrote frequently and learned punctuation skills in context. The other class learned punctuation skills in isolation. The result of this study shows that punctuation skills are learned more effectively in context. The writers like to use punctuation they know clarified their

writing. The nonwriters learned how to use punctuation by memorizing rules that they had been taught. It has been noted that the increase in using punctuation of the writers was due to their need of the complexity in their writing. On the contrary, the nonwriters learned the way of how to use punctuation marks from books and interaction in the classroom.

(<http://eric.ed.gov/ERIC/ WebPortal/custom/portlets/recordDetails>)

There is another teaching method by Bayraktar, Say and Akman (1998) which suggests that the rule of using punctuation marks should be reduced from syntax-patterns to more general rule-patterns. Then, these rule-patterns should be easily assigned to appropriate classes and students. It will be easy for students to learn and remember these rule-patterns. This method prevents students from getting bored. Moreover, students will gain more knowledge if they know all the rules that they learn.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

This chapter presents the methodology of the study. It covers the information of the subjects, the instruments, the pilot, data collection and data analysis.

#### **3.1 The Subjects**

Subjects of this study were 238 first year students enrolled in a bachelor's degree program at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla. They took English 1 course as a compulsory subject in the first semester of academic year 2008. These 238 subjects were selected by stratified sampling and simple random sampling from the name lists of the students from three faculties: the Faculty of Engineering, the Faculty of Business and the Faculty of Liberal Arts.

Actually, this study need 283 subjects which represent 27 % of the population of 1049. All 283 subjects participate in the pre-test, but some subjects didn't show up for the post-test one month later. Some missed the class, and some dropped out. Only 238 subjects appeared to take the post-test. After careful consideration, this research includes only 238 students as the subjects.

#### **3.2 The Instruments**

A pre-test and a post- test on the uses of comma, colon and semi-colon was used to gather the information from the subjects. The tests were adapted from exercises available on 6 websites as follows:

[http://www.say-it-in-English.com/Lesson 18.html](http://www.say-it-in-English.com/Lesson%2018.html)

[http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/Studey Zon/410/ grammar/colons.htm](http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/Studey%20Zon/410/grammar/colons.htm)

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g\\_commacomp EX1. html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g_commacomp_EX1.html)

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_ overw Ex 1. html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_overw%20Ex%201.html)

[http://www.sdc. UWO.Ca/Writing/handouts/The%20 Semi-Colon.pdf](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/Writing/handouts/The%20Semi-Colon.pdf)

<http://www.bkkonline.com/nany/tip/22-jul-46.shtml>

The test was developed by a researcher with help from two experts and two native speakers. They proofread the test before it was launched.

The pre-test and the post-test consisted of two parts. The first part included fifteen items in which students were required to put three suitable punctuation marks into each bracket. (See Appendix 1 Part A and Appendix 2 Part A). The second part was composed of five items. Some of five items contained a misuse of a comma, colon or semi-colon. To complete this part, students needed to study each sentence carefully and judge whether these three punctuation marks were used correctly or not. If not, students were required to correct the errors by replacing them with appropriate punctuation marks. (See Appendix 1 Part B and Appendix 2 Part B)

### **3.3 The Pilot**

The pre-test and the post-test on the use of comma, colon and semi-colon were piloted with ten students from three different faculties: three students from the Faculty of Engineering, three students from the Faculty of Business and four students from the Faculty of Liberal Arts. These ten students were excluded from the main study. The test was carefully revised based on the results of the pilot.

### **3.4 Data Collection**

The pre- test was given to each student prior to any teaching in order to check their previous knowledge of comma, colon and semi-colon use. The answers were checked and the correct scores were recorded. The post-test was given to each student one month after the pre-test to prevent students from memorizing answers. Before giving the post-test, the researcher explained the way of how to use the three punctuation marks: comma, colon and semi-colon. After listening to the explanation from the researcher, the students had opportunities to ask questions if they didn't understand and couldn't use those three punctuation marks correctly. The test papers were graded and the results were kept ready for further analysis.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

Standard derivation, mean and t- test were used to analyze the difference between pre-test and post- test results and to find out whether there was a significant difference or not.

