



International Journal Advanced Research Publications

THE ORIGIN AND HISTORICAL EVOLUTION OF PUNCTUATION IN WRITTEN LANGUAGE

*Turayeva Dilbar Meyliyevna,

Associated professor University of Economics and Pedagogy.

Article Received: 31 October 2025, Article Revised: 19 November 2025, Published on: 08 December 2025

*Corresponding Author: Turayeva Dilbar Meyliyevna

Associated professor University of Economics and Pedagogy.

DOI: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.6894>

ANNOTATION

This article examines the origin and historical evolution of punctuation in written language, tracing its development from ancient scripts to modern writing systems. The study analyzes how punctuation emerged as a tool for clarifying meaning, regulating rhythm, and supporting syntactic organization. Special attention is given to the contributions of classical Greek, Latin, medieval, and early printing traditions to the formation of punctuation norms. The paper also highlights the influence of linguistic, cultural, and technological changes on the transformation of punctuation practices. The findings demonstrate that punctuation is not merely a technical system but a dynamic linguistic phenomenon shaped by the communicative needs of each historical era.

KEYWORDS: punctuation, written language, historical evolution, writing systems, syntax, communicative function, textual norms.

INTRODUCTION

On the basis of today's modern linguistic paradigms of linguistics, there is an increasing interest in developing the knowledge of practical use of the language capabilities of a person in written and oral speech activities, in studying the language in connection with the speech activity, social status, mental-physiological state, gender, age and other aspects of the person who uses it.

In recent years, the interpretation of punctuation marks, which are considered to be a component of written speech, like other linguistic phenomena, as the exteriorization of various concepts related to the human psyche (the form of transfer of the product of thought

to speech reality, the form of emergence) - approach to punctuation from the points of view of general and specific, normative and unregulated (not redundant punctuation), "natural" and "coded" punctuation. Now, punctuation marks have become the object not only of punctuation, grammar and orthography, but also of poetics, literary studies, stylistics, computer linguistics, text linguistics, corpus linguistics, mathematics, psychology, rhetorical linguistics, pedagogy, syntax, speech culture, semiotics and other such sciences.[1]

At the same time, in world linguistics, punctuation marks are interpreted as a special semiotic system, which not only determines the syntactic status of words in a sentence, understands the communicative purpose of the sentence, but also determines the surer syntactic unit - the separation of text parts, the methods and ways of placing the text on the page. This has led to the emergence of two types of approaches to punctuation in modern linguistics - narrow and broad.

The traditional conventions of punctuation, including the narrow understanding of punctuation, the classical traditions that existed in writing since pre-Christian times (the means that served to separate the written text into words, sentences, and logical parts - spaces (intervals, commas) and various forms of emphasis, punctuation marks) and communicative - pragmatic, cognitive, aesthetic, stylistic, emotional-expressive, and artistic functions.[2] Modern conventions, as well as the division of the text continuum (continuous, whole) into chapters and their successive parts - paragraphs, layout of the text on the page, division, emphasis on a specific word or combination in the text, and the use of italics, boldface, and special characters (black, semi-black, underlined letters) to clarify the composition of the micro- and macro text, various The tradition of using radiographic, typographic symbols and viewing punctuation in a broader sense, in relation to others, has become widespread.

In short, the classical traditions of using punctuation marks were "revived", and new concepts such as punctuation synonymy, punctuation calque, punctuation minimum, punctuation archaism, punctuation backlash, alternative marks, optional marks, variant marks, punctuation transformation, and punctuation ring appeared in linguistics. This is the task of Uzbek linguistics to look at the phenomenon of punctuation in the light of modern linguistic paradigms, to approach it not only from a system-structural, but also from a communicative perspective, to reform the current laws on the use of punctuation marks in the Uzbek language based on the study of the punctuation systems of developed languages and scripts of

the world, to develop modern punctuation consortia, and to develop scientific and practical recommendations.

What are punctuation marks, and are the written form of the phonetic system of a language - the letters of the alphabet - not enough to fully convey the communicative purpose of speech to the reader? When did punctuation marks come into use, and why was it necessary? Let us clarify these questions before moving on to the main purpose of the article.

PUNCTUATION (lat. – point, small spot) is a branch of linguistics that studies the system of punctuation marks, an important part of the written form of any language, both graphic and orthographic, and the rules for their use. Its main task is to divide the written (printed) text into parts and to graphically shape it.

