

Communicative Value of Stylistic Variants in Russian Punctuation: A Guide for English Speakers

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Abstract

The Russian language is notorious among English speakers for its grammatical complexity. In particular, the acquisition and usage of punctuation rules of Russian as a foreign language, as well as for native speakers, presents considerable difficulty.

One reason for this problem is the existence of substandard uses of punctuation that deviate from standard punctuation rules to convey particular communicative nuances. Some punctuation patterns in Russian are not dictated by syntactic context; but instead vary according to the author's choice of communicative style. Guidelines for such usage are not provided in the majority of Russian textbooks and guides on orthography. General information about such deviations can be found, for example, in the guide "Orthography and Punctuation" by Valgina & Svetlysheva; however, substandard use of punctuation marks in the Russian written language remains poorly described. This presents a problem for students trying to master Russian punctuation, especially for nonnative speakers.

This paper focuses on the essence of substandard use of punctuation marks (substandard punctuating), in particular the use of contextually conditioned marks. I explain such punctuation by using a communicative approach to Russian punctuation. This paper analyzes examples of sentences with identical wording but different punctuation strategies. The examples are taken from textbooks, guides and monographs on modern Russian punctuation.

I conclude that these variants in punctuation are regular and represent an integral part of the Modern Russian punctuation system. However, by using substandard punctuation in accord with one's intention the author should be able to "protect" his text from misunderstanding. Identifying a context where punctuation is not fixed by the syntax, but rather allows communicative variation, can be challenging for the student. In this case, for example, an editor should apply to some new set of rules to suggest the proper punctuation in different communicative situations.

The traditional approach to the codification of Russian punctuation rules does not allow for a description of all variety of usages and, most importantly, does not in fact register the necessary punctuation patterns in long-term memory of a native speaker of Russian.

Therefore, modern Russian punctuation rules need to be revised in terms of actual usage and communicative function in texts of different styles. This topic is, in fact, broader than the present article, which simply introduces the problem.

Keywords: Russian syntax, punctuation, communicative principle, grammar acquisition

1. Substandard Punctuating and Contextually Conditioned Punctuation Marks in Russian

In general, modern Russian punctuation is regulated by both general rules with a higher degree of stability and situational rules adapted to the functional qualities of a certain type of text. General rules represent a required punctuation minimum. Situational rules are not so rigid; they provide a special informational content and expression of speech. N. S. Valgina explains that these rules cause *substandard punctuation variants* (Valgina & Svetlysheva, 1993, p. 277).

The functions of punctuation marks that conform to situational rules are the following: *logical-semantic* (as revealed in different texts but especially in scientific and official ones), *emphatic* (mainly in official texts, partly in journalistic and artistic ones), *expressive and emotional* (in artistic and journalistic texts), *signal* (in advertising texts). Such usage of marks, conformed to the situational rules, is not entirely dictated by a writer's will, but reflects the general stylistic properties of functionally different texts. Such substandard punctuation is regulated by the nature of texts and exists alongside *standard punctuation*.

Russian researchers concur that in every period of Russian punctuation system development the functions of marks and conditions of their usage changed. In this sense, the rules always "lag behind" the usage and, therefore, need to be revised from time to time. Changes in the function of punctuation marks are constant; they reflect "the life" of language, in particular, its syntactic structure and stylistic system.

For example, the guides of N. S. Valgina and V. N. Svetlysheva note that in modern Russian media the dash has come to be used increasingly between elements of the asyndetic sentence (in place of the colon), marking an illustration or a reason in the second part, generalizing words before a list of parallel items, etc.:

- (1) *Мариус Петипа ставил в России великолепные балеты—"Жизель", "Лебединое озеро", "Спящую красавицу".*
- (2) *Под развесистой кроной не бывает пусто—отдыхают путники, чабаны, благо живительный родник рядом.*
- (3) *...Игра свеч стоит—ведь такое общение должно стать прообразом будущих молодежных домов инженера и домов ученого.*
- (4) *Сюда прибыли тысячи механизаторов—из России, с Украины, из Прибалтики.*
- (5) *К нему относятся по-разному—кто с восхищением, кто с усмешкой.*
- (6) *Сопоставление России с Канадой [по климату] некорректно—все крупные канадские города лежат на широтах южнее Тамбова.*

The authors point to a similar usage of punctuation marks in literary works:

- (7) *У Блока было все, что создает великого поэта,—огонь, нежность, проникновение, свой образ мира, свой дар особого, все претворяющего прикосновения, своя сдержанная, скрадывающаяся, вобравшая в себя судьба (Б. Пастернак).*
- (8) *Но вызывать сейчас огонь артиллерии было бессмысленно—огонь накрыл бы и наших разведчиков (Ю. Бондарев).*
- (9) *Главный редактор газеты всячески избегает теперь встречи со мной, дозвониться ему невозможно, секретарша все ссылается на его занятость—то у него заседание, то планерка, то его вызвали в вышестоящие, как она любит подчеркивать, инстанции (Ч. Айтматов).*

Such deviations from the rules reflect common modern trends in Russian punctuation development and gradually prepare the ground for change or clarification of the punctuation rules formulations. Such punctuation choices are not due to author idiosyncrasy because such cases can be found among different authors in similar grammatical and stylistic conditions of a sentence (Valgina & Svetlysheva, 1993, p. 278).

Punctuation marks could be used according to the specific communicative tasks, and therefore connect with a writer's personality to a greater degree. Such marks are *contextually conditioned* and submit to the tasks of the communicative intention of a writer who has the right to choose one or another punctuating depending on the communicative situation, the context. Therefore, different authors can use identical punctuation variants to express the same communicative situation.

But the problem is that the communicative situation itself may be interpreted individually. In this case, the punctuation depends on the context, its regularities in semantic and lexical-grammatical structure. The punctuating of a text depends on its interpretation, but such punctuating may be as consistent with the rules and so do not comply with them.

N. S. Valgina gives the following examples in her guide:

- (10) *Все на нем было отглажено, франтовато. Кривоватые—**тоже от отца**—ноги приводили его в отчаяние (В. Каверин).*
- (11) *И оттого, что он так охотно и радостно слушал, рассказывали—с **радостью тоже**—новые истории (В. Шукшин).*

(12) *Печь когда-то треснула, ее, по белому, замазали глиной (И. Бунин).*

Such punctuation variants are not spelled out in the rules governing how the words and phrases that clarify the meaning of the preceding words are set off by commas but not dashes. In addition, one and the same word can be considered as clarifying or not clarifying, depending on the meaning (Rozental, 2004, p. 125).

In the first and second sentences the authors used the dash, which is traditionally considered to be a “stronger” mark of enclosure than the comma. In the last sentence the detached adverbial modifier “по белому” precedes the predicate “замазали”, but such a situation is not regulated by the rules. The choice of these marks is made conditional on the author’s communicative intention. But such contextually conditioned punctuation marks cannot be considered as individually author’s ones because they are used in similar grammatical conditions of a sentence and accompanied by pauses and specific intonation of enclosure in reading.

It must be admitted that, on the one hand, in such situations the writer’s perspective of the punctuation mark usage according to his communicative intention can be found, and, on the other hand, the lack of a functional purpose decoding mechanism of one or another mark for the reader can become a cause of misunderstanding or scanty understanding. The reader is reluctant to be guided mostly by the rules which are reflected in the reference books and in the absence of detailed “application instructions”—by his own intuition, which does not always draw a positive result. Nevertheless, the writer’s intuition formation is based not only on his knowledge of rules but also the basic principles of Russian punctuation.

2. The Principles of Russian Punctuation

As the prominent expert on Russian punctuation B. I. Osipov notes, the principles of punctuation relate to concrete punctuation rules (Osipov, 1992, p. 20) which determine the optimal marks usage (Lekant, 2001, p. 541).

Traditionally, the main principles of punctuation read as follows: a structural (a syntactic), a semantic (a logical-grammatical), an intonation (intonation-rhetorical) and a communicative one (Valgina, 1979; Shvartskopf, 1988a; Shubina, 1999; Valgina, 2004).

The most important feature of the Russian punctuation system development is the support on different principles in concrete historical periods. On the strength of the evolutionary nature of language development there are no sudden, instant transitions from one principle to another. Simply, in virtue of various circumstances, one or more principles play a dominant role in different periods (Orekhova, 2000, p. 14).

Thus, intonation principle dates back in ancient rhetoric, which was connected with the necessity to mark pauses in oratorical speech in the process of writing.

A. M. Peshkovskiy, a supporter of the intonation approach, assigned a dominant part to expressive reading in punctuating, with the writer’s orientation on his text perception. His position is clearly expressed in the following statements:

Almost all the punctuation marks, used in the modern Russian writing, are read... For the punctuating ability acquisition we should always consciously read the marks, i. e. to connect one or another intonation contour with one or another mark; consequently, strong association of each mark with appropriate intonation contour is generated... The harmonization of expressive reading with punctuation will be beneficial not only to the latter one. To hear mentally what you write! Often, it takes the teacher only to read a student’s inconsistent phrase from the rostrum that the author become horrified by his own words. Why did he write it? Because he didn’t hear in writing, because he was not reading himself aloud. The more the student will read himself aloud, the better he will understand the stylistic nature of language, the better he will write. The reunification of the writing top of the language tree with its lively oral roots always gives life, and their cutting-off always kills (Peshkovskij, 1925, p. 94).

