

CROSS-LINGUISTIC INFLUENCE ON PUNCTUATION: THE ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN DASH IN CONTACT

Albina Kayumova

Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University, 18 Kremlyovskaya St., Kazan, 420008

Abstract

In this article, firstly, the rules of using the dash in English and Russian punctuation systems are outlined. Secondly, the article describes errors students have made during an experiment focused on the usage of the dash. Analyzing the errors can offer insights into the challenges in acquiring English punctuation. The results of the experiment show that a comparative research of Russian and English punctuation marks is urgent due to significant differences between the two punctuation systems. More attention should be paid to teaching punctuation for second language learners.

Key words: *English as Second Language, English as a Foreign Language, Punctuation, Dash, Russian Language, Cross-linguistic Influence, Interference, Transfer*

1. INTRODUCTION

Cross-linguistic influence, or the influence of a person's knowledge of one language on that person's knowledge or use of another language (Jarvis & Pavlenko 2008), is a multifaceted phenomenon which has been investigated from different perspectives, such as the study of language contact, bilingualism, second language acquisition and multilingualism (with the latter being the most recent trend).

There are ongoing debates over the term to describe the phenomenon.

In this article we use the term **cross-linguistic influence**, proposed by Kellerman and Sharwood Smith (1986), because it is theory- and connotation neutral. Let us clarify this statement.

The term **transfer** has often been used since Lado's influential book *Linguistics Across Cultures* (1957). However, sometimes the term *transfer* is considered inappropriate because of its connection with the concept of skills transfer extensively used by representatives of behaviorism, the leading physiological school in the first half of the 20th century. **Interference** is another term; it appears in the classic work *Languages in contact* by Weinreich (1979). However, this term stands for negative transfer and carries a negative connotation; therefore some researchers consider it inadequate. **Facilitation**, on the other hand, involves only positive transfer. Thus, the term **cross-linguistic influence** is considered to be the most appropriate.

Cross-linguistic influence can occur on different levels of the language; for example, phonological and orthographic, lexical and semantic, morphological and syntactic, discursive, pragmatic and sociolinguistic.

In spite of the fact that much attention is paid to cross-linguistic influence on the abovementioned levels, the articles addressing cross-linguistic influence on punctuation are scarce (Alamin & Ahmed 2012; Ghabool, Edwina & Kashef 2012; Hirvela, Nussbaum & Pierson 2012).

It might be explained by the fact that "Punctuation too often ranks as an adjunct. In the fact, it should rank as a component" (Partridge 1978, p.7).

Hirvela, Nussbaum and Pierson say, "Little is known, except anecdotally, about how English as a second language (ESL) students actually feel about using English punctuation, despite the fact that they must use it frequently if they are writing in English, and may have different notions of how it functions based on its use in their native language" (2012, p.11).

The deficiency of research is even more surprising because punctuation is assessed in ESL practice; for example, at Russian Unified State Exam in English.

Thus, the attempt of a comparative analysis of the English and Russian dash (in order to shed light on differences) is urgent. It will enable teachers to predict learning problems that Russian students of the English language are expected to face and, as a result, to reduce them. Error analysis is also beneficial.

2. THE ENGLISH AND RUSSIAN USAGE OF THE DASH

2.1. Categories of punctuation

Before discussing the differences and similarities between the English and Russian dash, it should be mentioned that there are different categories of punctuation.

Firstly, punctuation can be classified into conventional and emphatic. Conventional punctuation is obligatory; it is prescribed by the accepted norms of the language. Emphatic punctuation is syntactically unnecessary (or even inappropriate); it is used by a writer/poet to produce some stylistic or visual effect, to create rhythm in prose or poetry, etc (Baer & Bystrova-McIntyre 2009).

Secondly, according to Shcherba (1974), punctuation systems may be classified into German and French types. "German" punctuation systems are well-regulated. The usage of punctuation marks is mainly mandatory and grammar-driven. "French" punctuation systems are less-regulated. The usage of punctuation marks is governed not only by rule, but personal taste as well. Russian punctuation falls into the German type; and English punctuation, into the French type.

At the same time, English and Russian punctuation systems are neither purely conventional nor purely emphatic. Both punctuation systems are flexible (English at a higher degree) because punctuation marks are mainly multifunctional and often interchangeable. Therefore, the following sub-chapters include both conventional and emphatic use of the dash in English and Russian.

