Some Differences in Punctuation Use in Croatian and English

Jakob Patekar
Opatija 2011
Presentation Outline

- punctuation is...
- the importance of punctuation
- punctuation marks in focus
- punctuation in modern communication
- the history of punctuation in English
- the history of punctuation in Croatian
- the differences in punctuation use
What is punctuation?

- the use of standard **marks** and signs in writing and printing to separate words into sentences, clauses, and phrases in order to clarify meaning (The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language 4th edition)
get me some milk and cookies

get me some milk and cookies 😊
The principal said Jamie was not doing a good job.

The principal, said Jamie, was not doing a good job.

“The principal,” said Jamie, “was not doing a good job.”
people believe punctuation is not that important because they think they can get their message across without paying too much attention to marks they put in their sentences. However, I believe this short text illustrates quite appropriately at that how important punctuation actually is. Perhaps not everyone is meant to be a fastidious shrewd-eyed freak but people should at least lose their pride when writing formal texts and consult a handbook or two.
people believe punctuation is not that important because they think they can get their message across without paying too much attention to marks they put in their sentences however i believe this short text illustrates quite appropriately at that how important punctuation actually is perhaps not everyone is meant to be a fastidious hawk eyed freak but people should at least lose their i couldnt care less attitude when writing formal texts and consult a handbook or two
People believe punctuation is not that important because they think they can get their message across without paying too much attention to marks they put in their sentences. However, I believe this short text illustrates, quite appropriately at that, how important punctuation actually is. Perhaps not everyone is meant to be a fastidious, hawk-eyed freak, but people should at least lose their I-couldn’t-care-less attitude when writing formal texts – and consult a handbook or two.
Why is punctuation important?

- it displays grammatical structure (enables texts to be read coherently)
- it gives clues about prosody (for reading aloud)
- it adds a semantic nuance (which is difficult or impossible to read aloud)

*I didn’t go to work because I was “sick”.*
Punctuation marks in focus

- capital letter
- period
- comma
- dash
- hyphen
- apostrophe

- veliko slovo
- točka
- zarez
- crta
- crtica
- izostavnik
Why is punctuation misused or missing in modern communication? (1)

- modern written communication is a **hybrid** of speech and writing
- punctuation is misused or missing in:
  - brand names, titles, advertisements, etc.
  - e-mails, text messages, chat, Facebook, Twitter, etc.
Why is punctuation misused or missing in modern communication? (2)

- Remember 2day is all about your mum, make them feel special cos they are worth it. happy Mothers day 2 all the mums out there especially mine!

- feel bad, need sugar
The history of punctuation in English

- Old English > no capital letters
- Middle English > no real punctuation (a mark resembling a period is used, function unclear)
- Early Modern English > the basis of the modern punctuation system emerged during the English Renaissance (16th – 17th century)
- the use of punctuation marks had been changing through history > differences from modern conventions apparent well into the 19th century
No hædne æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan. 
anæ ne æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan. 
æna ðe æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan. 
æna ðe æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan. 
æna ðe æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan. 
æna ðe æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan. 
æna ðe æminhtig. ἡλια ρολε. adume-æcan.
The history of punctuation in Croatian

- Standard Croatian established in the 18th century
- First orthography guide in 1892 (“Hrvatski pravopis” by Ivan Broz)
- 20th century – a fight for Croatian
Punctuation in Use
My favorite day of the week is Friday because we have English and the teacher lets us play board games.
My favorite day of the week is Friday because we have English and the teacher lets us play board games.
Capital letter – differences in use (1)

days of the week
- *Today is Friday.*
- *Danas je petak.*

months
- *My birthday’s in November.*
- *Rođendan mi je u studenome.*

languages
- *I’d like to learn Italian.*
- *Volio bih naučiti talijanski.*
Capital letter – differences in use (2)

historical periods and movements
- *They participated in the Spanish Civil War.*
- *Sudjelovali su u Španjolskome građanskom ratu.*

religion
- *She said she was a Catholic.*
- *Rekla je da je katolkinja.*

titles of institutions
- *He works at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*
- *Zaposlen je u Ministarstvu vanjskih poslova.*
Capital letter – differences in use (3)

adjectives of type
- *She writes in a Dickensian style.*
- *Piše dikensovskim stilom.*
- *He loves cooking Mexican food.*
- *Voli kuhati meksičku hranu.*

titles of books, film, plays, exhibitions, etc.
Capital letter – side note
25. May 2011

Dear John,

You won’t believe the cliché, but I’m breaking up with you.
Dear John,

You won’t believe the cliché, but I’m breaking up with you.
Na dobrotvornoj je večeri bila i Gđa Adamić. Pozdravni je govor održao dr.sc. Avelin Ristić.
Na dobrotvornoj je večeri bila i Gđa gđa Adamić. Pozdravni je govor održao dr. sc. dr. sc. Avelin Ristić.
Period (full stop) – differences in use

 ordinal numbers (especially present in dates)