For example, in punctuation practice the points of omission can serve as a pause signal in emotional written speech (Orekhova, 2000, p. 55).

(13) *Она едва смела верить ушам своим и... Но я бросаю кисть (Н. Карамзин).*

(14) *Для начала... такие... формальные вопросы (В. Шукшин).*

(15) *Давно это... в выраж вошел? (В. Распутин).*

The semantic principle of Russian punctuation is connected with the age of rationalism, to the tendency to attach logical order to the language. The punctuation marks usage was associated with the concepts of the thought completeness/incompleteness, the expression of opposition, explanation, reason, consequence and the

availability of relevant conjunctions; the utterance communicative orientation (affirmative, interrogative). Historical orientation on the logical-grammatical basis (without rupture with the intonation basis) is typical for Russian punctuation from the XVIII to beginning of the XIX century in general (Orekhova, 2001). In 1755 M. V. Lomonosov understood its logical-grammatical basis as follows:

Marks are used by the power of intellect, its proneness and conjunctions (Lomonosov, 1952, p. 436).

His contemporary, V. K. Trediavovskiy, also focused on the logical-grammatical basis of punctuation in his work “The conversation between the foreign man and the Russian on age-old and new orthography” in 1748, noting the primary role of punctuation marks in various asyndetic units with faintly subordinating forms (Orekhova, 2000, p. 43):

(16) *Стараться о чести, мало должно о пользе* (i.e., it is necessary to protect the honor).

(17) *Стараться о чести мало, должно о пользе* (i.e., it is necessary not only to protect the honor, but also to think about the benefit).

Contemporary linguists A.B. Shapiro, N.S. Valgina, D.E. Rozental wrote about the importance of semantic basis of punctuation. According to A.B. Shapiro, the manifestation of the semantic principle is associated with the fact that the punctuation marks, which graphically partition a phrase, indicate “such relations and connotations, which (being important for understanding) can not be expressed by lexical and syntactical means” (Shapiro, 1955, p. 86). In the rest of the cases punctuation marks (mainly intra-phrasal) can be “useless” for the sense explication (but the appropriateness of inter-phrasal marks usage doesn’t not give rise to doubt among the linguists: it can be explained by the fact that inter-phrasal punctuation was more consistent than intra-phrasal one in the ancient written language). These ideas were confirmed by B. I. Osipov’s research (Osipov, 1992, p. 200-201). However, according to the researcher, some marks can be “useful” for sense distinction, for example:

- commas that set off parallel sentence elements;
- marks that set off detached sentence elements (adverbial modifiers, modifiers, appositives);
- marks that set off parenthetical words and phrases.

According to B.I. Osipov, this is a complete list of rules, which can “usefully” be used for disambiguation of simple sentences (Osipov, 1992, p. 202).

(18) *Жеребцов моих братьев проезжали на бегу.*

(19) *Она [лошадь] остановилась, гордо, несколько набок, подняла голову. (Л. Толстой “Холстомер”)*

In the first sentence the sense could be the following without commas: “the stallions, belonging to my brothers, were being passed by”. In the second example both without commas and with them, the adverbial modifier “гордо” can be interpreted in either of two ways: “she stood proudly, to one side a little” or “proudly, to one side a little, she raised her head”.

In addition to these cases, the researcher exemplify complex and compound sentences, in which the marks usage is also “useful”, as well as cases of “useful” absence and “useless” presence of them.

However, considering such examples, B. I. Osipov makes a reservation: “the lack of the text separation by marks, even useless in this sense (i.e. in the sense of preventing ambiguity), might make this text more difficult to read because without any marks it would be difficult to extract integral semantic units and intone them correctly” (Osipov, 1992, p. 204). Similar cases will be discussed in the next part of this paper.

Thus, the most important function of punctuating process is stressed, i.e. the perception optimization of a written phrase.