## Chapter 4

### Results of the Study

This chapter presents the results of the study of the issues first year students at RMUTSV faced in using comma, colon and semi-colon. The symbols used in the data analysis will be presented first, followed by the results of difference analysis between the pre-test and the post-test. Part A and part B are presented separately, and the overall result of data analysis of the pre-test and the post-test is presented after that. The subjects' scores on each punctuation (comma, colon and semi-colon) are shown respectively at the end of the study.

#### 4.1 The Symbols Used in Data Analysis

$\bar{X}$	stands for	mean
SD	”	Standard Deviation
t	”	t-test
Sig	”	Significance
**	”	Statistical Significance at level of 0.01

#### 4.2 Results of Data Analysis

Below is the data analysis of the pre-test and the post-test of the first year students in Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla.

**Table 1: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of Part A**

Test	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t -test	Sig
Pre-test	238	19.76	4.308	15.387	0.000**
Post-test	238	25.71	4.526		

As has been presented in Table 1, the results of the test in part A show that the mean of the subjects' scores on the post-test is higher than the pre-test. T-test analysis reveals that there is a statistical significance between the pre-test and the post-test at level of 0.01. This means the subjects were able to use punctuation marks significantly better on the post-test.

**Table 2: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of part B**

The test	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t -test	Sig
Pre-test	238	0.73	0.803	11.053	0.000**
Post-test	238	1.72	1.158		

The analysis result presented in Table 2 indicates that the mean of the post-test in part B is higher than the pre-test. There is a statistical significance at the level of 0.01. This means that the subjects had a better understanding about the position of the punctuation in sentences and had a better use of those punctuations.

**Table 3: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of the overall test results**

The test	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t -test	Sig
Pre-test	238	20.49	4.483	16.784	0.000**
Post-test	238	27.43	5.012		

According to the results of the analysis, it can be clearly seen from the Table 3 that the mean of the post-test is markedly better than the pre-test with a statistical significance at level of 0.01. This proves that the subjects outperformed on the post-test when the overall scores from test part A and part B are examined.

**Table 4: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of scores on comma use**

The test	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t -test	Sig
Pre-test	238	11.39	3.454	7.851	0.000**
Post-test	238	13.59	2.449		

The results from Table 4 show that the students' comma use scores on the post-test are better than their scores on the pre-test. They are statistically different with a significance at the level of 0.01. This implies that the subjects did better after the researcher's explanation about comma usage.



**Table 5: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of scores on colon use**

The test	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t -test	Sig
Pre-test	238	4.66	1.737	11.884	0.000**
Post-test	238	6.84	2.342		

The results from Table 5 indicates that the students' colon scores on the post-test are higher than their scores on the pre-test. There is a statistical significance at the level of 0.01. The subjects better understood how to use colon when they listened to the explanation.

**Table 6: Mean, standard deviation and t-test analysis of scores on semi-colon use**

The test	n	$\bar{x}$	SD	t -test	Sig
Pre-test	238	3.71	1.838	7.160	0.000**
Post-test	238	5.28	2.716		

As has been presented in Table 6, the mean score of the semi-colon test on the post- test is higher than the pre-test. There is a statistical significance at the level of 0.01. The interpretation can be made that the explanation helped the subjects in doing the test of semi-colon usage.

A careful analysis of the data, confirms the helpful effect of explanation of punctuation marks for the first year students at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla. The subjects were better able to use 3 punctuation marks of the study (comma, colon and semi- colon) after they listened to the researcher's explanation.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Summary and Suggestion**

This chapter presents the summary of the study and suggestions for improving the content of the English courses.

#### **5.1 Summary of the Study**

During the data collection, the researcher found that all of these subjects paid more attention to do the pre-test even though some of them didn't know some of these three punctuation marks. Before the post-test was taken, the subjects had to listen to the explanation of the functions of these marks (comma, colon and semi-colon). In this step all of the subjects were interested in the explanation. They tried to remember what was each mark called; what was the symbol of each mark; and what were the functions of the mark.