2.2. The English Dash¹

Despite the fact that the dash is found in the early texts, it is believed that the first who brought the dash into fashion was Sterne who "used it to satiety, for the purpose of giving his writings that sudden transitive singularity of which he was not a little vain" (Brenan 1849, p. 89). The dash quickly came into use and was often used in combination with the ellipsis.

Nowadays, in English **formal writing** the dash (—) is used quite sparingly:

- A. According to Visser (1992, p. 36), in formal writing dashes are used, especially in long sentences, "to set off parenthetical expressions that are too lengthy or too independent of the syntax of the sentence to be enclosed in commas: *Those who have studied farming communities -- and I would include here ancient as well as modern historians -- have been struck by their similarities*".
- B. The dash is also used to introduce a summing-up: "*Genuine erudition, a rich understanding of the period, a sensitivity to the various currents of thought of the time, and an ability to convey all this to the reader -- these are the virtues Anderson shows in her new book*" (Visser 1992, p. 36).
- C. The dash is used to attach a comment to the end of a sentence: "*Teachers seldom have the time to respond to the serious academic difficulties experienced by many of their students -- a sad commentary on our educational system*" (Visser 1992, p.36).

In **informal writing**, the dash is frequently used (University of Chicago 2010; Johnson 1991; Trask 1997; Straus, Kaufman, & Stern 2014):

¹ In printing, two types of dashes should be distinguished: the **em dash** (i.e. a regular dash) and **en dash**. The **en dash** (–) is a little horizontal bar which is a little bit longer than the hyphen (-) but shorter than the regular em dash (—). There is one basic use of the en dash. It is used to show numerical or some other ranges, signifying "from...to" or "between...and"; for example, *January–June*. However, in handwriting, the two kinds of dashes cannot be clearly distinguished. In this article, which deals with handwritten text, the em dash (or simply the dash, as we name it) is under analysis.

- A. A pair of dashes, first of all, separates a strong interruption from the rest of the sentence. For example: “*An honest businessman—if such a creature exists—would never agree to such a project*” (Trask 1997, p. 69). If a strong interruption comes not in the middle of a sentence but at the end, then only one dash is used. For example: “*There was no other way—or was there?*” (Trask 1997, p. 70).
- B. A pair of dashes can be used instead of bracketing commas and parentheses to set off material from the surrounding text. For example: “*My friends—that is, my former friends—ganged up on me*” or “*The influence of three impressionists—Monet, Sisley, and Degas—is obvious in her work*” (University of Chicago 2010). Like parentheses but unlike bracketing commas, a pair of dashes can set off text that has no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence. For example: “*The chancellor—he had been awake half the night—came down in an angry mood*” (University of Chicago 2010).
- C. Like a colon, the dash can introduce an element or a series of elements illustrating what has preceded it. For example: “*I need three items at the store—dog food, vegetarian chili, and cheddar cheese*” (Straus, Kaufman, & Stern 2014, p. 45).
- D. Like a semicolon in formal writing, the dash can be used between two independent clauses not joined by a conjunction to signal a closer connection between them than a period would. For example: “*I pay the bills—she has all the fun*” (Straus, Kaufman, & Stern 2014, p. 45).

We would like to stress the fact that punctuation guides recommend using the dash carefully since excessive or inappropriate use of the dash will make writing informal and/or under-considered and give it a breathless, hasty, careless and disjointed appearance (Trask 1997; Wilson 2013; Straus, Kaufman, & Stern 2014).

One advantage of the dash is that it enables the writer to narrow the gap between writing and thought processes. It can make prose seem more natural or conversational. Therefore, the dash is often used in representations of conversation **in fiction**:

- A. The dash indicates a sudden break in thought or sentence structure; for example: “*Will he—can he—obtain the necessary signatures?*” asked Mill. (University of Chicago 2010).
- B. The dash shows an interruption in dialogue:
“*Well, I don’t know,*” I began tentatively. “*I thought I might—*”
“*Might what?*” she demanded. (University of Chicago 2010).
- C. If a sentence is broken off abruptly without being completed; the dash is used at the end of the sentence (not suspension points); it must be written solid next to the unfinished word: “*General Sedgwick’s last words to his worried staff were “Don’t worry, boys; they couldn’t hit an elephant at this dist—”*” (Trask 1997, p. 70).
- D. The dash is used to show a speaker’s hesitation or confusion: “*Where is the—er—the—tidying up you promised to do?*” (Unified English Composition 1996, p. 141). However, the suspension points can also be used for this purpose.