For Russian punctuation the *structural principle* begins to play a leading role in the second half of the XIX century as a result of the development of theoretical ideas about the structure of a sentence, syntactical relations, modes of communication. For example, since that time the comma of separation became stable in using as a mark for coordinate clauses separating:

(20) *Елена украдкой покачала головой, хозяин не счел нужным их представить, и Инсаров ушел, в последний раз обменявшись взглядом с Еленой (И. Тургенев).*

(21) *Через полчаса он лежал на носилках, около Николаевской казармы, и не знал, что он ранен, но боли почти не чувствовал, ему хотелось только напиться чего-нибудь холодного и лечь попокойнее (Л. Толстой).*

The supporting on this principle was considered to be more appropriate in didactic aspect that had minimized a “creative basis” of Russian punctuation, although the possibility of alternative usage of marks was not rejected in a number of cases. N.N. Orekhova believes that the national cultural-historical paradigm played a certain role in strengthening of Russian punctuation regulating basis, in which the aspiration to regulate the largest possible number of public life spheres was dominant. This fact might affect the rule-making (Orekhova, 2000, p. 186).

It should be mentioned that modern experts in Russian language recognize that this traditional approach to punctuation, its narrow understanding as a system of a sentence but not text organization do not allow to justify its wide variability (Shvartskopf, 1988b; Shubina, 1999; Valgina, 2004; Orekhova, 2004).

At present, along with these traditional principles a communicative understanding of the punctuation role was outlined as “the opportunity to emphasize the communicative significance of words or groups of words in a written text by punctuating” (Yartseva, 1990, p. 407). According to this approach, the main function of punctuation consists in that “by means of partitioning of the graphic organization of a written text to convey its meaning to the reader in such way that it is reproduced by the writer” (Valgina, 1979, p. 50). The communicative principle of Russian punctuation appears in “expression” of a communicative objective by punctuating (Barulina, 1982, p. 10).

According this position, Russian punctuation is subjective in its purpose and, consequently, in most cases, variational as appropriate. At the level of a sentence, this variability reveals in the cases of communicative and syntactic ambiguity of two types.

1) The ambiguity of such type as “Казнить (?) нельзя (?) помиловать” (“Execute not pardon!”). In such cases intonational and punctuation options allow to distinguish denotative semantics of phrases, to resolve the ambiguous relations between elements of denotative situation.

2) The ambiguity connected with situational norms functioning and the author’s way of punctuating. Such punctuating doesn’t touch denotative semantics of phrases but expresses various subjective intensions of a writer (Parubchenko, 2003, p. 265).

Substandard punctuation (cases when a writer intentionally uses or doesn’t use a punctuation mark) is not a spontaneous process in the Russian written language. It is regulated by one of the basic principles of Russian punctuation—a communicative one that is singled out by the majority of authors in textbooks and guides on orthography (Rozental, 2004; Lekant, 2001; Valgina, & Svetlysheva, 1993).

As a whole, modern Russian punctuation relies both on semantic, structural, and rhythmic-intonational segmentation of phrases or texts in their interaction (Lekant, 2001). So we can consider a punctuation as the open system adapting to conditions of communicative environment and communicative situation in which it operates that provides both its variability and organization (Shubina, 1999, p. 31). For example:

(22) *В кабинете он упал на диван и, чтобы хоть немного успокоиться, потянул с тумбочки дневники Толстого (Ю. Бондарев).*

In this sentence the subordinate clause (in extra bold) is set off by commas according to the structural principle. At the same time, according to the sense, the goal-setting is stressed, which accompanies the action above-named (*he fell on the sofa, for the purpose to calm down*). Therefore, in this case the action of two principles is combined—the structural and the semantic one. Besides, in the given example the period, used to close the sentence, conveys structural significance (it marks the sentence end) and semantic significance (it completed a thought), at the same time indicates tone fall. In this case the intonational principle acts as the principle accompanying structural and semantic ones. Discussions about systemic relationships of these three traditional principles of punctuation are the subject of independent research that can be form the topic for another article.

The purpose of the next paragraph is to show English speakers how to use punctuation marks in concrete punctuation pattern or “пунктограмма” (i.e., it is a place where we can use different ways of punctuating, where punctuation mistakes are often made (Osipov, 1992, p. 22); in Russian school practice it is a punctuation rule and its usage). Also I want to show how different principles of Russian punctuation operate in this usage, especially a communicative one.

3. A Communicative Principle of Russian Punctuation at the Level of a Sentence

In 2004 Edward Vajda and Valentina Umanets published a substantial guide for English speakers “Russian Punctuation and Related Symbols” (Vajda & Umanets, 2004)—the first guide on Russian punctuation for English-speaking students. The basic structural elements of Russian syntax, the rules of marks usage in Russian (comparing to English punctuation tradition), some cases of facultative, or optional punctuation (called “open

punctuation” in the English tradition) are analyzed in this edition.