The two punctuation marks that made most of the subjects rather confused were the colon (:) and semi-colon. As they said these two marks were quite new for them. They rarely had seen these marks before. During the test, they tried to do their test as well as they could, and they didn't copy from each other.

According to the results of the analysis in chapter 4, it can be seen that the mean of the pretest in Part A is quite lower than the post test. That is, the subjects had a better knowledge after they took the class. Moreover, the mean of the pre-test in Part B is rather low. It may have been because, in this part the subjects had to find and judge whether each item had a correct usage of each of the three punctuation marks or not. If it had a misuse, it would be corrected. However, the mean of the post –test in this part is a little higher than the pre-test. Furthermore, the mean of the overall test of the pre-test was still lower than the post test.

The results of the study of the mean scores of each mark show that a semi-colon got the lowest score in the pre-test. It was followed by a colon and a comma, respectively. In addition, the results of the post-test of each punctuation mark had the same pattern. This implies that the subjects had problems in using a semi-colon more than the using of a colon and a comma, respectively.

Furthermore, the whole picture of the results shows that the subjects had problems in using these three punctuations marks.

## **5.2 Suggestions for Improving the Content of the English Course**

Based on the results of the study, it would be beneficial to add more content about the usage of punctuation marks used in this study (comma, colon and semi-colon) as well as other internal punctuation marks (hyphen, dash, apostrophe, italics and underlining). Moreover, the external punctuation marks (full-stop, question mark, exclamation point or exclamation mark and quotation mark) are also important for students in reading and writing. Gaining knowledge of how punctuation is used can lead to an overall improvement in students' proficiency and confidence when communicating in English.

## References

Gibaldi, J. 2003. **MLA Handbook for Writers of Research Papers**. New York: New York.

Kesorncam, Lert. 2008. **Grammar and Techniques of the English Language**. Se-Education public company limited, Bangkok, Thailand.

Khemthong, P. 1981. The study of Errors in English Writing of Ramkhamhaeng Students Majoring in Teaching English. (pp.45 – 47)

Ministry of Education 2005. **Basic Education Curriculum**. Bangkok: The Express Transportation Ministry of Education.

Pollock, T.C, 1973. **English the Macmillan Series**. The Macmillan company (pp 468). Oxford: England

The New Jersey Law Journal March 22, 2004 Vol. CLXXV- No. 12 Index 1148.

Woods, G. 2006. **Webster's New World; Punctuation Simplified and Applied**. Wiley Publishing, Inc. USA.

<http://www.banbangkapi.ac.th/curri/หลักสูตร>

<http://www.say-it-in-english.com/Lesson> 18 html

<http://www.prep4success.ca/toolkit/83-85.pdf>

<http://chuma.cas.usf.edu/~olson/pms/semicolon.html>

[http://www.say-it-in-English.com/Lesson 18.html](http://www.say-it-in-English.com/Lesson%2018.html)

<http://www.bkkonline.com/nany/tip/22-jul-46.shtml>

<http://ksuweb.kennesaw.edu/~shagin/punctestpracticeanswer.htm>

[http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/Studey Zon/410/ grammar/colons.htm](http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/Studey%20Zon/410/grammar/colons.htm)

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g\\_commacomp EX1. html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g_commacomp_EX1.html)

[http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_overw Ex 1. html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_overw%20Ex%201.html)

[http://www.sdc. UWO.Ca/Writing/handouts/The%20 Semi-Colon.pdf](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/Writing/handouts/The%20Semi-Colon.pdf)

[http://www.reading.ac.uk/ studyskills / study\\_resources/study\\_guides/punctuation](http://www.reading.ac.uk/studyskills/study_resources/study_guides/punctuation)

[http:// www. dooyoo.co.uk/ discussion/English-grammar-and punctuation/1159169](http://www.dooyoo.co.uk/discussion/English-grammar-and-punctuation/1159169)

