

**The Most Common Punctuation Errors Made by the English and the TEFL Majors at An-Najah National University**

الأخطاء الأكثر شيوعاً في استخدام علامات الترقيم لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية الآداب وطلبة أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية العلوم التربوية في جامعة النجاح الوطنية في كتاباتهم

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**Abstract**

The aim of this study is to investigate the most common punctuation mistakes which the English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah National University make in their writing. To this end, the researcher administered a test to a stratified random sample of 100 students from An-Najah University: 45 males and 55 females from the TEFL Department in the Faculty of Education and the English Department in the Faculty of Arts. The results revealed that the most common errors among the English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah University were: the overuse of comma at the expense of the period, the incorrect use of the capital letter, the wrong use of the quotation marks and the misuse of semicolon respectively. Furthermore, the results indicated that there were no significant differences in the number of punctuation errors due to gender and department; however, the results revealed that there were significant differences in the number of punctuation errors among the participants due to academic level. In the light of the study findings, the researcher recommended that all the teaching staff should overstress the importance

of all the punctuation marks in the written and the oral communication courses.

**Key words:** Punctuation errors, English and TEFL majors at An-Najah University, Palestine

### ملخص

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة الأخطاء الأكثر شيوعاً في استخدام علامات الترقيم لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية الآداب وطلبة أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية العلوم التربوية في جامعة النجاح الوطنية. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف قام الباحث بتطبيق اختبار - قطعة نصية- على عينة عشوائية طبقية من ١٠٠ طالب وطالبة منهم ٤٥ طالب و٥٥ طالبة من قسمي اللغة الإنجليزية وأساليب تدريس اللغة الانجليزية ومن مختلف السنوات الدراسية. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة ما يلي: كانت الأخطاء الأكثر شيوعاً في استخدام علامات الترقيم لدى طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية الآداب وطلبة أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في كلية العلوم التربوية في جامعة النجاح الوطنية هي الاستخدام الخاطئ للفاصلة المنقوطة، والإفراط في استخدام الفاصلة على حساب النقطة، والاستخدام الخاطيء لعلامات التنصيص، وإخطاء في استخدام الحروف الكبيرة. لم يؤثر كل من الجنس والكلية في عدد مرات وقوع أفراد العينة في أخطاء الترقيم بينما لعب المستوى الدراسي دوراً في عدد مرات وقوع أفراد العينة في أخطاء الترقيم. بناء على نتائج الدراسة يوصي الباحث بأن يقوم أعضاء هيئة التدريس التركيز على علامات الترقيم أثناء إعطاء الطلاب اي عمل كتابي او شفوي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الأخطاء الأكثر شيوعاً، علامات الترقيم، طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية، وطلبة أساليب تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة النجاح الوطنية.

### Introduction

In this part, the researcher tried to show the great importance of the different punctuation marks which have been developed to help learners make up for the lack of voice intonation and body language in written communication. They themselves carry meaning and express relationships between ideas; thus it is important to choose the punctuation mark that best expresses the relationship learners have in mind.

Consider these two sentences:

Eat children.

Eat, children.

Both sentences are commands, but the first sentence would be correct only in a society where people eat human flesh. Oshima and Hogue (1991). So wrong use of punctuation marks is a distinctive indicator of unclarity in texts. (Ming, 2006; Rumki, 2005 and Connelly, 2005).

Punctuation has three important functions

1. **Phonetic Function:** this is very important, since punctuation marks show clearly the rhythm, pauses, and tone inflexions in a written document; a written document has a tone. Many times the tone is ignored, and the readers are free to interpret the tone the way they want/feel/ (like it): that may lead to confusing situations, and it is worse than grammatical mistakes. The tone is controlled by commas, semicolons, colons, points of ellipsis, etc. (Connelly, 2005). In this regard, they are like traffic lights telling us to slow down and stop. They make clear thought. Punctuation is an occupational hazard for almost any teacher, as hundreds of hours are given over correcting the vagrant punctuation of students.
2. **Grammatical Function:** punctuation is used in direct style: to form interrogations; to mark emphatic content; to highlight syntactic elements displaced from their natural positions; and to build the structure of the sentences, complex sentences, paragraphs, documents, etc.
3. **Semantic Function:** punctuation helps learners understand the meaning of particular words/phrases by marking/highlighting them differently than normal text, using italics, underlining, bolds, capitals, etc. In a short apposition, one could use commas to isolate it or not. Long appositions are always isolated by a pair of commas. Further, commas are needed almost in all instances when we have nominative of address (Rumki, 2005) In this respect, they are as essential to good composition as nails are to a carpenter (Lukeman, 2006). Wrong punctuation can interrupt the flow of ideas and change meaning, but properly used punctuation not only helps readers

understand your meaning but also makes them engrossed in one's writing. (Rumki, 2005).