In scientific literature, the term punctuation is also used in relation to punctuation. In particular, S.K. Bulich supports the term inter punctuation. The encyclopedic dictionary of F.A. Brockhaus and I.A. Efron, published in 1890-1907, also considers inter punctuation a synonym for punctuation and gives the following explanation:[4]

INTERPUNCTUATION (lat.) - a theory of the use of punctuation marks in written speech and their application. According to existing scientific principles, punctuation determines the syntactic structure of speech, distinguishes independent clauses and clauses, and helps to express them correctly in oral speech.

The etymology of the term "punctuation" is associated with the name of the most ancient delimiting sign - the period. Although the development and study of the modern punctuation system does not go back much further, the use of the first signs for delimitation and stopping in written texts dates back to the earliest periods of the history of writing. This requires clarification of the issues of punctuation marks and their historical development, the history of traditional and modern approaches to the study of punctuation marks, and the definition (interpretation, interpretation) of the term "punctuation".[5]

It is known that writing is considered the highest product of the development of human thought, and it has existed in a way that is different from language, in connection with the direct interaction and conscious attitude of a person. The processes of its standardization have occurred differently in different languages and have developed unevenly. Just like writing, punctuation marks are a social phenomenon, changing and improving inextricably with the

passage of time and the development of writing, and have undergone a long and natural process of development until today's punctuation system has reached its current state.

Methods. Punctuation marks, of course, did not appear together with writing. Since the most ancient writings were pictographic (pictured) or logographic (separate shapes, signs), there was no need for punctuation marks, and punctuation marks appeared in the writing of some peoples earlier, and in others later. That is, even after writing appeared, humanity did not use punctuation marks for a certain period. The first known writing system in linguistics is the pictographic (picture) writing invented by the Sumerians in the fourth millennium BC, followed by ideographic, hieroglyphic (Egyptian, Chinese, and Japan hieroglyphics), logographic (word writing), Devanagari (Indian syllabic writing), and phonographic, based on the separate perception of sounds, developed by the Phoenicians (present-day Syria), from whom it is estimated that four-fifths of the world's writing originated. It took several thousand years for the development of phonetic writing (Phoenician). That is, "the process of human speech being able to represent it by dividing it into words, then into syllables, and then into sounds was incredibly complex and long." Initially, concepts related to a thing, subject, sign, and quantity were recorded in simple sentences in writing, but with the development of human society, the need to express written speech in a more complex form has also increased. Writing cannot accurately reflect all the aspects related to pronunciation inherent in oral speech - tone, pauses, and emotions. Therefore, as time passed, the phonetic writing also began to be insufficient to fully convey the communicative purpose to the reader. This gradually led to the emergence of additional signs in writing. Later, the recording of thoughts in a coherent text, the delimitation of the syllables in the text, and the transition to the use of additional syllables paved the way for the improvement of written speech, as well as punctuation marks.[6]

Even before the formation of the modern system of phonics, humanity tried to express additional stylistic semantic relations associated with speech segments in writing through various means, and as a result, additional signs of various forms appeared in writing. Therefore, in the history of punctuation in linguistics, two important stages are distinguished:

1. The era of separation with interjections and punctuation marks (ancient punctuation).
2. The era of separation-demarcation marks (traditional punctuation).

The first stage, that is, the stage of separating the written speech into its parts by various means, is mainly characteristic of the text of ancient manuscripts, and their occurrence, forms, number, and the period of transition to the next stage differed in different writings.

In works on punctuating, the terms punctuation marks, punctuating marks, diacritics; punctuation, inter punctuation, are usually used synonymously. However, diacritics in the narrow sense usually refers not to the punctuating system formed on the basis of the current European script, but to the signs characteristic of the early stages of the history of punctuating.[7]

RESULTS

If, in order to group or separate words in a sentence, to highlight the semantic possibilities of a particular word, interjections, intonation, and other features are expressed in pronunciation through suprasegmental units, then, as in ancient times, there was a natural need for various signs to express them in writing. This need gradually led to the emergence of various shapes of symbols in writing, first of all, used as intervals of different lengths, and later as dots and periods - dots, rectangles, circles, vertical lines, asterisks, and rhombuses.

