

Call for Papers
Conference from 3rd to 4th May 2019
Punctuation Seen Internationally. System – Norm – Practice
Regensburg

Background/object of research:

Punctuation is a formally and functionally differentiated subsystem of written language. However, its significance is controversial. Linguists of the language system and of language typology consider it to be of little or no importance for the language system of a single language as well as for other languages in comparison, and as 'too insignificant' to deal with, and thus leave it to the 'carping critics'. Even in the spelling discourse, punctuation is often reduced to its certified rules without recognizing the linguistic potential of the syntactic, semantic, and prosodic principles on which punctuation is based. Not to mention the everyday writing practice in which punctuation is taken into account, but still, depending on language, government, domain (school, public authority, private sphere, etc.), and medium (e.g. social media), punctuation is still used differently and individually. Even those who must teach and evaluate punctuation as an orthographic substandard differ considerably with regard to their assessment of how relevant punctuation actually is.

Thus, it is no surprise that punctuation has hardly been considered a part of the research focus in the fields of language typology, contrastive linguistics, sociolinguistics and pragmalinguistics as well as studies concerning attitudes and standards in language. Instead, punctuation research is primarily conducted in the domains of written language acquisition, didactics of writing, and language code research. Especially in Germany, however, the study of the history of punctuation has received new impetus in recent years. There are approaches to comparative punctuation research in individual works, but contrastive punctuation research including typology (language system), sociolinguistics (language norms) and pragmatic aspects (language practice) remains highly desirable.

Aims:

In this sense, the meeting focuses on the system, norm, and practice of punctuation. The goal is to discuss punctuation in connection with these three aspects contrastively or comparatively, codicologically, and with regard to education in international comparison. Another aim of the planned meeting is to establish an international network on punctuation. With a strong focus on contrastive punctuation, this topic area should be illuminated on many levels encompassing the following three given aspects.

Addressees:

The meeting appeals to all researchers who deal with or are interested in punctuation from a typological, codicological, or norm-related perspective or deal with the didactics and implementation of the practice of writing.

Topics:

The following topic areas are open to discussion and may serve as orientation:

System/Typology:

- * Punctuation inventory, comparatively
- * Functions of punctuation, comparatively
- * Principles of punctuation, comparatively: syntax, semantics, rhythm and prosody
- * Correlation between punctuation and language typology: writing systems of isolating, agglutinating, and inflectional languages and their punctuation
- * Punctuation and language typology: logographic, syllabic, and alphabetic script types and their punctuation
- * Punctuation as text marker, syntax marker, or lemma marker, comparatively
- * Syntax: highlighting structures, hypotactic structures and their punctuation markers, comparatively
- * Writer-oriented and reader-oriented punctuation

Norm:

- * Fault tolerance and obligatory punctuation rules, comparatively
- * Extension of regulated areas/codification degree of punctuation, comparatively
- * History of codification, comparatively
- * Punctuation reforms, comparatively – successes and failures
- * Punctuation and intelligence – myths and attitudes toward punctuation, comparatively
- * Formulation strategies of punctuation rules in codices, comparatively
- * *Can-, must-, mustn't*-rules of punctuation, comparatively
- * Explicit (=codified) and subsistent punctuation norms, comparatively
- * Punctuation in curricula, comparatively

Practice:

- * Attitudes of norm authorities (e.g. teachers) toward punctuation, comparatively
- * Language attitudes and punctuation
- * Correction practice of punctuation errors at school and university, comparatively
- * Punctuation practice in social media, comparatively
- * Metalinguistic discourse and linguistic criticism toward punctuation, comparatively
- * Regional variation of punctuation (e.g. in newspapers)
- * Idiosyncratic variation in punctuation practice: variation between texts or lifespans
- * Expressive/emotive punctuation as written individualism, comparatively
- * Codex-free zones: punctuation in literature, comparatively

These aspects are intended to serve both as guidelines and as a source of inspiration to collect and to compare contributions from the mentioned areas of various languages. Contributions about all languages with a writing system and punctuation are welcome.

Conference languages: English, German

If you are interested in participating and in giving a presentation, please send a concrete topic (title plus abstract of max. 2500 characters) until 30th June 2018 to the following address:

punctuation@ur.de

Literature:

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- Catach, Nina (1996): La ponctuation. Histoire et système. 2nd revised edition. Paris.
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- Primus, Beatrice (2007): The typological and historical variation of punctuation systems: Comma constraints. Written Language and Literacy 10.2, 103-128.
- Schou, Karsten (2007): The syntactic status of English punctuation. English Studies 88, 195-216.

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