### **Problem of the study**

To the researcher's best knowledge; Arab learners of English commit a lot of errors in their writing in regard to their use of punctuation marks. This phenomenon has been noticed in almost all the courses that the researcher has run; consequently, he conducted this study.

This university offers two different majors; one is offered by the Faculty of Art known as English and Literature majors and the other is offered by Methods of Teaching Department in the Faculty of Education known as TEFL Majors.

### **Questions of the study**

This study sought to answer these questions:

1. What are the most common punctuation mistakes among English Majors and the TEFL majors at An-Najah University?
2. Are there significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to gender?
3. Are there significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to department?
4. Are there significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to the students' academic level?

### **Hypotheses of the study**

For the verification of the objective of the study and answering its questions; it could be possible to examine the following null hypotheses:

1. There were no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to gender?
2. There were no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to department.

3. There were no statistically significant differences at ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) in the frequencies of punctuation errors due to the students' academic level.

### **Significance of the study**

The significance of this study stems from the importance of punctuation marks in learning. The findings of this study will try to shed light on the correct use of punctuation marks in order to remove ambiguity for the reader. In addition, the findings should give teachers some useful insights to adopt suitable strategies and develop effective practices in order to solve the problems of punctuation marks and to increase the students' competence in writing correctly.

### **Limitations of the study**

The present study considers the following limitations:

1. The sample was selected randomly from the English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah University during the second semester 2009-2010. The English Majors from the Faculty of Art and the TEFL Majors from Methods of Teaching Department in the Faculty of Education.
2. The instruments were also restricted to filling the spaces in a comprehension passage with the correct punctuation marks.

### **Definitions of terms**

#### **1. Punctuation marks**

They are little things, but they are as essential to good composition as nails are to a carpenter. Mainly by their aid do we make sense or nonsense of what we write? Without punctuation marks, many sentences are mere jumbles of words. The art of punctuation, as any other art, is acquired only by study and practice. There are certain well-defined rules observed by all; the mastery of these will make one capable of deciding where rules do not apply. (Lukeman, 2006).

## 2. Comma Splices

When two independent clauses are joined by only a comma, a comma splice occurs. The following construction is an example of a comma splice:

"Japan will design the aircraft; the United States will provide the technology". This sentence can be revised the following ways:

- Separating the clauses into two separate sentences using a period:

"Japan will design the aircraft. The United States will provide the technology".

- Linking the clauses with a semicolon:

"Japan will design the aircraft; the United States will provide the technology."

- Linking the clauses with a comma and a coordinating conjunction (e.g., and, but):

"Japan will design the aircraft, and the United States will provide the technology".

### Reviewing of Related Literature

For the sake of clarity and work organization, the researcher arranged this section in regard to the other researchers' works, where do researchers meet and where do they differ. The level of difficulty of the punctuation marks each study has shown and suggested remedies by researchers for such errors.

In regard to the effect of using good punctuation or bad ones, there are some studies that show the importance of this issue. For example, Meyer (1985) found that educators see punctuation accuracy as the difference between "good" writing and, "bad" writing. He added that writing in an easy to read style, requires students to use various punctuation marks correctly to help the reader construct the intended meaning of each sentence appropriately and meaningfully. Rumki (2005)

stated that wrong punctuation can interrupt the flow of ideas and change meaning, but properly used punctuation not only helps readers understand your meaning but also makes them engrossed in one's writing. Additionally, Robinson (2002) stated that good punctuation makes a lot for clean thought. A mania for punctuation is also an occupational hazard for almost any teacher; he added that the rules are important. But by themselves they are insufficient. Unless one has an emotional investment, rules are too easily forgotten. What learners and teachers must instill is an attitude toward punctuation, a set of feelings about both the process in general and the individual marks of punctuation. That set of feelings might be called a philosophy of punctuation. To him, punctuation is informed by two ideals: clarity and simplicity. Punctuation has the primary responsibility of contributing to the plainness of one's meaning. It has the secondary responsibility of being as invisible as possible, of not calling attention to it.