However, to make this guide clearer for English speakers I propose to include the examples and principles of substandard punctuation (according to Valgina’s definition). In this case I reference the last edition of the most authoritative guide on Russian orthography—“Справочник по правописанию и литературному редактированию” by D. E. Rozental. This material, undoubtedly, will be conducive to better understanding of Russian punctuation system, first of all, its communicative role for a writer and a reader, its openness and variability, in which English-speaking students can see some similarity with English punctuation system.

Let’s clarify how different principles of Russian punctuation can interact in concrete punctuation pattern (пунктограмме) according to the text of “Russian Punctuation and Related Symbols”.

According to the rule 7.5.1., detached modifiers (обособленные определения), postposed to the modified noun, are set off by commas (Vajda & Umanets, 2004, p. 57):

(23) *Небо, **золотое и багровое**, отражалось в воде.*

(24) *Лена, **в шляпе и шали**, торопливо возвращалась с прогулки.*

This punctuation pattern is explained in Rozental’s guide in another way: “two or more single modifiers, postposed to the modified noun, are detached modifiers, if the last one is preceded by one more modifier” (all modifiers are in extra-bold) (Rozental, 2004, p. 110):

(25) ***Любимые** лица, **мертвые и живые**, приходят на память (И. Тургенев).*

(26) ***Длинные** облака, **красные и лиловые**, сторожили солнца покой (А. Чехов).*

But “if two single modifiers are not preceded by one more modifier (to the modified noun – my note), they are set off or not set off by commas, depending on their intonational and semantic cohesion with the modified noun” (Rozental, 2004, p. 110). Let’s give examples of the last case.

(27) *Под этой толстой серой шинелью билось сердце **страстное и благородное** (М. Лермонтов).*

(28) *Водил смычком по скрипке старой цыган **поджарый и седой** (С. Маршак).*

In the first (27) and in the second (28) sentences the phrases “сердце страстное и благородное” and “цыган поджарый и седой” are closely connected with their semantic and must be pronounced without a pause (i.e., if we mentally remove these italicized modifiers, the meaning of the sentence will be lost: in the first one it is not important that there is a heart under an overcoat and it beats, but its qualities (it is passionate and noble); in the second sentence the lack of commas is connected with its rhythmic-intonational contour: *В/од\ил см\ыч\ком н/о скр\ипк\е ст\арой | ц\ыг\ан н/одж\ар\ый \и с\ед\ой*). (Note 1) Such modifiers are not detached ones and they are not set off by commas.

Thus, in the foregoing examples structural, semantic, and intonational principles of Russian punctuation are realized.

The communicative principle is realized in these examples as possibility of a punctuation mark selection depending on the author’s communicative objective.

Let’s consider another punctuation pattern to clarify this thesis.

In paragraph 7.5.2. E. Vajda and V. Umanets give the rule of the participial phrase detaching: “the participial phrases that follow the word they modify, often correspond to subordinate clauses containing a form of the relative pronoun *который, who, which, that*. In Russian, both participial phrases as well as subordinate clauses are set off by commas” (Vajda & Umanets, 2004, p. 58):

(29) *Траву, **скошенную крестьянами вчера**, дети собрали в кучи.*

As the guide’s authors fairly note, if the participial phrase precedes the **noun it modifies**, it is not set off by commas (such practice is not found in English):

(30) ***Брошенный с высоты** камень падает на землю.*

But it is necessary to emphasize that participial phrases (and other forms of extended and single modifiers) can be detached or not depending on existence or lack of additional adverbial meaning (causal, conditional, concessive, temporary) in Russian (Rozental, 2004, p. 111). In such cases a communicative principle of Russian punctuation is realized: a detached sentence element can gain greater semantic importance when it is set off by marks as the writer’s intension.

(31) ***Сопровождаемый офицером**, | комендант вошел в дом. (А. Пушкин).*

The participial phrase “сопровождаемый офицером” is emphasized in this sentence (it is not important for the writer that the *commandant entered the house*). Thus a boundary of the syntagma coincides with a boundary of the participial phrase with a proper pause in reading.

Another variant of this sentence punctuating could be the following:

(32) *Сопровождаемый офицером комендант | вошел в дом.*

In this case the participial phrase doesn't gain any additional adverbial meaning and it is not set off by marks.

