

International Conference for International Education and Cross-cultural Communication.  
Problems and Solutions (IECC-2015), 09-11 June 2015, Tomsk Polytechnic University,  
Tomsk, Russia

## Specificity of Chinese Punctuation and its Place in Teaching Russian Punctuation to Foreign Students

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### Abstract

The article deals with the specifics and national-cultural identity of the functioning of punctuation marks in texts in Russian and Chinese languages. An overview and comparative analysis of the functioning of punctuation marks at the end of a sentence in texts of various stylistic trends described in the linguistic literature of China and Russia, were made. Due to the change of the leading paradigm in linguistics, a language speaking personality (in this case a foreign student creating texts in the Russian language) becomes the centre of research. Success in learning a foreign language (in this case Russian) is largely due to the knowledge and account of the features of the mother tongue. The selection of the tested material is determined by the fact that the mother tongue of students from the Asia-Pacific region (from China in particular) greatly influences their punctuation marks in texts. This determines the need to study the punctuation rules and regulations of the native (in this case Chinese) language. The description of punctuation marks made in students' texts (on the example of punctuation mark function at the end of a sentence) in the foreign (Russian) language significantly complements and enriches the picture of punctuation functioning in the Russian language and the languages of the Asia-Pacific region. The article describes and analyzes the texts of various stylistic trends created by TPU students; it also contains conclusions concerning the specificity of punctuation marks functioning at the end of a sentence.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of IECC 2015.

**Keywords:** Punctuation; punctuation marks; functioning.

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## 1. Introduction

This article is devoted to the review, collation, and analysis of the available information on the punctuation of the Chinese language, represented in educational and reference books in Chinese and Russian, especially punctuation in essays of foreign students enrolled in Tomsk Polytechnic University.

The relevance of the study is due to several factors. In recent years, considerable attention in pedagogy has been given to the student-oriented approach, in which the central figure in the process of learning is the very student, mastering non-native (Russian) language. It should be taken into account that until recently the research of punctuation in Chinese texts in scientific linguistic literature was not performed. On the other hand, until recently the Chinese punctuation rules in a text, having different paradigm, were not given priority.

The relevance of this study is also due to several additional reasons.

- First, the present study adds to the existing scientific understanding of the rules of written text organization in Chinese, it also has a scientific and practical significance.
- Second, knowledge of particularities of punctuation in Chinese has provided substantial assistance in learning the punctuation practice of text structure in modern Chinese texts.
- Thirdly, accounting for theoretical foundations of Chinese punctuation and features of modern punctuation, while designing texts in Chinese, is the necessary scientific basis for the development of teaching methods of punctuation rules when designing in modern Russian texts.

The aim of our work is the study and description of punctuation system functioning in the Chinese language to the extent that it is presented in educational publications. The main task of this study is to teach Chinese students the principles of writing in a variety of text styles in their native (Chinese) language. Due to the fact that in the process of learning at TPU, when placing punctuation in a foreign (Russian) texts, foreign students, in some cases, rely on the punctuation rules known from the textbooks on grammar, published in China and Russia. Therefore, it is important to know this system. This article suggests a sequel, in which we plan to study the functioning of punctuation in the middle of a sentence in a variety of texts in a foreign (Russian) language for foreign students from the Asia-Pacific region enrolled in Tomsk Polytechnic University. In this article we analyze the available information about punctuation in the Chinese language and consider different cases of placing punctuation at the end of a sentence in the texts in foreign (Russian language). The examples are given in Russian, the spelling and punctuation of sentences from students' summaries are saved completely.

Currently, in our country and abroad, there is an increased attention on the Chinese language, but Chinese punctuation hasn't been well studied yet. Attention to the creator of the text, a foreign student, is not reasonable, because the punctuation rules for designing texts in Chinese are poorly known, and so there is no reason to assume that the reader adequately understands the meaning of a text created by foreign students.