As for the level of seriousness as pointed out by other researchers, some researchers have found out that misuse of commas in different respects is the most serious and common errors. For example, Alley (1987) stated that a comma splice is a comma that joins two independent clauses. One should replace comma splices with either periods or semicolons. What is more, he said, is that the possessive singular of nouns by adding 's, no matter what the final letter is, could be considered as one of the major punctuation errors. Alley added the idea that the space devoted to each punctuation mark reflects the degree of difficulty that most people have with it. These conclusions are in harmony with Russell's (1984). For example, apostrophes and bracketing commas receive a great deal of discussion, while question marks are dealt with much more briefly, since hardly anybody finds them difficult. In this context, Menand (2004) added that nonrestrictive clauses must be preceded by a comma. If not they become like a wild ride downhill and the comma is deployed as the mood strikes.

Al-Mutib (1989) said that the use of punctuation marks and the semicolon in particular, to connect two related clauses, is very rare. However, the comma was inappropriately used to link two clauses where

the result is often a run-on sentence. Some punctuation marks prompt the reader to give a word or sentence more than the usual emphasis. For example, a command with a period does not evoke the same emphatic response as the same command with an exclamation mark. A dash or colon has more emphatic force than a comma. For example: The employees were surprised by the decision, which was not to change company policy. The employees were surprised by the decision—no change in company policy. The employees were surprised by the decision: no change in company policy. (Al-Mutib, 1989: 34) In the Palestinian context and in this regard, Khalil (2000) mention that the most common frequent errors made by Palestinian EFL students in their writing are commas and periods. The most common errors are categorized into comma splice and superfluous commas. Superfluous commas errors that refer to over punctuating sentences by inserting commas in the wrong place.

The present researcher supports Gaines (2002) mainly in the part through which he showed that the most common errors the learners of English make could be arranged to frequency of error according to the following order. Wrong use of comma to replace the semi-colon or vice versa. Commas are probably the most frequently used punctuation mark, and comma errors come up frequently in student writing. The most common mistake that students make when using commas is thinking that a comma goes wherever one hears a pause in a sentence. That's not true at all, and this assumption is likely to lead to comma errors. Conjunctive adverbs (like "however," "therefore," "moreover") or transitional phrases (like "in fact," "in addition") must be used with a semicolon when they connect two independent clauses. (Gaines, 2002).

The present researcher agreed with Wilde (1992), as they emphasized that readers have trouble understanding written English because of the lack of commas; they have to go back and re-read a certain section of written work to get the full gist of it. Adding to this context, detecting comma delimiter problems poses a fascinating challenge: if punctuation is required to parse a text (Bernard, 1995) and if



punctuation is generally misused, then how is it possible to parse successfully a poorly punctuated text?

As for the level of seriousness as pointed out by other researchers, some researchers have found out that the misuse of italics and quotations is in different respects is the most serious and common errors. For example Robinson (2002) wanted to mention two other practices that are out of hand: the use of italics for emphasis and of quotation marks for distancing. These are serious errors because of the intellectual tone they set. Italics rarely fail to insult the reader's intelligence. More often than not they tell learners to emphasize a word or phrase that they would emphasize automatically in any natural reading of the sentence. Quotation marks create the spurious impression of an aristocracy of sensibility.

In regard to capitalization, the present researcher agreed with Sofer & Raimes (2002) on the lack of capitalization in the Arabic alphabet could be the basic reasons behind the Arab learners' misuse of the English capital letter.

Pausing is another problematic area where learners fail to achieve correctly. For example, Daniel (2004) showed that pausing is different from one punctuation mark to another which affects the meaning and changing it. Consider the following examples:

Did you know the answer?

Did you know the answer!

In the first question it is just a question and its answer is yes or no whereas in the second example, I doubt that you know the answer.

In regard to teaching strategies and remedies when dealing with teaching and learning the punctuation system, there are a lot of studies. For example, Moy (1996) conceded that punctuation is not as uniform and prescriptive as it was assumed, and that teaching this sub-skill can fall into a mechanical, monotonous abyss. Teachers should encourage their students to explore a diversity of written and entertainment media, as they can learn to discover and appreciate permissible variations and

violations of punctuation instead of encapsulating them with boring rules. Various novel and thought-provoking assignments can be introduced thus allowing the learner to interact with authentic English, such as collecting data samples from magazines, listening to the news to compare reported and direct speech, and administering a punctuation "test" to peers and other teachers. The benefits of this discovery approach to teaching punctuation will increase students' motivation, arouse and sustain their interest, and foster independence which are all significant pedagogical considerations in language learning.