A great number of examples of detached modifiers (including participial phrases) that precedes the word it modifies is given in Rozental's guide (Rozental, 2004, p. 111). For example:

(33) *Веселый и жизнерадостный, Радик был вообще любимцем (Фадеев).*

(34) *Охваченный каким-то неясным предчувствием, Корчагин быстро оделся и вышел из дому (Н. Островский).*

(35) *Сконфуженный, Миронов поклонился в спину ему (М. Горький).*

(36) *Высокая, Леля и в стеганых одеждах была излишне худой (Кочетова).*

The above-mentioned cases deal with the *facultative punctuation*. Depending on the place of a mark, the additional shades of meaning and accents, created by a writer, can be varied. However, the denotative meaning is not varied in such cases. It is important to know that according to the communicative principle Russian punctuation can represent a way of disambiguation in reading process, for example in *syntactic homonymy*:

(37) а. *Казнить |, нельзя помиловать!* (= it is necessary to execute);

б. *Казнить нельзя |, помиловать!* (= it is necessary to pardon);

с. *Надя, чувствовала сестра |, не зря вызвала ее.* (= Nadia called for her sister, and the sister felt it);

д. *Надя чувствовала | сестра не зря вызвала ее.* (= Nadia's sister called for her, and Nadia felt it).

The sentences (37a) and (37b) are syntactic homonyms, and also the sentences (37c) and (37d) are.

The concept of syntactic homonymy deserves more detailed consideration, therefore, in this paper we don't dwell on it in detail.

It is obvious that in the absence of punctuation marks in the previously mentioned sentences a situation of possible ambiguous understanding is appear. This situation can be resolved by using a certain punctuation mark for the purpose of realization of successful written communication act.

The guides on Russian punctuation do not contain any exhaustive list of such “risky” punctuation patterns, though some of them can be found as separate notes to concrete rules, for example in D.E. Rozental's guide and also in several monographs (written by B. I. Osipov, N. N. Orekhova, N. L. Shubina) and articles. Further I will try to systematize the examples from different works of Russian researchers (A. M. Peshkovsky, N. S. Valgina, D.E. Rozental, N. L. Shubina, L.B. Parubchenko, et al.) and to make a list of substandard punctuating cases with my own author's comments.

4. A Communicative Principle for Disambiguation of the Type “Казнить (?) нельзя (?) помиловать”

In the foregoing case, using the same way of a punctuating a writer and a reader strive for mutual understanding, accurate detection of relations between elements of a denotative situation. That is, the essence of a writer's communicative intension depends on the alternative choice of a text (or a phrase) punctuating, and its understanding by a reader does. Another classic examples are the following:

(38) *Ходить – | долго не мог.* (= somebody had no ability to go for a long time).

(39) *Ходить долго – | не мог.* (= somebody had no ability for continuous walking).

In the foregoing example the dash functions as a mark of semantic differentiation: the denotative content of the phrase depends its position.

Such functioning of marks can be found in the following punctuation patterns.

4.1 Parallel Sentence Elements Punctuating

(40) *Дайте мне другую, | интересную книгу.* (= somebody asks to give him the interesting book because another one which he was given earlier, probably, was uninteresting).

(41) *Дайте мне другую интересную книгу.* (= somebody asks to give him one more interesting book).

(42) *Денники у нас были в длинном теплом коридоре, | с решетчатыми дверьми, | сквозь которые все видно было.* (= there were stalls with lattice doors).

(43) *Денники у нас были в длинном теплом коридоре с решетчатыми дверьми, | сквозь которые все видно было.* (=there were stalls in a corridor with lattice doors).

(44) *Я видел множество самых различных брошюр, | открыток, | плакатов, | листовок: | цветных, | на хорошей бумаге, | с прекрасными иллюстрациями | и простеньких, | выполненных почти кустарным способом.* (= the brochures, cards, posters and leaflets were in color, printed on good paper, with illustrations).

(45) *Я видел множество самых различных брошюр, | открыток, | плакатов, | листовок, | цветных, | на хорошей бумаге, | с прекрасными иллюстрациями | и простеньких, | выполненных почти кустарным способом.* (= only leaflets were in color, printed on good paper, with illustrations).

4.2 Detached Sentence Elements Punctuating

(46) *Она говорила долго, | только о нем.* (= she spoke long but only about him).

(47) *Она говорила долго только о нем.* (= she spoke long solely about him).

(48) *Улыбнувшись, | ласково сказал.* (= somebody smiled and told something tenderly).

(49) *Улыбнувшись ласково, | сказал.* (= somebody smiled tenderly and spoke).

(50) *И опять старая Жулдыба [a nickname of a horse], | степенно, | выступая впереди других, | показывала возможность идти дальше.* [= the horse showed a way gravely and moving forward the others].