The **tasks** of our research result from this line of reasoning.

1. To analyze and summarize the scientific description of particularities of punctuation in Chinese by comparing the viewpoints of different linguists.
2. To analyze and summarize the practice of placing punctuation at the end of a sentence written by native Chinese speakers in their native language texts.
3. To analyze the practice of placing punctuation at the end of a sentence written by native Chinese speakers in foreign (Russian) texts.
4. Develop guidelines for teaching the rules of punctuation of text design to foreign students in a foreign (Russian) language.

## 2. Research instrumentation

Grammar books on the Chinese language published in Russia and in China (Gorelov, 1982; The course of writing essays in Chinese..., 2006; Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008), as well as summaries in foreign (Russian) language written by foreign students studying at Tomsk Polytechnic University, were used as sources for our research.

As we consider different cases of placing punctuation marks in Chinese and Russian texts, the main **methods** of

research are the descriptive method, comparative method, and comparative analysis method.

### 3. Background

While teaching grammar of the Russian language to students from countries in the Asia-Pacific region, we have repeatedly drawn attention to the difficulty of mastering the rules of punctuation text design. To understand what guided the foreign students while placing punctuation in the texts in a foreign (Russian) language, it is necessary to analyze the particularities of punctuation marks in the native (in this case, Chinese) language. To do this, one should refer to the educational literature on grammar, published in China and Russia.

The functioning of punctuation marks in non-codified texts in a foreign (Russian) language began to be studied relatively recently (Yaritsa, 2013a, 2013b). The system of norms and rules familiar to the students from school and university courses affects creating texts and placing punctuation.

Russian and Chinese systems of writing are quite different, as in China for many centuries characters have existed. Besides, characters were originally written (drawn) vertically, and more recently under the influence of European languages - horizontally. Accordingly, with vertical writing, a page was filled with columns of characters, and there was a little need for punctuation; with a horizontal arrangement of characters, lines were more like European writing, and as a result, particularities of punctuation, was required to separate sentences, clauses, homogeneous parts of a sentence, addressing and introductory words, and etc.

It is well known that most languages using characters are characterized by a minimum number of traditional punctuation marks: they usually include a full stop between the sentences (or lines); more seldom within a sentence. In addition, character-based written texts starting from the 19th century, have borrowed punctuation from European (primarily English) writing. The use of this borrowed punctuation was often optional. Therefore, the need arose to get acquainted with publications declaring the rules of punctuation in Chinese texts, because they affect the development of punctuation skills and the use of punctuation in the texts in a foreign (Russian) language by foreign (mostly Chinese) students. This also shows the efficiency of education in the foreign (Russian) language.

In the Russian Federation and China textbooks written by Russian linguists (Gorelov, 1982), as well as scientists having Chinese as their mother tongue (The course of writing essays in Chinese..., 2006; Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008) are known. The information about punctuation in Chinese texts presented in these publications is quite brief.

Punctuation "is used to divide the speech into pieces and to denote a pause in writing, and the rhythm of speech and the tone of voice" (Gorelov, 1982). In the Russian language ten punctuation marks are most often used: a full stop, question mark, exclamation mark, ellipses, comma, semicolon, colon, dash, parentheses, and quotation marks. In Chinese punctuation eleven punctuation marks are used: the same as in Russian, as well as a drop-shaped comma, which is a variety of the standard comma (Gorelov, 1982). Besides, the author (Gorelov, 1982) did not include the so-called hollow and black full stop, which is put under the line, and special punctuation marks in the list of punctuation marks used in Chinese texts.

Some punctuation marks used in Chinese texts differ from the corresponding punctuation marks in the Russian language by its role and manner of writing. The rules of punctuation adopted in the Russian and Chinese languages have differences (Gorelov, 1982).

In the "Course of essay writing in Chinese..." (The course of writing essays in Chinese..., 2006) 14 punctuation marks are described.