Mayo, et al (2000) described a new Intelligent Tutoring System (ITS) that teaches the mechanical rules of English capitalization and punctuation. Students must interactively capitalize and punctuate short pieces of unpunctuated, lower case text (the completion exercise). The system represents the domain as a set of constraints. The ITS was evaluated during several sessions in a classroom of 10-11 year old school children. The results showed that the children effectively mastered the 25 rules represented in the system. Adding to the role of teaching and punctuation errors, Angelillo (2002) stated that teachers often lament that many children do not remember to put in the punctuation when they write. Perhaps teachers need to change the way they teach punctuation by leaning toward inquiry and conveying meaning. For example, they might show children how punctuation works, rather than giving them punctuation rules. They might teach children to value punctuation marks as much as letters and words for conveying meaning.

Allen (2002) emphasized the role of step by step procedure via describing the basics of constructing statements and how they are best expressed using the basic elements of punctuation- from the comma to the full stop. Then he talked about the more complex issues of representing speech and using such punctuation marks as the colon and the semicolon. He explained how to avoid the most common mistakes in punctuation- such as using too many commas, or using the comma as substitute for the full stop.

Truss (2003) stated that any experienced editor who spends much time in both Britain and America will probably conclude that, on the

whole, British standards of punctuation are somewhat lower than American ones. An example or two won't really suffice. He cited the renowned legal scholar Peter Birks's obituary written by an Oxford don. It was riddled with the most elementary punctuation errors: many missing commas, several wrongly inserted commas, a superfluous hyphen, missing hyphens, and a missing apostrophe (omitted from master's degree)—not to mention a couple of grammatical bumbles.

So teacher of English in regard to punctuation marks should select the best materials that can teach learners punctuation system in an interesting way and in this respect, Valentin (2004) said that one of the best-selling books in Britain at the moment was one on 'correct' English punctuation called *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynn Truss. He believes, however, that many punctuation marks are becoming obsolete. For example, he very rarely sees colons or semi-colons used any more—which seems similar to the findings of the present study and he can't help but think that Truss's book is just another ultimately futile attempt to stop language doing exactly what it wants to do. Robinson (2006) and Lukeman (2006) added that clarifying writing by using punctuation in an efficient manner could be possible but not through rules and grammar lessons which bore the readers. Instead, they sought to inform by showing examples of successful use by well-known authors.

Gaines (1992) showed that the sentence is a standard textual unit in natural language processing applications. In many languages the punctuation mark that indicates the end-of-sentence boundary is ambiguous; consequently, educators and teachers should do their best to make them clear so as to remove such ambiguity mainly between question mark and an exclamation mark.

In conclusion, punctuation marks to the readers are like the torch for a person walking in the darkness. As indicated by Robert (2006) punctuation marks cut the flow of words into meaningful groups and prevent confusion. We use punctuation when writing because we lack phonetic and visual means of indicating how the flow of sound is to be parsed. Consequently, good punctuation enables sophisticated

processing; while bad punctuation causes a lot of trouble and the reader is left scrabbling for sense.

## **Methodology and design**

### **1. Method**

The researcher used descriptive statistics that includes frequency of punctuation errors, percentages and of ( $\chi^2$ ). Using a comprehension passage without punctuation marks and asking the students to insert the correct punctuation marks was the tool used to collect the necessary data. The researcher used this comprehension passage as it requires from students to refer to almost all punctuation marks.

### **2. The Population**

The population of the study was An-Najah University males and females from the TEFL Department in the Faculty of Education and the English Department in the Faculty of Arts during the second semester of the scholastic year 2009-2010. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that An-Najah University offers two different majors; one is offered by the Faculty of Arts known as English and Literature majors and the other is offered by Methods of Teaching Department in the Faculty of Education known as TEFL Majors.

### **3. The sample**

The study subjects, chosen randomly were 100 students from An-Najah University:

45 males and 55 females from the TEFL Department in the Faculty of Education and the English Department in the Faculty of Arts. The following table shows the distribution of the sample according to the study variables: gender, department and the academic level.