## Answer

### Appendix 1 Part A

#### Pre-test

**A. Place the Commas (,) Colons (:) and Semicolons (;) where they should be in each bracket of following sentences.**

1. Several countries participated in the airlift <sup>1</sup>(:) Italy <sup>2</sup>(,) Belgium <sup>3</sup>(,) France <sup>4</sup>(,) and Luxembourg.
2. The following are the primary colors <sup>5</sup>(: ) red <sup>6</sup>(,) blue <sup>7</sup>(,) and yellow.
3. Arriving on the <sup>8</sup> 8(: )10 plane were Liz Brooks <sup>9</sup>(,) my old roommate <sup>10</sup>(;) her husband <sup>11</sup>(;) and Tim <sup>12</sup>(,) their son.
4. The automobile dealer handled three makes of cars <sup>13</sup>(: ) Volkswagens <sup>14</sup>(,) Porsches <sup>15</sup>(,) and Mercedes Benz.
5. Though Phil said he would arrive on the <sup>16</sup>9(: ) 19 flight <sup>17</sup>(,) he came instead on the <sup>18</sup> 10(: ) 36 flight.
6. I bring everything I need to class every day <sup>19</sup>(: ) my pens <sup>20</sup>(,) my books and my dictionary.
7. Young-Hee failed her English test <sup>21</sup>(;) nevertheless <sup>22</sup>(,) she was able to get a good job.
8. There are two things about him that drive me crazy <sup>23</sup>(: ) his music and his cooking.
9. Java <sup>24</sup>(: ) a popular programming language for the World Wide Web.
10. Three countries are involved in the discussions <sup>25</sup>(;) however <sup>26</sup>(,) only Mexico and Canada will sign the treaty immediately.
11. The meal consisted of the following <sup>27</sup>(: ) a garden salad with Italian dressing <sup>28</sup>(;) a baked potato with sour cream and chives <sup>29</sup>(;) New York strip steak <sup>30</sup>(,) cooked to perfection <sup>31</sup>(;) steamed carrots <sup>32</sup>( , ) broccoli <sup>33</sup>( , ) and cauliflower <sup>34</sup>( ; ) and blueberry cheesecake for dessert.
12. At the staff party <sup>35</sup>(,) all the men gathered in the den to watch the hockey game <sup>36</sup>(;) the women sat in the living room.
13. When the professor came down the hall <sup>37</sup>(,) the students hid in the stairwell <sup>38</sup>(;) they didn't want to be seen.
14. Mark usually awoke at <sup>39</sup>6(:)30 in the morning <sup>40</sup>(;) however <sup>41</sup>(,) this morning he overslept.
15. The artist preferred to paint in oils <sup>42</sup>(;) he did not like watercolors.

## Appendix 1 Part B

**B. Decide if each of the following sentences is correctly punctuated. If not, correct them.**

1. Jan's new house is beautiful; it has wooden floors, off-white walls and big windows with a view of the park. ( : )
2. Tiger: a very large fierce Asian wild cat that has yellowish fur with black bands.
3. The country is suffering once more from an economic downfall; however, the rich are not very much affected.
4. There are different ways of cooking: with water; oil: or in dry heat. ( , ) ( , )
5. We have a really good life; a trip abroad every year, a comfortable home and two lovely children. ( : )

([http://www.say-it-in-English.com/ Lesson 18.html](http://www.say-it-in-English.com/Lesson%2018.html))

([http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/Study\\_Zone/410/grammar/colons.htm](http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/Study_Zone/410/grammar/colons.htm))

([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g\\_commacomp\\_EX1.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g_commacomp_EX1.html))

([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_overw\\_Ex1.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_overw_Ex1.html))

([http://www.sdc.UWO.Ca/writing/handouts/The% 20 Semi-Colon. pdf](http://www.sdc.UWO.Ca/writing/handouts/The%20Semi-Colon.pdf))

(<http://www.bkkonline.com/nanny/tip/22-jul-46.shtml>)