In a grammar tutorial of the Chinese language it is reported that punctuation marks are "supporting characters in fixing the speech, they have become an integral part of the written language; these signs indicate pauses, emotions, etc." (Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008). The number of described punctuation marks is more than in the first two publications: 2 types and 16 varieties of marks (Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008).

We studied 54 abstracts of preparatory department students and students from the 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> years of study at the Institute of International Education and Language Communication, and analyzed more than 350 syntactic units. As a result, the work revealed some features of the functioning of punctuation in texts in Russian, written by students from China. We will consider punctuation marks used in Chinese texts and punctuation rules in Chinese texts. To do this, we first turn to the punctuation marks forming the borders of a sentence (external) and analyze the practice of

putting these marks in the summaries of Chinese students studying the Russian language and writing texts in Russian. The punctuation and vocabulary of the summaries of foreign students are presented here in full.

#### 4. Main text

##### 4.1. Punctuation marks at the end of the sentence

The most common punctuation mark in Chinese texts is a full stop. This is a hollow dot; the graphic writing of this punctuation mark differs from that in the Russian language. In the known textbooks, a common feature of a hollow dot is marked: it is placed at the end of a sentence, and indicates its completion.

In contrast to the hollow dot, the standard ("black") full stop as a punctuation mark at the end of a sentence is not used in the Chinese language, it has other functions (See below).

The full stop (.) is placed "at the end of a narrative, and sometimes an incentive sentence." (Gorelov, 1982). For example: *"The Soviet Union is a socialist state."*

The full stop... "refers to the end of the story" (Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008). Example: *"I am Russian."*

In this case, there is a match with the rule of sentence punctuation in Russian texts. The texts in Russian have a full stop to form the border of a declarative sentence, while at the end of the incentive one, we often put an exclamation mark (Valgina, 2002, 2004; Rozental, 1999; Yaritsa, 2013a, 2013b). A full stop in writing "denotes a pause after the sentence completion" (The course of writing essays in Chinese ..., 2006). For example: *"Tomorrow at five o'clock in the banquet hall of the University a conference will be held."*

Provided that foreign students from China have learned to write and create texts in Russian, they use the common full point to indicate the end of the sentence, and in their summaries we mainly see the observance of rules of punctuation (a full stop is put at the end of a declarative sentence):

*Here are some facts from his biography.*

*I hope that my recommendation will be useful to you.*

*I know him from the preparatory courses.*

Explanations of foreign students look the same: "a full stop is put at the end of the sentence." While putting a full stop at the end of the sentence, a grammatical feature dominates; the punctuation rule is the same, so sentences essentially end with a full stop.

*The plot is devoted to the problem of migrants.*

The student's explanation is succinct: "The sentence is completed."

*In his spare time he likes to go sightseeing and listen to music.*

A full stop is put at the end of complex sentences.

*If any link in this chain dies, the threat looms over all.*

*I received your letter in which you ask me to describe the man who claims to be in the position of a guide-interpreter in your company.*

*I think that the Internet is harmful for us.*

*I have no doubt that he better than others will work as a guide and interpreter.*

Students' explanations sound about the same: "A full stop is put at the end of a sentence. »

In accordance with the norms of Russian printed texts a full stop isn't put in headlines of texts. This rule applies to printed literature and is not specifically explained in Chinese textbooks. In foreign students' summaries in half of the cases, according to the norm, a full stop isn't put in headlines. For example:

*Reference*

*Why it is difficult to become good parents*

Foreign students explain: "I do not know. It should be." In accordance with the rules, they do not put it at the end of a headline, but he can't explain its absence, because this rule has recently been learnt and has not become obvious and accepted yet. A deviation from the rules of punctuation is observed. Very rarely (in the studied material such cases constitute not more than 2%) a full stop isn't put at the end of a sentence.