**Table (I):** I shows the distribution of the sample according to the study variables. (gender, department and the academic level).

Variables	Level	N
Gender	Male	45
	Female	55
Department	TEFL Majors	46
	English Majors	54
Academic Level	Second year	36
	Third year	34
	Fourth year	30

#### 4. Instrument

The instrument which the researcher used was a comprehension passage rich in almost all the common punctuation marks (Mosback,G and Mosback V1983). The researcher administered it to the whole sample and then asked them to fill the spaces with the correct punctuation marks.

#### 5. Statistical Analysis

To answer the questions of the study and analyze the collected data, the researcher used the statistical program (SPSS) using frequencies, percentages and  $\chi^2$  square.

#### Result and Discussion

To answer the first question of the study, "**what are the most common mistakes among the English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah National University?**" The researcher used frequencies and percentage.

**Table (2):** Result of the most common mistakes among English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah National University.

<b>Punctuation Mark</b>	<b>Frequencies</b>	<b>Percentage %</b>
Comma	232	45%
Semicolon	25	4.8%
Period	83	16.26%
Quotation	65	12.64%
Capital Letters	109	21.20%
<b>Total</b>	<b>514</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table II shows that the most common mistakes made by the English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah National University during the second semester 2009- 2010 were the comma, the capital letter, the period, quotation marks , and the semicolons respectively. The first of these findings is in accordance with Gaines (2002) and Wilde (1992)

The researcher believes that the Arab learners of English over differentiate the use of the comma due to the vast differences between the two language systems –Arabic and English- regarding the use of the comma. In this respect, the researcher supported Mahmoud (1997) who pointed out those students tend to make mistakes in punctuating nonrestrictive relative clause because of the Arabic interference where the Arabic nonrestrictive relative clause is not marked off by commas.

Regarding the capital letter which comes second in the findings of the present study is in harmony with Sofer and Raimes (2002) who stated that the lack of capitalization in the Arabic alphabet could be the basic reason behind the Arab learners' misuse of the English capital letter. In this respect, the Arab learners of English under differentiate the use of the English capital letters.

In regard to the wrong use of the semicolon which comes last in its frequency could be in agreement with Al-Mutib (1989) who found that the use of semicolon to connect two related clauses was very rare. However, the comma was inappropriately used to link two clauses where

the result was often a run-on sentence. Regarding the use of the quotations, it seems that the present research findings in this respect are rare and they could be attributed to the nature of the comprehension passage used as the research tool. Markers such as question mark, exclamation, ellipses, dash, parenthesis, and brackets, apostrophe, possessives and hyphen are not used in the passage too often, but they are of great importance and they are worth studying,. Here is a call for other researchers to use other tools such as questionnaires, asking students to write different types of compositions i.e., descriptive, analytical and persuasive as using more than one tool could achieve a comprehensive use and reference to all the punctuation marks.

To answer the second question of the study, "**Are there significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors made by English and the TEFL majors at An Najah University due to gender?**" The researcher used ( $\chi^2$ ) test.

**Table (3):** The result of ( $\chi^2$ ) test due to gender.

Gender	Comma	Semicolon	Period	Quotation	Capital	Total	df	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Male	232	28	86	72	129	547	4	1.806	0.771
Female	232	22	80	57	118	509			
Total	464	50	166	129	247	1056			

significant at  $\alpha = .05$

The results of table III showed that the computed  $\chi^2$  value was not significant at  $\alpha = .05$  between males and females. In short, gender had no effect on making punctuation mistakes.

To answer the third question of the study, "**Are there significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors made by English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah National University due to department?**" The researcher used ( $\chi^2$ ) test.

**Table (4):** The result of  $\chi^2$  test due to department.

Department	Comma	Semicolon	Period	Quotation	Capital	Total	df	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Eng .dept	236	34	88	68	132	558	4	3.181	0.528
Methods of Teaching Department	229	20	75	59	115	498			
Total	465	54	163	127	147	1056			

significant at  $\alpha = .05$

The results of Table IV show that the computed  $\chi^2$  value was not significant at  $\alpha = .05$  between the two departments-Methods of Teaching Department and English Department. In short, department had no effect on making punctuation mistakes. Such finding is worth exploring in other local universities, regional universities or even international universities mainly those which offer two types of English majors.