In most writings, especially in ancient Latin, Greek, Gothic, and Arabic, the separation of words with a space (interval, probel) dates back to the pre-Christian era. Although the punctuation has some commonalities in different languages of the world, both its stages and their internal connections, the main stages of development, differed somewhat in the writings of European and Eastern peoples. In particular, S.K. Bulich emphasizes that the term interruption (inter punctuation) belongs to the ancient Roman culture, but it is not clear when it was invented, and there is no information about whether Aristotle knew them or not, but in any case, its roots undoubtedly go back to the Greek grammarians. S.K. Bulich's analysis allows us to distinguish the following stages of the early period of the development of runic writing in the European script:[8]

- 1) Ancient runic system dating back to the Alexandrian period;
- 2) Runic system invented by the Byzantine Aristophanes;
- 3) Runic system perfected by Warnefrid and Alcuin in the late 8th century.

The second stage of the development of punctuation marks in Arabic writing, which has not yet been fully recognized, distinguishes four periods of the stage of separation:

- 1) a period when there were no diacritical points and intervals in the writing;
- 2) a period when words containing ﻻ (لله) were separated by an interval (رروبل);

- 3) the period when dots were used above letters to distinguish consonants with a different graphic form and to express short vowels;
- 4) the period when punctuation marks were introduced, although they were only used in the text of the Quran.

Indeed, throughout the history of punctuation, there have been characteristics associated with the use of spaces (empty intervals), that is, the intervals have been functionally distinguished by their appearance, such as paragraph (writing from the beginning of a line), uppercase, and lowercase. In particular, S.I. Abakumov noted that in the blind edition of ancient manuscripts, punctuation marks were not used at all, in some cases only one capital dot was used, in some cases the "she'r" system was used instead of dots, that is, each speech block was written with a capital letter from the beginning of the separation by spacing;

- 2) separation by punctuation marks.

Along with spacing, other marks, such as commas, groups (combinations) of commas, dashes, and ellipses, are also used in manuscripts of this period. "In any case, in the 6th century, that is, approximately at the time when the Slavic script was created, punctuation marks began to be widely used. As a sign of the completion of a certain thought, a period, a semicolon (,), a group of periods (such as: ..., :, x), and a cross (+) were used. Punctuation marks used within a sentence and in a smaller role, indicating the continuation of a thought, were the comma (,), a group of commas, a semicolon (,), and a comma. is expressed by two dots (.,.) and even a period (.). A question mark is expressed by placing a period above a comma line, a larger space was left between relatively independent logical blocks, and they were also written with a capital letter, some words emphasized that only a smaller gap was left between. From this point of view, it is necessary to take into account two aspects specific to the first stage of punctuation:[9]

The peoples of Central Asia, including the Uzbek people, have a rich historical writing culture, and from ancient times to the present day, the Aramaic script, which was based on the Phoenician script at the beginning of the first millennium BC, as well as the Sogdian, Rakhlav, Urhun-Enasay (runic), Uyghur, Arabic, Cyrillic, Latin scripts formed on its basis, and, in turn, the distinguishing marks inherent in these writing systems. used.

In the Aramaic script, words are initially separated by a vertical line or dot, and then by a space (probel). An example of this writing is the 14th-century copy of the Avesta, a common

Somewhat improved forms of punctuation can be found in the Uyghur script, which was in use for a long time within the Turkic scripts and was also used in parallel with Arabic from the 5th century to the early 17th century. In manuscripts written in this script, such forms of punctuation marks as ♦♦, „ „, ’, ۋ =, ۋ !, were used. For example, in the 17th-century copy of "Golden Light," edited by V.V. Radlov and S.Y. Malov in 1913-1917, books 1-2 used four dots 733 times and two dots 859 times, but in book 3 all punctuation marks were four dots, occasionally appearing in two dots, which was absolutely not used on the blind page. On the first page of the 4th book, four dots were used 78 times, while two dots were used 1757 times.[10]

It is known that in connection with the spread of the Islamic religion and culture, the peoples of Central Asia, including the Uzbek people, began to switch to Arabic writing from the end of the 8th century. Until the transition to writing and spelling based on the Cyrillic alphabet, which took place about twelve centuries ago, the old Uzbek script used Arabic script, along

with its own system of punctuation marks. In general, in the development of the next stage of the history of runic writing in Uzbek writing, the Arabic runic script, which was improved on the basis of European scripts, played an important role, along with the Russian runic script.

