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Punctuation Tolerance in International Scientific Prose

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This study focuses on theoretical problems concerning punctuation tolerance in international scientific writing. A set of punctuation devices used in scientific prose is rather wide: it includes micro-and macro-level punctuation, each having their purpose and function. Although the use of devices is specified in a variety of guides, modern punctuation practice reveals a certain inconsistency allowed in international journals. The punctuation tolerance can be considered at different levels: 1) the limitations of how to use two categories of devices; 2) ways of punctuating English prose by non-native speakers; 3) divisibility of written speech into segments in different scientific fields.

The standards for using punctuation (comma, colon, full stop, etc.) and typographic devices (italics, bold, underlining, etc.) representing different levels of segmentation of scientific corpora are different. The functions of micro-level punctuation are presented in manuals, most of the rules are conventions that are not strictly complied unless it impedes the understanding, whereas absolute rules are rare. Unlike stops, typographic devices are not universally codified; however, it is obligatory to follow the standards given in templates prescribed by the publisher.

Non-native speakers use the devices based on their own idea of punctuation thereby contributing national features (L1 habits) to modern scientific writing. The relative flexibility of English punctuation, with the conventions allowed to be ignored, creates favorable conditions for changes that are rejected or accepted by the system.

The division of a written fragment also varies in different fields of science. The punctuation structure is different depending on the continuity in discourse expressed in corpora with the help of connective and segmentation markers. This can be observed both at a sentence and text organization level.

To sum it up, the punctuation of international scientific prose is a gradually developing complicated mechanism having complex relationship between its elements and comprising national traces of different punctuation systems, which needs further investigation.

References

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