2.3. The Russian Dash

The Russian dash was put into use by Karamzin. At different times it was named *molchanka* (lit. silence), *cherta* (lit. a line), *chertochka* (lit. a little line) and *znak mysleotdelitelny* (lit. a thoughts-separating mark) (Moiseev 1989, p. 54). It is known that Karamzin was actively engaged in translating the works of Sterne, who (as we have mentioned above) popularized the dash. Therefore, we might assume that Sterne indirectly influenced the appearance of the dash in the Russian system of punctuation. However, this is only our suggestion; it requires a more detailed study.

In modern times, the dash is extremely widespread in Russian formal and informal writing. The specific cases of the usage of the dash (plus, numerous exceptions) are so varied that it seems

unsuitable to give their full list in this article. We would like to follow Valgina's classification of the usage of the dash, which is based on its functions (2001):

A. The dash is used to bridge syntactical gaps; for instance: (a) it separates subject noun from predicate noun replacing the verb 'to be', (b) in elliptical sentences it replaces a word (usually a verb) which is understood via context, etc.

- (a) *“Любой серьезный бизнес — гадкая штука, но стыдиться мне нечего”* (Lukyanenko 2006, p. 13). Lit.². Any serious business — a nasty thing, but I have nothing to be ashamed of.
- (b) *“Пауза была короткой, ответ — уверенным”* (Lukyanenko 2006, p. 71). Lit. The pause was short, the answer — confident.

B. The dash performs semantic function when other means of expression are absent; in other words, it facilitates the transfer of semantic relations. For example:

- (a) *“Иногда из-за стены долетала песня — Марина не могла разобрать слов [...]”* (Pelevin 1993). Lit. Sometimes a song was wafted from behind the wall — Marina could not make out the words. The second part of the sentence contains contrast which is not transferred by any lexical means (e.g. conjunction 'but').
- (b) *“Он выбрался на траву и пошел по ней — ноги сразу промокли [...]”* (Pelevin 1993). Lit. He got out on the grass and started to walk on it — his feet got wet immediately. The second part of the sentence contains effect which is not transferred by any lexical means (e.g. conjunction 'so').

C. The dash performs emotional-expressive function, reflecting the feelings of the author; for example: *Река на Миссисипи никак не тянула и особенно не впечатляла, но это была широкая судоходная река, у городка была пристань, у которой стоял — нет, держите меня, держите крепче, — деревянный колесный пароход!* (Lukyanenko 2006, p. 45). Lit. The Mississippi River didn't attract and wasn't particularly impressive, but it was a wide navigable river, the town had a wharf, by its side stood — no, hold me, hold me tight, — a wooden paddle steamer!

Also, the dash can indicate direct speech if (a) it precedes narrative comment or (b) it is interrupted by narrative comment:

- (a) *«Есенин», — подумала Вера* (Pelevin 1991). Lit. «Esenin», — Vera thought.
- (b) *«А куда я иду? — подумал он. — И зачем?»* (Pelevin 1993). Lit. «Where am I going? — he thought. — And why?»

Finally, the dash is used to punctuate dialogues in Russian:

— *Что происходит? — спросил он.*

— *Понимаете, — заговорил Артур, — произошла техническая ошибка* (Pelevin 1993).

Lit.

— *What's happening? — he asked.*

— *You know, — Arthur began to speak, — there was a technical error.*

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. Method

The experiment was conducted at Kazan (Volga Region) Federal University at the department of English Language during the academic year of 2013-2014. The subjects of this experiment were the students of the first, second, third, fourth, and fifth year of University studying English Language and

² In this article we use the punctuation of the original text when giving literary translation.

Literature and first-year postgraduates enrolled in an academic program English Language. The total number of the subjects was 58. The majority of them were Russian and Tatar. The participation in the experiment was voluntary and anonymous.