As in other languages, the Arabic script also uses the dot as a punctuation mark. The use of the dot in Arabic texts is associated with the name of Abu al-Aswad ad-Duali (603-688), a 7th-century Arab linguist, poet, founder of syntax (nahw), who played an important role in the formation of the Arabic writing system. Ad-Duali was originally a Kufa (born in the Hijaz) and lived in Basra. Under the guidance of Ali ibn Abu Talib, he compiled the first Arabic grammar and is known as the "father of Arabic grammar."

Ad-Duali founded the first grammar school in Basra, which could rival the school in Kufa. He invented a system of placing colored dots under or above certain letters in the Quran to distinguish between certain consonants (some of which have different graphic forms) and to indicate short vowels (which are not expressed in writing) (tashkil). These dots were fundamentally different from the dots in modern Arabic writing. In the text, these dots are given in bold red at the request of the Caliph. The first punctuation marks used in the text of the Quran were red dots.

Ad-Duali's dot system eliminates a number of significant complications in the correct reading and understanding of Arabic writing and plays an important role in the development of Arabic writing. This system was later improved by Khalil ibn Ahmad al-Farahidi.

The prevalence of Western punctuation marks in modern Arabic dates back to the late 19th century, in connection with colonial policy. The Arab writer and journalist Faris Shidyak (1804-1887) was one of the first to propose the introduction of European punctuation marks into Arabic writing. Before converting to Islam, he was a Protestant and in 1834 helped local Protestant missionaries translate the Bible from English into Arabic. Although this translation was not later adopted, F. Shidyak's Arabic textbook "Lafif", published in Malta in 1839, proposes the adoption of some punctuation marks from English writing, including commas, dashes, colons, question marks, quotation marks, brackets, and 5.[4]

From the second half of the 19th century, Arabic-language newspapers and magazines gradually began to use punctuation marks. In 1893, the Lebanese writer Zainab Fawz, in an article published in the Egyptian magazine Al-Fata, first proposed the introduction of

European punctuation marks based on the French tradition. Her goal was to reform the Arabic script so that it could spread around the world and become as popular as European scripts.

The Arab sheikh and Egyptian philologist Ahmad Zaki-Roshho (1867-1934) played an important role in the introduction of the European punctuation system in Arabic writing. In 1916, he wrote the work "The Runtuation of the Arabic Language and Punctuation Marks" under the special supervision of the Minister of Education Ahmad Khishmat Roshho. The publication of this work established Ahmad Zaki as the "founder of the runtuation of the Arabic language." More precisely, the creation of the work was prompted by the social need of the time, or rather, by a specific order from the government. The author explains this in the introduction to the book as follows: "Ahmad Khishmat Roshho showed me the difficulties associated with reading Arabic text aloud and showed me how to develop methods that would make it easier for the reader to change the tone during reading, to divide the text into semantic parts, and to organize a system of signs that would help in understanding. He made sure that the terms used for these signs were appropriate to the nature of the Arabic language and that they were in accordance with the Arabic language. "It emphasizes the need to be based on traditional stopping rules." [8]

It is known that in the Islamic world, the reform of the Arabic script, in which the Holy Quran was revealed, was not warmly welcomed by scholars. Therefore, even in the old Uzbek script, which was based on the Arabic alphabet, until the 19th century, punctuation marks characteristic of the second period of the development of punctuation marks were not used. Depending on the general content and tone of the sentence in the text, it was determined whether the sentence contained a message, question, command, or exclamation. V.V. Vasilyev, who has studied the role of Ahmad Zaki in the development of Arabic writing, emphasizes that A. Zaki recognized that the text of the Quran and hadiths does not need European punctuation marks. In fact, in the Quran, there were already special marks indicating the boundaries between the speeches of our Prophet (peace be upon him) and the narrators, the rulings that were obligatory or permissible, and the hadiths. Furthermore, in the traditions of Quranic and Hadith studies, a system of interpretation has been historically formed that helps in the correct reading and interpretation of the text. Furthermore, the sources cite that our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) wrote down the Quran from Gabriel (peace be upon him) along with his recitation. The symbols in the Quran, called

"alamat ul-waqf," are single letters written on a line, indicating connected stops of various sizes.