(51) *И опять старая Жулдыба [a nickname of a horse], | степенно выступая впереди других, | показывала возможность идти дальше.* (= the horse showed a way and simultaneously moved forward the others gravely).

(52) *Буря кобылка, | забияка, | всегда дразнившая старика | и делавшая ему всякие неприятности, | и тут | по воде пошла к нему.* (= the mare, who made trouble for the old man once in the past, suddenly began to come nearer to him).

(53) *Буря кобылка, | забияка, | всегда дразнившая старика | и делавшая ему всякие неприятности и тут, | по воде пошла к нему.* (= the mare, who not only always teased the old man, but also in this moment is making trouble for him, nevertheless, began to come nearer to him).

(54) *Тут была старая Голанка, | Мушка – | Сметанкина дочь, | Краснуха, | верховая Доброхотиха [nicknames of the horses], | все знаменитости того времени...* (= Mushka is Smetanka's foal).

(55) *Тут была старая Голанка, | Мушка, | Сметанкина дочь, | Краснуха, | верховая Доброхотиха [nicknames of the horses], | все знаменитости того времени...* (= Mushka and Smetanka's foal are different horses). (Толстой Л. Н.).

4.3 Parenthetical Words and Parenthetical Phrases Punctuating

(56) *Ваши рассуждения, | естественно, | подводят нас к правильному решению.* (= your reasoning leads us to the right decision and it goes without saying).

(57) *Ваши рассуждения естественно подводят нас к правильному решению.* (= your reasoning naturally leads us to the right decision).

(58) *Он, | безусловно, | прав.* (=“He is right, I am sure of it”, i. e. the confidence in his rightness is pointed out).

(59) *Он безусловно прав.* (=“He is absolutely right”, i. e. the extent of his rightness is pointed out).

(60) *Действительно, | было что-то величественное | в фигуре этой лошади.* (= indeed, something majestic was in the figure of this horse).

(61) *Действительно было что-то величественное | в фигуре этой лошади.* (=something majestic was in the figure of this horse and this fact was indeed).

4.4 Punctuating Clauses

(62) *Надя чувствовала: | сестра не зря вызвала ее.* (= Nadia's sister called her and Nadia felt it).

(63) **Надя**, | чувствовала сестра, | не зря **вызвала** ее. (= Nadia called her sister and Nadia's sister felt it).

(64) Было **пасмурно**, | с утра и росы не было, | но тепло, | и комары липли. (= there was no dew from in the morning).

(65) Было **пасмурно с утра** | и росы не было, | но тепло, | и комары липли. (= it was cloudy in the morning).

(66) При этом мерин надулся, | но ему всунули палец в рот | и ударили коленом в живот, | **так что** он должен был выпустить дух. (=as a gelding was hit to the stomach by a knee so he could breathe his last).

(67) При этом мерин надулся, | но ему всунули палец в рот | и ударили коленом в живот **так**, | что он должен был выпустить дух. (=a gelding was hit to the stomach by a knee so hard that he could breathe his last).

(68) Но о том, | сколь велика была опасность, | **до сих пор говорят уловы рыбаков**. (= the catches of fishermen still argue that there was a high risk).

(69) Но о том, | сколь велика **была опасность до сих пор**, | **говорят уловы рыбаков**. (= there is still a high risk and the catches of fishermen argue it).

In most cases above mentioned, the phases understanding ambiguity is related to the phenomenon of syntactic homonymy which can be clarified, in principle, not only by punctuating but also by context. However, if no communicant (neither a writer nor a reader) was concerned about it, the ambiguity remains.

5. A Communicative Principle in Disambiguation Related with Situational Rules Functioning and the Author's Punctuating

In such situations, as it was noted, punctuating options do not deal with the relationship between denotative situation elements, do not determine the essence of the writer's communicative intention and its interpretation by the reader, but they deal with its connotations, subjective meanings. According to N.S. Valgina, in such cases the punctuating follows the situational rules and may be the author's one.

5.1 The Accentuating of Causal or Concessive Relationship between Elements of a Phrase

(70) Привлеченные ярким **светом**, | бабочки кружились около фонаря. (= as bright light attracts butterflies, they were going round the lantern).

(71) Привлеченные ярким светом **бабочки** | кружились около фонаря. (= attracted by the bright light the butterflies were going round the lantern).

(72) Скошенная **с утра**, | трава к полудню уже сухо шуршала под ногами. (= although the grass was mowed down only in the morning, it had already dried out by noon).