The instrument used in the experiment was a list of 15 Russian sentences (see Appendix). While selecting the sentences for the experiment, we did not include the examples of author's individual usage of the dash (i.e. not conventional usage). To simplify the translation process, a list of words with their dictionary counterparts was presented at the bottom of the page.

The subjects were asked to translate the sentences into English focusing on punctuation marks. During the pre-experiment meeting, the subjects were also informed that they had to write down the first variant of translation that came into their mind, not to make any corrections and not to return to the previous sentences, once they had been translated.

The subjects were given 30 minutes to carry out this work.

3.2. Results and discussion

Having analyzed 870 variants of translation, we were able to find out the most frequent punctuation errors connected with the usage of the dash:

- the usage of the suspension points or zero punctuation instead of the dash when punctuating a sudden break in thought or sentence structure (see sentences 13 and 15 in Figure 1);
- the usage of the commas or suspension points instead of the dash when punctuating hesitation (see sentence 14.1 in Figure 1);
- the usage of the dash between direct speech and narrative comment (see sentence 14.2 in Figure 1);
- the usage of the dash in elliptical sentences (see sentence 8 in Figure 1);
- the omission of punctuation marks in sentences with parenthetical clauses, where a pair of dashes can be used (see sentences 10-12 in Figure 1).

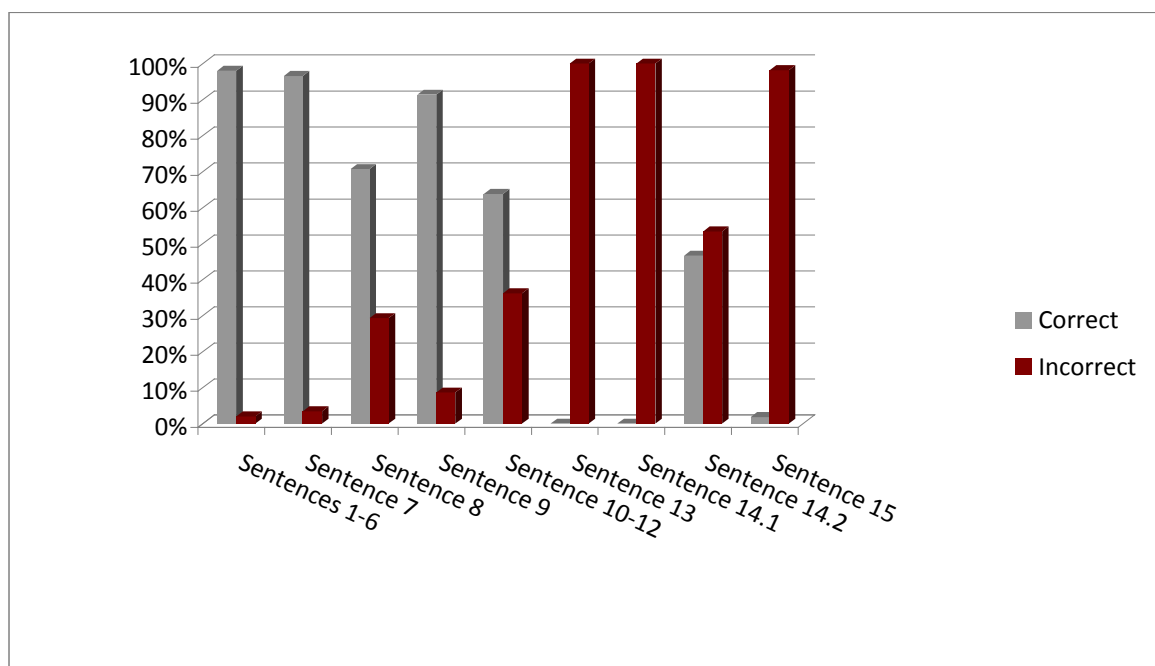


Figure 1. Percentage of Correct and Incorrect variants of translation

Destructive or negative cross-linguistic influence (see sentences 13, 14.1, 14.2 and 15) prevails over constructive one (the ratio is 81.3% to 18.7%).

Let us discuss the fifteen sentences separately. Each of the Russian sentences is accompanied with its literary translation and the explanation of the punctuation marks used. Then we offer our variant(s) of translating these sentences into English. Finally, we list incorrect variants of translation made by the subjects of the experiment.