To answer the fourth question of the study, "**Are there significant differences in the frequencies of punctuation errors made by the English and the TEFL majors at An-Najah National University due to the academic level?**" The researcher used  $\chi^2$  test.

**Table (5):** The result of  $\chi^2$  test due to academic level.

Academic Level	Comma	Semicolon	Period	Quotation	Capital	Total	df	$\chi^2$	Sig.
First	154	178	206	121	301	960	12	191.349	0.0001
Second	128	27	81	66	101	403			
Third	87	9	41	53	88	278			
Fourth	82	9	33	42	51	217			
Total	451	223	361	282	541	1858			

significant at  $\alpha = .05$



The results of Table V showed that there were significant differences in the number of punctuation errors due to academic level. That is, students in the early academic levels made punctuation errors more than students in the higher academic levels. This finding is due to the impact of studying more courses. The more exposure the students have to language, the fewer mistakes they make in their dealing with the punctuation marks. This could be a fruitful indication towards intensive and early use of the different punctuation marks at schools in all levels and in the different university English courses as well. In addition, this finding is a strong indicator of the necessity of including a special course which covers skillfully and attractively all the related issues of the language punctuation marks both in the target language and the mother tongue.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Due to the positive effect of using correct punctuation marks is a distinctive indicator of clarity in texts, the researcher presents the following recommendations which may represent some guidelines for teachers of English to the Arab learners to improve their writing.

Allowing students to “try out” punctuation in their notebooks, the way young musicians practice on their instruments. This is a place for rehearsal and discovery, and for working toward achieving a voice.

Teaching students that punctuation is a unit of composition. They can teach this to students through a combination of inquiry and direct instruction, understanding that it will take time for students to master punctuation.

Paying more attention to interference strategy where Arabic punctuation system is different from its English counterpart. For example, when punctuating nonrestrictive relative clause in English, one should use commas whereas its Arabic counterpart is not marked off by commas.

Exposing students to the basic systems of punctuation by including exercises in the textbooks along with continual practice in the end of each period by asking students to punctuate a short text.

Syllabus designers should consider the similarities and differences between Arabic punctuation system and its English counterpart. Exercises and activities should be included somewhere in each unit. Conducting other studies that show the best strategies to employ in teaching punctuation marks

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### Appendix I

Read the following passage and insert the punctuation marks in the space provided. Make sure to use capital letters where appropriate. These are the punctuation marks to be used in your answers.

*{Comma, Semicolon, Colon, Period, Question Mark, Exclamation Mark/Point, Ellipses, Dash, Parenthesis and Brackets, Quotation Marks, Apostrophe and Possessives, Hyphen as well as the capital letter}*

*Note: You might use one punctuation mark more than once; other punctuation marks might not be used*

The Passage in the summer of 1969 i had the privilege of leading a seminar group of twenty{ }one persons in a unique study experience in egypt{ } jordan { } lebanon{ } israel{ } and the occupied territories { } in the forty{ } five major briefing{ } interview{ } and lecture sessions we attended{ } the most frequent questions concerned who was at fault in the middle east{ } { }who bears the responsibility for the continuing hostilities{ } { }{ }who actually is the chief aggressor{ }{ } { }who is taking the land away from whom{ }{ } the answers { } we soon learned { } were predictable { } when we talked to the arabs { } the israelis got all the blame { } when we spoke to the israelis { } the arabs were the undoubted disturbers of the peace { } the farther we traveled and the more we listened { } the more confused the seminar participants became { }one middle easterner we met { } however { } suggested a new approach to finding the answer { } { } there are two ways of looking at the conflict { } { } he explained. { } one way is that of the tourist { } summer seminarian { } or the journalist { }in { }a hurry{ }the other way is that of the historian{ } { }in the first approach you look at contemporary events only{ } you isolate them and try to determine who fired the first shot{ } on that basis you identify the aggressor{ } but it{ }s an inadequate approach { } because it{ }s like analyzing a newsreel on the basis of one or two frames or like judging a football game on the basis of one or two isolation replays{ } to get the whole story{ } you have to see the whole film { } and the middle east story is a very long newsreel{ } The more of it you see{ } the better you understand{ }{ }.