*Dear Andrei\_*

*I received your letter in which you asked me to recommend you someone whose personal and professional qualities correspond to the job of director of the plant "GMP"*

The student considered the words *Dear Andrei* as an address and headline at the same time, so he did not put any

punctuation mark in accordance with the rule studied. In the second sentence the student did not remember about the punctuation mark at the end of the sentence.

It is a violation of the rules that in their summaries foreign students put a full stop in headlines, but this happens much less often than in notebooks of Russian students.

*Report.*

*How to live without a common language.*

*Report on the internship.*

Students consider a full stop put in headlines to be a "special form" of punctuation sentence design. Accounting for the difficulties of translation, there is a reason to believe that a full stop is seen as a punctuation mark indicating the end of the sentence as a unit of information.

#### 4.2. Peculiarities of a full stop functioning at the end of a sentence

1. There is a similarity in the rules of putting a final punctuation mark (a full stop) in Russian and Chinese: a full stop is placed at the end of a complete sentence to mark its completion.

2. There are some differences in Russian and Chinese in putting a full stop as a final punctuation mark at the end of a sentence.

3. A hollow dot is used as a final punctuation mark in Chinese, though it doesn't exist in Russian.

4. Functions of the hollow dot are somewhat broader: it is placed "at the end of the narrative, and sometimes incentive sentences" representing a pause after the sentence completion.

5. In the textbooks published in China, a middle dot can be found which is not in the Russian punctuation, a "point-interval", which is placed exactly in the center of the line. The literature clearly specifies the reason for this punctuation usage: "... to distinguish the month and the day when writing the date, as well as the first name and the last name of foreigners and members of ethnic minorities."

6. Sometimes, at the end of a sentence ellipsis are used. The functions of the ellipsis in the Russian and Chinese languages are very similar: at the end of the sentence it indicates understatement or a missing fragment of the sentence.

In addition to a full stop a question mark is also used as punctuation at the end of a sentence. In the description of the mark, educational tools complement each other rather than contradict. In "grammar ..." (Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008), the authors increasingly pay attention to the indication of a pause after the sentence, giving it critical meaning.

A question mark (?) is placed at the end of an interrogative sentence (Gorelov, 1982), it denotes the end of an interrogative sentence (The course of writing essays in Chinese..., 2006), a pause after the question (Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008). For example: "What is his name?", "How can you say that?"

It should be noted that the question mark in the Chinese language performs the function of the final punctuation mark in sentences having not only a questioning tone, but also expressing an emotional state of the author's statements. A question mark often carries an additional modal meaning.

A question mark is also used in summaries of foreign students.

The texts written by foreign students mostly observed this punctuation rule. Most often, the appearance of a question mark in a notebook is a teacher's question. As a rule, the question is followed by the answer.

*What is the theme of the text?*

*Is this theme actual? Why?*

*The theme of the text is "Internet dependence".*

*In my opinion, this topic is relevant, as it seriously affects the health and psyche of a person's life.*

There are some deviations from the norm in putting a question mark in the texts in Russian written by foreign students. This following a dialogue indicates that a foreign student does not always strongly differentiate interrogative and incentive intonation. Example:

*Identify the main idea?*

At the end of the sentence the student puts a question mark, apparently, by analogy with the following interrogative sentences, written with the dictation of the instructor. Although the sentence does not include a question in its meaning and has no specific indicators of a grammatical question (the presence of interrogative pronouns, word order, intonation), the student puts a question mark aiming to make the recording of the dialogue

(question - answer) uniform. Foreign students are not very confident in their own knowledge and do not always distinguish interrogative intonation in pronunciation, especially if they see the printed text. The Chinese language has four intonation tones, a fact which creates certain difficulties in the assimilation of the non-native (Russian) language.

The written answer to the question: "The text deals with the problem of Internet dependence."