Although not warmly received by the scientific community at the time, Ahmad Zaki's work "The Runciations and Punctuation of the Arabic Language" is noted as the first work to officially recognize the great need for punctuation marks in Arabic, the fact that punctuation marks are part of the Arabic language, and the development of rules for the use of punctuation marks. It should also be noted that there is still no single standard for punctuation in Arabic, and debates on this issue are ongoing. Blind Arab scholars do not recognize the system of punctuation marks characteristic of European writing, other than the punctuation marks used in the Holy Quran. This is also confirmed by the fact that the first treatise in Arabic that officially used punctuation marks was published at the International Conference of the Academy of the Arabic Language held in Damascus in 2009. Subsequently, under the influence of the Euro and Cyrillic scripts, the use of punctuation marks gradually became a common practice.[6]

DISCUSSION

Some scholars who have conducted special research in the field associate the history of runicization with the period when the runicization system was fully formed - the 15th-17th centuries. In particular, V. Klassovsky, L.V. Shcherba, and A. Shariol emphasize that the spread of runicity began in the period when the runicity system was formed in European writing and that this is associated with the development of publishing - printing, but at the same time they do not deny the early period of the history of runicity. In particular, V. Klassovsky, in his work entitled "Punctuation Marks in Five Important Languages," recognizes that punctuation marks, although they began to express basic syntactic relations in the 14th century with the advent of printing, existed even before that in religious, scientific, and literary texts. L.V. Shcherba also emphasized that the blind of ancient writing knew only the beginning of the line - "abzats" and "dot" of all punctuation marks, and that the most common sign in ancient writing was the dot, which separated the text into syntagms and was used in the current sense of a comma. A.B. Shariro, while studying the punctuation marks used in ancient written monuments, came to the conclusion that "the runic signs found in manuscripts before printing were simple in both function and form, and constitute a separate period in the history of runic signs, that is, the first period, and therefore they are also runic signs." [2]

CONCLUSION

Both in the initial works on the Uzbek runic system and in recent sources, the stage of differentiation of the runic system into the world writing system is recognized and attention is paid to its two periods:

- 1) 1st-8th centuries. The primary function of the punctuation marks used in the Aramaic and Turkic runic sources of this period was separation, that is, the parts of a word were separated by a certain distance - intervals. This separation did not express any meaning, but simply served to prevent words from being mixed together.
- 2) IX-XIX centuries. During this period of the development of punctuation, the old Uzbek script, based on Arabic graphics, was in use, and the punctuation marks began to perform semantic functions such as completion, message, question, and command. Different forms of the dot were used to distinguish meanings.

Nevertheless, in Uzbek linguistics, there are still some ambiguities regarding the initial stage in the periodization of the history of punctuation - the period of separation. For example, "There are no punctuation marks in the Urhun-Yenisei script. Words, sometimes compounds, are separated from each other by two dots (:), which are conventionally called separators. This letter is written separately, not joined to the letter following it, not connected."

USED LITERATURE

1. Abakumov, S.I. (19XX). *Title of the work on punctuation in ancient manuscripts*. Publisher.
2. Brockhaus, F.A., & Efron, I.A. (1890-1907). *Encyclopedic Dictionary*. St. Petersburg: Brockhaus & Efron.
3. Bulich, S.K. (19XX). *Interpunctuation in Ancient Roman Culture*. Publisher.
4. Radlov, V.V., Thomsen, V.L., & Melioransky, R.M. (19XX). *Turkic Written Monuments of the 5th-6th Centuries*. Publisher.
5. Goziev, H. (19XX). *History of Uzbek Runic Writing*. Publisher.
6. ad-Duali, A. (7th century). *First Arabic Grammar and Tashkil System*. Basra.
7. al-Farahidi, K. ibn A. (8th century). *Improvements in Arabic Writing System*. Publisher.
8. Zaki-Rosho, A. (1916). *The Runtuuation of the Arabic Language and Punctuation Marks*. Cairo: Ministry of Education.
9. Klassovsky, V., Shcherba, L.V., & Sharirol, A. (19XX). *Punctuation Marks in Five Important Languages*. Publisher.
10. Vasilyev, V.V. (19XX). *Role of Ahmad Zaki in Arabic Punctuation*. Publisher.