our educated informer was correct{ } of course{ } western conclusions on the middle east conflict{ } as on the war in vietnam{ } have been based too much on the daily snatches of news{ } which are rarely{ }if ever{ } placed in historical context { }it is difficult{ }of course{ } always to know how far to roll back the middle east reel{ } must one go back to the war of 1967{ } or to the united nations partition Resolution of 1947{ } or to the balfour declaration in 1917{ } or to the first zionist congress of 1897{ } or to the conquest of palestine by the turks in 1517{ } in this present work we try to roll the reel back five thousand years or more{ } admittedly a difficult task because it really means dealing with the beginning of civilization and most of the history of man{ } however{ } we have accepted the risks and pitfalls of treating such a big subject in so

little space on the assumption that what is needed{ } particularly among north american christians (the primary audience of this study) { } is the kind of historical and theological understanding that comes from historical perspective in length and breadth{ }

In other words{ } we hope to help overcome two weaknesses in the western approach to the world in general and the Middle East in particular{ } a historical view that is too short and a theological stance that is too narrow{ }.

I am indebted to a large number of people who have assisted in the preparation of this volume{ } in particular a group of six manuscript readers{ } But my thanks must also go in special way to more than one hundred middle easterners who{ } in my 1968 field research trip{ } first opened up to me the breath and depth of the problem{ } and to the 1969 seminar resource people who helped to sharpen up the insights gained from field and library research{ } which was sponsored by the Mennonite central committee peace section{ } the responsibility for the contents of this book{ } of course{ } is mine alone{ }

**Adapted from: Mosback,G and Mosback V.(1983) "Practical Faster Reading: A course in Reading and Vocabulary for Upper-Intermediate and More Advanced Students" . Cambridge University Press. Great Britain**

## Appendix II

### The model answer

In the summer of 1969 I had the privilege of leading a seminar group of twenty – one persons in a unique study experience in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Israel, and the occupied territories .In the forty- five major briefing, interview, and lecture sessions we attended, the most frequent questions concerned who was at fault in the Middle East: "Who bears the responsibility for the continuing hostilities?" "Who actually is the chief aggressor?" "Who is taking the land away from whom?"

The answers, we soon learned, were predictable. When we talked to the Arabs, the Israelis got all the blame; when we spoke to the Israelis, the Arabs were the undoubted disturbers of the peace. The farther we traveled and the more we listened, the more confused the seminar participants became.

One Middle Easterner we met, however, suggested anew approach to finding the answer. "There are two ways of looking at the conflict," he explained. "One way is that of the tourist, summer seminarian, or the journalist-in –a-hurry; the other way is that of the historian.

"In the first approach you look at contemporary events only. You isolate them and try to determine who fired the first shot. On that basis you identify the aggressor. But it's an inadequate approach, because it's like analyzing a newsreel on the basis of one or two frames or like judging a football game on the basis of one or two isolation replays. To get the whole story, you have to see the whole film. And the Middle East story is a very long newsreel. The more of it you see, the better you understand."

Our educated informer was correct, of course. Western conclusions on the Middle East conflict, as on the war in Vietnam, have been based too much on the daily snatches of news, which are rarely, if ever, placed in historical context. It is difficult, of course, always to know how far to roll back the Middle East reel. Must one go back to the war of 1967, or to the United Nations partition Resolution of 1947, or to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, or to the First Zionist Congress of 1897, or to the conquest of Palestine by the Turks in 1517?

In this present work we try to roll the reel back five thousand years or more, admittedly a difficult task because it really means dealing with the beginning of civilization and most of the history of man. However, we have accepted the risks and pitfalls of treating such a big subject in so little space on the assumption that what is needed, particularly among North American Christians (the primary audience of this study), is the kind of historical and theological understanding that comes from historical perspective in length and breadth.

In other words, we hope to help overcome two weaknesses in the western approach to the world in general and the Middle East in particular, a historical view that is too short and a theological stance that is too narrow.

I am indebted to a large number of people who have assisted in the preparation of this volume, in particular a group of six manuscript readers. But my thanks must also go in special way to more than one hundred Middle Easterners who, in my 1968 field research trip, first opened up to me the breath and depth of the problem, and to the 1969 seminar resource people who helped to sharpen up the insights gained from field and library research, which was sponsored by the Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section. The responsibility for the contents of this book, of course, is mine alone.

**Adapted from: Mosback,G and Mosback V.(1983) "Practical Faster Reading: A course in Reading and Vocabulary for Upper-Intermediate and More Advanced Students" . Cambridge University Press. Great Britain.**