

СОВРЕМЕННЫЕ МЕТОДЫ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ЯЗЫКА, РЕЧИ И ТЕКСТА

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Scientific writing in English: punctuation problems

In a digital age the problem of punctuation in English scientific style, which is specified both by social and linguistic factors, is of great importance. On the one hand, the number of scientific publications in international journals and conference proceedings is constantly increasing, and thereby punctuation, as other fields in linguistics, suffers the influence of the globalization of the English language as the majority of papers are written by researchers who are non-native speakers of English. On the other hand, the anthropological approach, so popular in linguistics nowadays, focuses mostly on the communicative intent of the writer in a particular situation, thereby permitting more freedom in obeying the punctuation rules, which leads to the inconsistency in the use of punctuation devices.

This paper is aimed at 1) analyzing the state of the art, 2) presenting the degree of the punctuation tolerance in modern scientific prose, and 3) discussing the ‘punctuation identity’ of the international scientific prose.

The object of our study is punctuation (micro- and macro-text level), tendencies in current punctuation practice, and the factors that specify the changes. When studying the punctuation problems we used punctuation and typographic guides codifying the use of devices and printed and pre-printed scientific papers written by native and non-native English speakers.

1) In order to analyze how the punctuation in English works, it is necessary to explain what the term ‘punctuation’ implies and also to specify its nature and principles.

The main principle of English punctuation is called rhetorical or communicative, whereas the principles of tolerance and non-overpunctuation are not to be neglected. That means that the use of main punctuation marks in a number of cases is recommending: similar syntactic constructions can be punctuated differently. Depending on the communicative intent of the writer, the length of the sentence and some other factors (not all of them are known yet), the punctuation mark can be used or omitted, such cases are quite often and considered in guides as conventions [1]. For example, a compound sentence with a coordinative conjunction can be separated or not depending on a strong necessity of this separation (a very subjective factor).

The samples have arrived and testing will begin shortly.

Of course, even for the optimum choice of Z , there may be a frequency f_{max} beyond which the inequality can no longer be obtained, and this frequency, if it exists, is the “maximum frequency of oscillation”.

This flexibility results in the inconsistency in the use of punctuation devices. And non-native speakers observing this inconsistency without knowing the theory of English punctuation may think that the use of most devices is optional, which is not always true [2]. There exist a number of strict rules that must be complied [3].

When we discuss the punctuation of a scientific text, which is complex by nature, we need to consider two levels of punctuation: micro-text level, traditional punctuation marks such as comma, colon, dot and others, and macro-text level punctuation, typographic devices such as italics, spaces, and others, organizing the text hierarchy. A set of punctuation devices in European languages is universal (some little differences) and their functions are reduced to delineation, interpolation, serialization, and stylization [4]. The main difference is the usage of traditional punctuation marks, which is specified by the leading punctuation principle (prescriptive or descriptive).

As for macro-text level devices, they are not codified in a special manual common for all editors. However, their use is strictly prescribed in the templates for the international scientific journals, though most of the time inconsistent in different publishing houses. Not being strictly codified they have to be always complied with, otherwise the paper might be rejected.

2) In order to estimate the degree of the punctuation tolerance in scientific prose, we have to consider the correlation of theory and practice using descriptive and contrastive approaches.

The results of our previous investigations allow suggesting – however, these issues are still controversial and need further investigation – that there are several levels of tolerance for the use of punctuation in scientific writing in international English. The use of devices differs depending on a) the length of the sentence, communicative intent of the writer, his/her nationality and the type of speech); b) different publishing houses; c) different fields of science; d) different punctuation cultures, etc.

Two points have been already discussed, whereas the other two need yet to be clarified.

There are a number of similar syntactic structures that are punctuated differently depending on the field of science where they are used. For example, the compound sentence with the conjunction that is not put off by two commas in texts in Electronics, whereas double comma is rather often in texts in Computer Science.

If, however, one or both of them are present then they must occur in the specified positions, i.e., between the terminal “sip:” and the encoded element<hostport> and immediately following the encoded element <uriparameters>, respectively (Computer Science).

The transistor is operating as a three terminal element, i.e. with RF current flowing in all three leads (Electronics).

The analysis shows that the writers of different nationalities do not similarly use punctuation devices in cases when the choice of the mark is optional. For instance, when emphasizing transitional adverbs such as thus, therefore and others, the choice of the device is different.

Thus, one needs to simplify the model by applying restrictions (French).

Thus, it is common practice to create a test suite, i.e. a finite set of tests that cover the system with respect to certain criteria (Chinese).

3) The relative flexibility and anthropological nature of the English punctuation, on the one hand, and the globalization process, on the other hand, create favorable conditions for the evolution of a different system with its own identity.

As it was shown in previous works [2], non-native speakers use the idea of native-language punctuation and use it in the text produced in English (L1 interference). As a result, this English punctuation of pre-printed or non-edited corpora reflects the traces of the identity of the native language. As for reviewed international journals, there are few mistakes that strictly contradict the rules of English punctuation. However, it is still possible to find the traces of the other languages in the body of International English punctuation studying the conventions.

As it is seen from the text above the chosen subject area lies on the border of applied and cognitive linguistics and the reviewed results can be useful for further research both in linguistics and methodology. On the one hand, we are probably observing the formation of a new system that contains the features of British, American and other languages which contributes to the study of the status of the punctuation phenomenon as a whole and can help linguists derive an optimal punctuation model for written scientific communication. On the other hand, it would be quite helpful to derive a correct approach for teaching punctuation using a method of approximation taking into account current punctuation tendencies in international scientific writing.

References

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Анализ концептуальных смыслов образа-символа вѣльвы как когнитивной единицы (на материале древнеисландской эддической песни «Прорицание вѣльвы»)

Процесс когниции, т.е. восприятия мира с помощью сенсорных органов и отражения результатов данного восприятия в виде ментальных репрезентаций, имеет долгую историю. Он появился тогда, когда у архаического человека