(73) Скошенная с утра **трава** | к полудню уже сухо шуршала под ногами (= mowed down in the morning the grass was dry and rustling underfoot).

5.2. The Imparting of Attributive or Predicative Meaning to Modifiers

(74) **Сопровождаемый офицером**, | комендант вошел в дом. (= being accompanied by the officer the commandant entered the house).

(75) Сопровождаемый офицером комендант | **вошел в дом**. (= the commandant who was accompanied by the officer entered the house).

(76) **Перемытые речной водой**, | песчаные косы поросли мать-и-мачехой | и цветами. (= being hollowed out by river water the sandbars were grown by coltsfoot and flowers).

(77) Перемытые речной водой песчаные косы | **поросли мать-и-мачехой** | и цветами. (= the sandbars which were hollowed out by river water were grown by coltsfoot and flowers).

5.3 Clarifying Sentence Elements Detaching

(78) Далеко, | **в лесу**, | раздавались удары топора. (= someone hears the ax strokes from the forest and this person is outside the forest).

(79) Далеко **в лесу** | раздавались удары топора. (= someone hears the ax strokes in the forest and this person is in the forest too).

(80) *Вот тот, | маленький, | уже приближается к финишу.* (= that one of the few people, namely the small one, is coming nearer to the finish).

(81) *Вот тот маленький | уже приближается к финишу.* (= look at that small man, he is coming nearer to the finish).

5.4 The Writer's Important Information Accentuating

(82) *Незрелый ананас, | для человека справедливого, | всегда хуже зрелой смородины.* (= Exactly an unripe pineapple is always worse for fair people than ripe currant).

(83) *Незрелый ананас для человека справедливого, | всегда хуже зрелой смородины.* (= An unripe pineapple is always worse than ripe currant, exactly for fair people).

6. Conclusion

Analyzing the functions and proper usage of Modern Russian punctuation requires a nuanced stylistic assessment of the sentence and the text. The traditional understanding of punctuation pattern (“пунктограмма”) in school and university Russian grammar teaching practice is reduced to the study of those places in the sentence and text, where punctuating variants could be present potentially and where punctuation mistakes are often made. However, many punctuation patterns are characterized not only by common but also situational rules.

The rigid standardization of Russian punctuation is based, first of all, on the syntactic principle functioning (to mark boundaries of structural elements of a sentence and a text), but punctuation system variability is provided with functioning of the semantic, intonational and communicative principles (Rozenal, Golub, & Telenkova, 1995, pp. 540-542).

In the theory of Russian punctuation a communicative principle consists in “the possibility of underlining the communicative importance of a word or a group of words in a written text by means of punctuation marks” (Yartseva, 1990, p. 407). According to this approach, the main function of punctuation consists in that “by means of partitioning of the graphic organization of a written text to convey the meaning of a written text to the reader in such way that it is reproduced by the writer” (Valgina, 1979, p. 50). That is, the communicative principle of Russian punctuation is shown at “expression” of a certain communicative objective by means of punctuation (Barulina, 1982, p. 10).

The deviations from general rules may be caused by different reasons. At the same time, it is necessary to distinguish *substandard* and *wrong punctuation*. Substandard punctuation includes the cases of marks usage in accord with:

- Situational rules, associated with functional characters of the concrete text type, the concrete communicative situation, for which a writer regularly use one or another punctuating variant, adequately interpreted by readers);
- A concrete context, a phrase meaning, a communicative intension of a writer;
- The exclusive author's choice, stylistic significance of marks.

The last two factors are less stable, less usual, but as soon as they pass “the threshold of permissible variation”, they acquire the features of the situational norm or the general norm. Of course, this thesis requires the further empirical evidence and can be considered as the prospect of my future work.

In conclusion it should be noted that the variance in punctuating is regular, it is inherent in punctuation system of the modern Russian language. However, by using substandard punctuation in accord with one's intension, the author should be able to “protect” his text from misunderstanding. In practice, to identify that context, the punctuation pattern, not fixed by the rules, which causes the usage of a substandard mark, is not always a success. In this case, for example, an editor should apply to some new set of rules fixing the mass punctuating practice in similar contexts, in typical communicative situations.

The traditional approach to the codification of Russian punctuation rules does not allow to describe all diversity and variety of marks usage and, most importantly, does not register the necessary punctuation patterns in long-term memory of a native speaker of Russian actually.

Therefore, the modern Russian punctuation rules need to be revised in terms of actual usage, their functioning in texts of different styles. This is the subject of my future work.

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Note

Note 1. / - a rising tone, \ - a falling tone, | - a pause on syntagma`s boundary

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