Sentence 1

Казань, Нижний Новгород, Саратов, Волгоград, Астрахань — крупные города Поволжья.
Lit. Kazan, Nizhniy Novgorod, Saratov, Volgograd and Astrakhan — large cities of Volga Region.

According to the rules of the Russian punctuation system, the dash is used between an enumeration and a generic term if the latter follows the first. In this case, 'cities' is a generic word which follows the enumeration.

Two variants of translating this sentence into English are possible:

- (a) to insert a linking verb 'to be': Kazan, Nizhniy Novgorod, Saratov, Volgograd and Astrakhan are the large cities of Volga Region.
- (b) to replace the dash by the colon and complete the generic word part using a subject and a predicate: Kazan, Nizhniy Novgorod, Saratov, Volgograd and Astrakhan: all are the large cities of Volga Region. However, punctuation of the second variant is rarely used in modern English (Trask 1997, p. 39).

All of the subjects, except for two, translated the sentence inserting a linking verb 'to be'. Let us list sentences which had a punctuation error:

Kazan, Nizhniy Novgorod, Saratov, Volgograd, Astrahan — big cities of the Volga Region.

Kazan, Nizhny Novgorod, Saratov, Volgograd, Astrakhan — all of them are big cities of Volga Region.

Sentence 2 and 3

Старший брат — мой учитель. Lit. Elder brother — my teacher.

Старший брат мой — учитель. Lit. My elder brother — a teacher.

We analyze the two sentences together because at first sight they have the same components, but the meaning is different. What is more important in our case is that the meaning is transmitted with the help of the dash which separates a subject noun from predicate noun, replacing the verb 'to be'.

Let us give possible variants of translation of these sentences into English:

Elder brother is my teacher. (It can be my/his/her/their brother; it is not clear because of the lack of context.)

My elder brother is a teacher.

Some students used the dash between a subject noun and predicate noun in spite of inserting a linking verb 'to be':

Elder brother — my teacher. (Sentence 1)

Elder brother — is my teacher. (Sentence 1)

My elder brother — is a teacher. (Sentence 2)

All the subjects noticed the difference in meaning between sentence 1 and 2.

Sentence 4

Геометрия — это раздел математики. Lit. Geometry — this is a branch of Mathematics.

The dash separates a subject noun from predicate noun (replacing the verb 'to be') if the latter is preceded by such words as 'это', 'это есть', 'значит', 'это значит', 'вот' (lit. this, this is, means, that).

The correct English translation sounds the following way:

Geometry is a branch of Mathematics.

All the subjects translated the sentence in a correct way.

Sentence 5

Большая медведица — семь ярких звезд. Lit. The Big Dipper — seven bright stars.

The dash separates a subject noun from predicate numeral (or, vice versa, a subject numeral from predicate noun).

In English the dash must be replaced by a predicate verb; for example:

- (a) The Big Dipper contains seven bright stars.
- (b) The Big Dipper has seven bright stars.
- (c) The Big Dipper is made up of seven bright stars.

All the subjects omitted the dash; however, the choice of a predicate verb was not varied: the verb 'to be' was always used:

The Big Dipper is seven bright stars.

Sentence 6

Это — одиночество. Lit. It — loneliness.

When the subject is expressed by the pronoun 'это' (lit. it), the usage of the dash is optional in the Russian language. In English, it must not be used at all. The correct way of translation is to insert a linking verb 'to be' between the subject and predicate:

It is loneliness.

Some subjects used the dash between the subject and predicate:

This — loneliness.

That is — loneliness.

Let us summarize the results of translating sentences from 1 to 6. 88% of the subjects gave the correct answer. 2% of the subjects used the dash between a subject and predicate. It serves as a representation of negative cross-linguistic influence; however, it is not frequent.

Sentence 7

Готовиться к экзаменам — не так просто. Lit. To prepare for exams — not so easy.

The dash is placed between a subject infinitive and predicate adverb with the final letter '-о'; in oral speech a pause would be made between them.

Three variants of translating this sentence into English are possible; none of them contains the dash:

- (a) It's not so easy to prepare for exams.
- (b) To prepare for exams is not so easy.
- (c) Preparing for exams is not so easy.

Some of the subjects used the dash even after inserting a pronoun 'it' and a linking verb 'to be':

To prepare for exams — it is not easy.