Further the written dialogue continues:

*Is this theme relevant? Why?*

The answer of the student:

*In my opinion, this problem [dependence on the Internet] is relevant, as it seriously affects health.*

*How do you feel about this issue?*

The answer of the student:

*I have a positive attitude because in China many people depend on the Internet.*

The student does not justify the spread of the Internet in the world; he agrees that the problem of Internet dependence exists not only in Russia but also in China.

*What is the attitude to this problem of other people?*

The answer of the student:

*I have a few friends that have negative attitude.*

*What do you mean?*

Answer:

*I think that the Internet is harmful for us.*

*What do you know about it?*

Answer:

*I know that the Internet is like a drug.*

*Who should be responsible for that?*

The answer of the student:

*It seems to me, no one knows exactly what the internet is - it is beneficial or harmful.*

*Compare, please, the situation in Russia and in your country?*

In this case, as in the first sentence, there is a mismatch in a codified norm: the impulse to action is written in the form of a question. According to the student, it is a question mark that first reflects the emotional state of the writer and in the second sentence, unifies the dialogue by giving it a uniform character (question - answer).

The answer of the student:

*Compared with Russia, the problem is more serious in China.*

*Do you know examples of such situations?*

No answer.

*What can you suggest to solve this problem?*

Answer:

*To solve this problem, you can offer guidance to Internet users.*

*What conclusion can be drawn?*

Answer:

*Finally, we can conclude the following: the Internet has more harm than good.*

The written dialogue gives reason to believe that foreign students do not always distinguish interrogative and imperative sentences, as they are inconsistent in their use of the final punctuation mark, due to the peculiarities of perception of certain syntactical constructions: without interrogative words the intonation of interrogative sentences in Russian is not always perceived. They capture the emotional intensity of the sentence, however, and consider the use of a question mark in this case to be correct.

The following sentence contains a question – it is a composition theme:

*How will we live in the future?*

Putting a question mark at the end of the sentence in this case is correct: proper use of punctuation marks in interrogative sentences correspond more often with the norm in cases when students see a written version of the sentence and can conceptualize the meaning of the sentence and intonation. So, the use of a question mark in the



Russian and Chinese languages have both similarities and differences. The similarity concerns the basic functions of a question mark: it is put at the end of an interrogative sentence. The differences relate to the additional function of this punctuation mark: a question mark in Chinese denotes a pause at the end of sentences. Additional modal value is attached to a question mark: it conveys the emotional state of the speaker. Intonation of interrogative sentences is not always perceived by foreign students. While listening, the students do not always distinguish interrogative and imperative tones, especially if sentences sound at a rapidly pace almost without a pause. All these features condition the peculiarities of the educational process of teaching Russian as a foreign language: it is necessary to articulate interrogative sentences firmly, to observe the interrogative intonation, and to use lexical markers – interrogative words and pronouns as often as possible. In addition, teaching punctuation in Russian as a foreign language requires more training hours than teaching Russian as a native language.

#### 4.3. Peculiarities of putting an exclamation mark at the end of a sentence in the texts of foreign students

At the end of the sentence in texts in the Chinese language an exclamation mark is also used.

- The exclamation mark (!) is placed at the end of an exclamation, and sometimes incentive sentence (Gorelov, 1982), which coincides with the Russian punctuation norm. (Valgina, 2004, 2002; Rozental, 1999). Example: *"Down with the warmongers!"*
- Russian grammar distinguishes exclamatory and non-exclamatory sentences by intonation declarative, interrogative and incentive by the purpose of the utterance (Valgina, 2004, 2002; Rozental, 1999). These concepts are not separated in the grammar of the Chinese language as more attention is paid to the inner content of the sentence.
- It is emphasized that the exclamation mark means "a pause after the exclamation" (Grammar of the Chinese language... 2008), which is important for the Chinese language having four intonation tones. Example: *"There are really a lot of books on the bookshelf!"*
- An exclamation mark in writing often expresses not only the emotions of the speaker, but also a call, an impulse to action (Grammar of the Chinese language..., 2008): *"Speak quickly!"*
- An exclamation mark means "strong emotions of the speaker, it is placed at the end of an exclamatory sentence" (The course of writing essays in Chinese... 2006). When the incentive sentences and «sentences - rhetorical questions» convey the feelings of the speaker, it is also appropriate to use an exclamation mark at the end. For example: *"How quiet it is in the library," "Happy Birthday!", "Come quickly!" "But were I really up to it!"* (The course of writing essays in Chinese..., 2006).

