

# Punctuation Science in the Context of Studying the Comma as a Punctuation Mark

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**ABSTRACT:** The article reveals the role and place of punctuation marks in the construction of a logical-semantic phrase.

**KEYWORD:** punctuation, literacy, circulation, speech, meaning, language, colon.

Punctuation marks appeared much later than the letter itself. The ancient Greeks and Romans introduced intermediate signs to separate words. If we turn to our ancient manuscripts, for example, the Ostromirov Gospel (copied by the deacon Grigory for the Novgorod Ostromir in 1056-1057), it turns out that the signs that existed at that time were not so much “thought-separating”, but “spoken”, “with musical purposes and phonetic”: the composition was sung.

The history of punctuation marks in our understanding, that is, “in their syntactic sense, can only be traced with the advent of printing, although they, in all likelihood, arose in the first era of the increasing distribution of manuscripts ... in the XIV century, and maybe even earlier” [1, p.70].

In anonymous writings (XVI-XVIII centuries) devoted to the rules of writing, we will find many interesting remarks and recommendations. “A gap separates the merging of verbs, and a comma makes a perfect speech”[4, p.113]. The ability to put punctuation marks is interpreted by I. V. Yagich as “truthfulness”: “... and truthfulness is what they understood where it was worth putting a comma in the scripture ...”. So that “speech does not intertwine with speech, so that they would understand the mind of writing,” it is recommended to leave “little idle space between speeches.” To highlight individual parts of the text, a comma is called one of the first punctuation marks: “... between sayings, the place is great idle, they write a comma on that, if anything is updated a little in the single broadcast of that mind, a comma is written oubou ...”.

Even by the beginning of the 19th century, punctuation marks retained quite expressive names. Each of them revealed the function of a punctuation mark: a comma is a rest, a semicolon is a middle rest, a colon is a long rest, and a dash is a silence. These names said that both the comma, and the semicolon, and the colon, and the dash indicate pauses in the letter, that is, they convey the rhythm of our oral speech. Of course, to some extent this is true. But only to some extent.

Punctuation rules have developed historically, and now they do not represent a single system and are not based on a single principle. Academician L. V. Shcherba notes the dual nature of any punctuation: “phonetic, since it expresses some sound phenomena, and ideographic, since it is directly connected with the meaning” [5, Vol. IX].

Punctuation marks are determined by the desire to: 1) designate pauses that convey to some extent the rhythmic melody of sounding speech (read text) and 2) designate the logical and semantic relationships between words and groups of words within a sentence, that is, the structure of the sentence itself. Of course, the researchers of punctuation emphasize, "the first and most reliable basis for such division of the text could, of course, be only the division of the corresponding oral statement through pauses" [3, p.202].

The emerging written speech, in comparison with oral, acquired its own specifics: a special construction of phrases, a choice of words. Therefore, it is impossible to equate the role of punctuation with the rhythmic and melodic role of pauses in our oral communication. That is why the logical-semantic, structural principle, enshrined by M. V. Lomonosov in the Russian Grammar, turned out to be dominant.

The English explorer Eric Patridge, in his famously titled study "Punctuation is a friend, not an enemy," refers to the observations of Richard Hodges, made as early as 1644. R. Hodges, a schoolteacher, advocating the study of punctuation, gives an example of the most curious distortion of meaning due to a single comma: «Сын мой, если грешники тебя соблазняют,, не уступай им...». In the English phrase - "My Son, if sinners intise (entice) thoe congent thou, nat refraning thy..." - it is enough to put a comma after the word nat (then this negation will refer to the conditional clause), so that the phrase acquires the opposite meaning "My son, if sinners do not tempt you, yield to them..." [2, p. 25].

With the help of punctuation marks, as it were, a contact is established between the writer and the reader, the opportunity to focus the reader's attention on one or another meaning, shade of a word, phrase increases. Therefore, it is important that the writer and reader interpret the punctuation marks in the same way. "Any rule about punctuation marks is, as it were, a clause of an agreement between the writer and the reader," A. B. Shapiro rightly notes [6, No. 3]. But if this agreement is violated, then punctuation marks turn from helper signals "into real stumbling marks," as N.A. Melgunov, one of the literary critics of the last century, in a letter to A.I. Herzen (April 13, 1857).

Almost a hundred years ago, spelling and punctuation were hotly debated on the pages of Russian newspapers. In 1872, one of the zealots of Russian literacy was indignant at the dissonance in the use of punctuation marks: "what the author, then his commas, what the newspaper, then his colons, periods, semicolons ...".

Taking care of the comma, as we see, is by no means a sign of the new time. We often recall the words of one of our finest stylists, the writer I. A. Bunin, that "sometimes one comma breaks the whole music and plunges the author into a uniform illness" (in a letter to F. I. Blagov, March 28, 1916) , but we forget the instructions of our old grammarians, who assigned one of the first roles to the comma, in "true words."

The semantic meaning of punctuation, punctuation and literacy - these questions have long been among the acute and still unresolved, not only in Russian, but also in many other languages.

Already in the last century, there was concern about how newspapers affect the literacy of young people. Even then, they thought about what punctuation "liberties" should be considered as mistakes that prevented them from entering the university. This issue has now become even more acute due to the massive development of information technology and the influence of electronic media on the language and literacy of young people.

Punctuation is primarily a means of emphasizing the logical and semantic construction of a phrase. If a student does not know how to build a phrase, then, of course, knowledge of punctuation rules will not save him. The study of punctuation, based not only on formal rules, but also on the semantic features of the text, belongs to the field of practical stylistics.

Insufficient attention to the meaning and originality of each punctuation mark leads to chaos of “signs of despair”.

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