Prepare for examines — is not a simple task.

Only 3.4% of the subjects made a mistake; the rest of the sentences were correct in terms of punctuation.

Sentence 8

Марат приехал из Казани, Александр — из Москвы. Lit. Marat came from Kazan, Alexander — from Moscow.

The Russian dash is used in elliptical statements to replace a word, usually a verb, which is understood via context.

In English, two ways of rendering this sentence are possible:

- (a) Marat came from Kazan and Alexander came from Moscow.
- (b) Marat came from Kazan; Alexander, from Moscow.

Thus, we may use a predicate (for example, the verb ‘to come’) instead of the dash or the comma which, according to Longknife and Sullivan, indicates the omitted verb in compound sentences with elliptical construction (2002, p. 12).

The most typical variants of translation given by the subjects were the following:

Marat came from Kazan and Alex from Moscow.

Marat came from Kazan and Alex — from Moscow.

29.3% of the subjects mistakenly used the dash instead of the predicate.

Sentence 9

Лыжникам — хорошую базу. Lit. To skiers — a good ski depot.

The dash is placed in elliptical sentences with a specific structure: noun in the dative case — noun in the accusative case (note that the subject and predicate are not present). Typically, this structure is used in slogans and headlines.

When translating these sentences from Russian into English, the dash must be removed. Also, additions must be made so that the sentence fits the SVO word order characteristic of the L2; for example:

Skiers must be given a good ski depot.

The majority of the subjects succeeded in rendering this sentence from Russian into English; however, some of them used the dash and the L1 word order:

To skiers — a good ski depot.

For skiers — a good ski depot.

The number of wrong answers is 8.6%.

Sentence 10

Честный политик (если такой человек существует) никогда не согласится на такой план. Lit. An honest politician (if such a person exists) would never agree to such a plan.

A parenthetical clause is found in the middle of the sentence in Russian.

Three variants of translating this sentence into English are possible:

- (a) An honest politician—if such a creature exists—would never agree to such a plan.
- (b) An honest politician (if such a creature exists) would never agree to such a plan.
- (c) An honest politician, if such a creature exists, would never agree to such a plan.

A pair of dashes unlike bracketing commas or parentheses would create a stronger interruption. However, all of the three variants are correct.

There were only two wrong variants of translation among the subjects' papers when none of the possible punctuation marks were used (only the full stop at the end of the sentence):

Honest politic if such man exists never agrees with such plan.

Sentence 11

Но — чудное дело! — Павел стал патриотом. Lit. But — funny thing! — Pavel became a patriot.

The dash is used to mark a parenthetical clause in the middle of the sentence. The use of the dash entails a specific intonation pattern in oral speech.

Only the dash or parentheses can be used in this case in English. Bracketing commas are not used to set off text that has no grammatical relationship to the rest of the sentence:

(a) But—how do you like it!—Pavel became a patriot.

(b) But (how do you like it!) Pavel became a patriot.

Let us give examples of sentences with punctuation errors:

But, how do you like that, Pavel became a patriot!

But it's a wonderful thing! — Pavel has become a patriot!

But! How do you like that! — Pavel became a patriot!

Sentence 12

Наш директор, который часто выходит из себя, был самым спокойным в комнате. Lit. Our director, who often loses his temper, was the calmest in the room.

Relative clauses are usually marked by commas in the Russian language.

Three variants of translating this sentence into English are possible:

(a) Our boss — who often loses his temper — has been the coolest in the room.

(b) Our boss (who often loses his temper) has been the coolest in the room.

(c) Our boss, who often loses his temper, has been the coolest in the room.

The most typical mistake was to omit punctuation marks at all (except for the full stop):

Our director who always loses his temper was the calmest person in the room.

Let us summarize the results of translating sentences from 10 to 12: two or three ways of punctuating additional information were possible (parentheses, a pair of dashes or commas). When translating, the subjects gave preference to commas or parentheses or excluded punctuation marks at all. The number of wrong answers is 36.2%. Moreover, if the Russian sentence contained parentheses (sentence 10) or commas (sentence 12), the subjects preserved the original punctuation marks in their translation. Still, if the sentence contained a pair of dashes (sentence 11), the subjects shied away from using it in English.