In the work of foreign students we have noted only a few sentences at the end of which there was an exclamation mark.

1 An exclamation mark is used in addressing:

*Dear Anton!*

2. It is also used to separate the words of wishes and words of farewells:

*All the best!*

*Bye!*

*And after all, I tell everyone "Good night!" and go to bed and undress.*

3. There is also the case of putting an exclamation mark at the end, reflecting the emotional attitude of the author (student) to the statement:

*When we are heating it, you must first preheat and then heat, and most important, the surface of the tube is dry!*

4. The summaries of foreign students presented a case when an exclamation mark was used not as a final punctuation mark, but as a means of drawing attention to the information in the headline. This is a single case, but it can not be ignored:

*! Why the state should help students to find work.*

We can assume that an exclamation mark here has a function of drawing attention, which indicates the emotional attitude of the author to the subject of writing (the importance of the phrase is recognized). It expresses the subjective attitude of the author to the utterance.

So, punctuation rules for placing an exclamation mark in Russian and Chinese have more similarities than differences: the exclamation mark is placed at the end of the exclamatory and sometimes incentive sentence. The

exclamation mark is placed at the end of sentences with a modal value. The exclamation mark notes addresses, wishes, farewells. Intonation is considered the primary criterion for using an exclamation mark. Sometimes an exclamation mark is used as a means of particularities of punctuation to call attention to certain information. In this case, an exclamation mark is written in the margins in front of words that are considered most important.

## 5. Conclusion

Thus, there are similarities and differences due to national and cultural features of the use of punctuation marks in one's native language, including at the end of the sentence. At the end of the sentence in students' summaries a full stop, an question mark, an exclamation mark, and ellipsis are used. There is a difference in writing a full stop: in the Chinese language there is a hollow dot, which has no analogue in the Russian language. In contrast to the hollow dot, the regular full stop is used as a sign of the end of the sentence only in Russian texts written by foreign students. On the other hand, under the influence of Russian grammar, students from China studying punctuation in texts in Russian are beginning to punctuate borrowing from the Russian language. That is an example of the assimilation and use of punctuation of the non-native (Russian) language as part of their developing understanding of punctuation around the world.

In the use of punctuation marks at the end of the sentence, there is an observed coincidence in the norms and rules of punctuation design in Russian and Chinese texts. This is due to a relatively small number of these signs and to an active manifestation of communicative principles of the text organization. In quantitative terms, the Chinese language has many fewer punctuation rules for denoting the end of the sentence, which suggests they are fairly uniform in nature.

There is reason to believe that punctuation is largely influenced by semantics. "The semantic relationship in a sentence is a very complex issue, this relationship is determined by the semantics of vocabulary, syntax and logic, these three interconnected aspects determine the semantic compound" (The course of writing essays in Chinese).

The description of punctuation marks in Chinese allows you to make some conclusions about the specifics of their use for text design. Some punctuation marks used at the end of the sentence in Chinese texts (such as an interrogative mark) involve additional modal colouring that must be considered when teaching Chinese students. Sometimes punctuation in Chinese does not only structure the text, but also reflects the modal content of the sentence.

Learning Chinese punctuation is the basis for the subsequent assimilation of Russian punctuation by foreign students. To achieve success in education, one must take into account the rules that do not coincide with the Russian punctuation system, and those that do coincide with the Russian (the study of these rules does not need to be long-term). All this must be considered when teaching punctuation of Russian texts to foreign students of the Asia-Pacific region.

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