

МИНИСТЕРСТВО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ
РОССИЙСКОЙ ФЕДЕРАЦИИ
НАЦИОНАЛЬНЫЙ ИССЛЕДОВАТЕЛЬСКИЙ
ТОМСКИЙ ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ

ЯЗЫК И КУЛЬТУРА

*Сборник статей
XXV Международной научной конференции,
посвящённой Году культуры в России*

20–22 октября 2014 г.

Отв. ред. профессор С.К. Гураль

Томск
Издательский Дом Томского государственного университета
2015

T.V. Butuzova, T.G. Evtushenko

Tomsk State University

**PUNCTUATING TRANSITIONAL WORDS ‘THUS’,
‘THEREFORE’, ‘HOWEVER’
IN ENGLISH SCIENTIFIC PROSE**

Nowadays punctuation practice in European languages is changing, which is stimulated by a number of social factors, namely fast growth of IT technologies and, as a consequence, close language contacts. In a digital age, the communication of different nationalities becomes inevitable, which influenced the structure and functioning of most living languages. International English suffers the greatest impact [Truss, 2004] because of its global status: non-native speakers, i.e. the representatives of different nationalities and mentality interact with each other using their idea of English language, which results in the creation of pigeons (Chinglish, Spanglish, etc.).

English punctuation is known for its recommending nature, where the communicative intention is dominating. It implies that the author can punctuate similar syntactic constructions in different ways depending on his/her point of view. The rules, most of them conventions, are clearly presented in a variety of guides [Rubens, 2001; Kirkman, 2006]. However, in practice the researchers have difficulties with punctuating introductory and transitional phrases in scientific writing. Therefore, this paper is aimed at analyzing the mechanism of punctuating transitional words ‘thus’, ‘therefore’, ‘however’ in modern international scientific prose.

According to punctuation guides, the transitional adverbs are put off by separating devices (semicolon and comma) in a sentence. At the beginning of the sentence the transitional (or conjunctive) adverbs must be put off by commas, whereas a semicolon is used before a transitional when it stands in the middle of a complex or compound sentence.

Studying the corpora in computer science written by the researchers of different nationalities allowed to state the fact that the use of punctu-

ation devices with these transitional adverbs is not consistent and does not always comply to the rules. This inconsistency of punctuation is observed both at the beginning and in the middle of the sentence.

1) At the beginning of the sentence the transitionals are mostly put off by commas (thus – 75%, therefore – 60%, however – 99%). In all the other cases the commas are omitted.

e.g. **Therefore**, one needs to select a small enough subset of these test cases that have the highest possible fault revealing power.

e.g. **However** this would not be a fair comparison.

2) In the middle of the sentence thus is not used at all, whereas the transitional words therefore and however are rare. No punctuation devices are used to separate the following adverbs.

e.g. Integration testing can only detect bugs in program sections which are executed, and **therefore** cannot detect all the mutations.

The inconsistency in punctuating international scientific prose can be specified by a number of factors: 1) non-native English speakers try to avoid over-punctuation and, 2) the researchers as the representatives of different cultures have their own idea of how to punctuate scientific prose. This preliminary study is of current scientific interest since the obtained knowledge can be used either in teaching practice or for further theoretical linguistic research. The analysis of traces of national punctuation habits of non-native English researchers in the body of scientific corpora in international English can help reveal the current tendencies needed for regulation and standardizing of punctuation practice in scientific prose, which could help solve the problems of the communicative competence arising between non-native speakers and thereby contribute to the efficiency of international scientific communication.

References

1. Truss L. (2004) *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, New York: Penguin Group.
2. Kirkman J. (2006) *Punctuation Matters Advice on Punctuation for Scientific and Technical Writing*, London and New York: Routledge.
3. Rubens Ph. (2001) *Science and Technical Writing: A Manual of Style*, New York: Routledge.