Sentence 13

Я думал написать... во сколько, ты сказал, начался фильм? Lit. I was thinking about writing ... what time, did you say, the movie started?

In this case, the suspension points signify a shift in direction of thought in Russian.

According to the rules of the English language, you must use the dash to indicate an unexpected turn of thought:

I was thinking about writing a—what time did you say the movie started?

The subjects used the suspension points (instead of the dash), omitted punctuation marks or divided the original sentence into two parts nullifying the emotional effect. For example:

I was thinking to write... what time did you say the movie started?

I was thinking to write what time did you say the movie started?

I wanted to write. When the film has started?

Not a single sentence in English contained the dash. The number of wrong answers is 100%.

Sentence 14

«Я, э-э-э, имею в виду другое место», — сказал Билл. Lit. «I, er-er-er, I mean another place,» — said Bill.

Firstly, the hyphen is used for a graphic representation of hesitation (in this case, an attempt to find a good wording). Secondly, the dash is used at the end of direct speech preceding narrative comment.

In the English writing the dash is not used to mark the end of direct speech and the beginning of narrative comment; however, it is used to show hesitation. Therefore, the punctuated English sentence might look the following way:

“I—err—mean another place,” said Bill.

All of the subjects made mistakes while punctuating the sentence; some of the examples are:

Well, I mean another place” — said Bill.

“I, hmm, mean another place”, — said Bill.

“I...hmm... mean another place” — said Bill.

Bill said: “Xm, I mean another place”.

Err... I mean another place, said Bill.

“I, err, mean another place”, said Bill.

“I, err... meant another place” — said Bill.

“I – err – mean another place”, – said Bill.

I, err, mean another place — said Bill.

“Hm-m, I mean another place”, said Bill.

Hesitation was shown using a wrong punctuation mark in 100% of cases (see sentence 14.1 in Figure 1). Direct speech was indicated in a wrong way in 53.4% of cases (see sentence 14.2 in Figure 1).

Sentence 15

Последние слова Генерала были «Не переживайте, ребята, они не смогут навредить нам на расстоянии...» Lit. The last words of General were «Don't worry, guys, they can not hurt us at a dist...»

In the Russian language, the suspension points are used when a sentence is broken off. In English, the suspension points show that “the writer or speaker has simply ‘tailed off’ into silence, deliberately leaving something unsaid” (Trask 1997, p. 123). In this case, the suspension points are inappropriate; the dash must be used in English:

General's last words were “Do not worry, boys; they can't hurt us at this dist—”.

There was only one correct answer among the subjects' papers; the wrong answers include:

... *“Do not worry guys, they will not be able to do us much harm on a distance”*

... *“Do not worry guys, they will not be able to do us much harm on a ...”*

... “Do not worry guys, they will not be able to do us much harm on a dist ...”.

The number of wrong answers is 98.2%.

4. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that students and post-graduate students need more training on punctuation. The case study should be brought to both students’ and teachers’ attention. Further research involving other punctuation marks should be undertaken.

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Appendix

- 1) Казань, Нижний Новгород, Саратов, Волгоград, Астрахань – крупные города Поволжья.
- 2) Старший брат – мой учитель.
- 3) Старший брат мой – учитель.
- 4) Геометрия – это раздел математики.
- 5) Большая Медведица – семь ярких звезд.
- 6) Это – одиночество.
- 7) Готовиться к экзаменам – не так просто.
- 8) Марат приехал из Казани, Александр – из Москвы.
- 9) Лыжникам – хорошую базу.
- 10) Честный политик (если такой человек существует) никогда не согласится на такой план.
- 11) Но – чудное дело! – Павел стал патриотом.
- 12) Наш директор, который часто выходит из себя, был самым спокойным в комнате.
- 13) Я думал написать... во сколько, ты сказал, начался фильм?
- 14) «Я, э-э-э, имею в виду другое место», сказал Билл.
- 15) Последние слова Генерала были «Не переживайте, ребята, они не смогут навредить нам на расстоянии...»

Поволжье – Volga Region

Раздел – branch

Большая Медведица – the Big Dipper

Одиночество – loneliness

Лыжник – skier

Лыжная база – ski pavilion, ski depot

Существовать – exist

Чудное дело – how do you like that!

Выходить из себя – to lose one's temper