## Answer

### Appendix 1 Part A

#### Post-test

**A. Place the Commas (,) Colons (:) and Semicolons (;) where they should be in each bracket of following sentences.**

1. Several countries participated in the airlift <sup>1</sup>(:) Italy <sup>2</sup>(,) Belgium <sup>3</sup>(,) France <sup>4</sup>(,) and Luxembourg.
2. The following are the primary colors <sup>5</sup>(: ) red <sup>6</sup>(,) blue <sup>7</sup>(,) and yellow.
3. Arriving on the <sup>8</sup> 8(: )10 plane were Liz Brooks <sup>9</sup>(,) my old roommate <sup>10</sup>(;) her husband <sup>11</sup>(;) and Tim <sup>12</sup>(,) their son.
4. The automobile dealer handled three makes of cars <sup>13</sup>(: ) Volkswagens <sup>14</sup>(,) Porsches <sup>15</sup>(,) and Mercedes Benz.
5. Though Phil said he would arrive on the <sup>16</sup>9(: ) 19 flight <sup>17</sup>(,) he came instead on the<sup>18</sup> 10(: ) 36 flight.
6. I bring everything I need to class every day <sup>19</sup>(: ) my pens <sup>20</sup>(,) my books and my dictionary.
7. Young-Hee failed her English test <sup>21</sup>(;) nevertheless <sup>22</sup>(,) she was able to get a good job.
8. There are two things about him that drive me crazy <sup>23</sup>(: ) his music and his cooking.
9. Java <sup>24</sup>(: ) a popular programming language for the World Wide Web.
10. Three countries are involved in the discussions <sup>25</sup>(;) however <sup>26</sup>(,) only Mexico and Canada will sign the treaty immediately.
11. The meal consisted of the following <sup>27</sup>(: ) a garden salad with Italian dressing <sup>28</sup>(;) a baked potato with sour cream and chives <sup>29</sup>(;) New York strip steak <sup>30</sup>(,) cooked to perfection <sup>31</sup>(;) steamed carrots <sup>32</sup>( , ) broccoli <sup>33</sup>( , ) and cauliflower <sup>34</sup>( ; ) and blueberry cheesecake for dessert.
12. At the staff party <sup>35</sup>(,) all the men gathered in the den to watch the hockey game <sup>36</sup>(;) the women sat in the living room.
13. When the professor came down the hall <sup>37</sup>(,) the students hid in the stairwell <sup>38</sup>(;) they didn't want to be seen.
14. Mark usually awoke at <sup>39</sup>6(:)30 in the morning <sup>40</sup>(;) however <sup>41</sup>(,) this morning he overslept.
15. The artist preferred to paint in oils <sup>42</sup>(;) he did not like watercolors.



## Answer

### Appendix 1 Part B

**B. Decide if each of the following sentences is correctly punctuated. If not, correct them.**

1. Jan's new house is beautiful; it has wooden floors, off-white walls and big windows with a view of the park. (:)
2. Tiger: a very large fierce Asian wild cat that has yellowish fur with black bands.
3. The country is suffering once more from an economic downfall; however, the rich are not very much affected.
4. There are different ways of cooking: with water; oil: or in dry heat.  
(, ) (, )
5. We have a really good life; a trip abroad every year, a comfortable home and two lovely children. (:)

([http://www.say-it-in-English.com/ Lesson 18.html](http://www.say-it-in-English.com/Lesson%2018.html))

([http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/ grammar/colons.htm](http://web2.uvcs.uvic.ca/elc/studyzone/410/grammar/colons.htm))

([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g\\_commacomp EX1. html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/interact/g_commacomp_EX1.html))

([http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g\\_overw Ex1.html](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/grammar/g_overw_Ex1.html))

([http://www.sdc.UWO.Ca/writing/handouts/The% 20 Semi-Colon. pdf](http://www.sdc.uwo.ca/writing/handouts/The%20Semi-Colon.pdf))

(<http://www.bkkonline.com/nanny/tip/22-jul-46.shtml>)