- 25 May 2011
- 25. svibnja 2011.

 abbreviations

- PhD (also Ph.D.) notice the lack of spacing!
- dr. sc.
- J D Salinger (also J. D. Salinger)
- J. D. Salinger
Period (full stop) – side note

please note:
 British (*Mrs Palin, Dr Johnson*) vs American (*Mrs. Palin, Dr. Johnson*) practice
 in Croatian Mrs > gđa Miss > gđica Mr > gosp.

please note:
 etc. e.g. i.e. a.m. p.m.

please note:
 acronyms are nowadays generally spelt without periods: CIA, UNICEF, USA, BBC, WHO, UK, NATO
Comma – differences in use (1)

- the use of the comma is an issue in both languages why?
- both languages once used commas to mark pauses mirroring “natural” pauses in speech
Sve što želim od tebe je ljubav, iskrenost, i odanost.
Sve što želim od tebe je ljubav, iskrenost, i odanost.

Sve što želim od tebe je ljubav, iskrenost i odanost.
Comma – differences in use (2)

a) listing (to separate items in a list using **and** or **or**)
- *You should buy eggs, tomatoes, **and** cheese.* (AmE and OUP)
- *You should buy eggs, tomatoes **and** cheese.* (BrE)
- *Trebao bi kupiti jaja, rajčice **i** sir.*

- *We’ll get there somehow: by plane, by boat, **or** by train.*
- *We’ll get there somehow: by plane, by boat **or** by train.*
- *Nekako ćemo već doći tamo: avionom, brodom **ili** vlakom.*
Comma – differences in use (3)

b) joining (to join complete sentences using **and**, or, **but**, **while**, **yet**)

- *Jordan wanted to buy new jeans, **and** Michelle wanted to go with her.*
- *Jordan je željela kupiti nove traperice **i** Michelle je željela ći s njom.*

please note:

- *They admitted they were guilty. **However**, they never said they were sorry.*
- *Priznali su krivnju. **Međutim** nikada se nisu ispričali.*

(adjuncts like however, therefore, furthermore, etc.)
Rekao je, “Nisam ovako zamišljao svoj život.”
Rekao je, “Nisam ovako zamišljao svoj život.”
Rekao je: “Nisam ovako zamišljao svoj život.”
Comma – differences in use (4)

c) introducing a piece of direct speech
- *He said, “This is not what I ordered.”*
- *Rekao je: “To nije ono što sam naručio.”*

please note:
- “*This is not what I ordered”, he said.*
- “*To nije ono što sam naručio”, rekao je.*
You need to be argus-eyed to notice something wrong in this sentence.
You need to be argus-eyed to notice something wrong in this sentence.

You need to be argus-eyed to notice something wrong in this sentence.
Dash – differences in use

the dash is not the same as the hyphen:
- the dash is longer –
- the hyphen is shorter -
and their uses differ

in both languages the dash can be used instead of commas or brackets to separate – more forcefully – a part of the sentence

it can also be used to indicate a range from ... to:

That’s a seriously-flawed proposition.
That’s a seriously-flawed proposition.
That’s a seriously flawed proposition.
Hyphen – differences in use

modern use > less hyphenation
- *co-operate > cooperate*
- *socio-economic > socio-economic*

ambiguity: *air fare, air-fare, airfare*

the hyphen is not so common in Croatian as it is in English

some uses of hyphens not acceptable in Croatian:
- *I like your I-don’t-give-a-damn attitude.*
- *Sviđa mi se tvoj nije-me-briga stav.*
- *They’re interested in pragma- and sociolinguistics.*
- *Zanima ih pragma- i sociolingvistika.*
when to hyphenate:
compound adjectives
- well-versed, accident-prone, good-looking
some verbs
- They booby-trapped the first floor.
to avoid awkward spelling
- co-opt, pre-eminent
distinguishing meaning
- re-cover vs recover
Hyphen – side note (2)

avoid hyphenating:
- with adverbs ending in -ly + participle:
  - *a happily married couple*, not *a happily-married couple*

please note: premodification vs postmodification
- *This is a top-of-the-range model.*
- *This model is top of the range.*
- *She loved her honey-blonde curls.*
- *She loved her curls of honey blonde.*

please note: change in meaning
- *It was our first class discussion.*
- *It was our first-class discussion.*
Two monkey’s fought fiercely over the last banana.
Two monkey’s fought fiercely over the last banana.
Two *monkeys* fought fiercely over the last banana.
Apostrophe – differences in use

used for the omission of letters (and numbers) in both languages:

- We’re not amused. We are not amused.
- Je l’to novi dućan? Je li to novi dućan? (informal)

however, the apostrophe is also used to show possession in English:

- Coco’s garden is beautiful!
- Her parents’ house is on sale. (belonging to both parents)

it is not used to make plurals:

- *I bought some flowers’/flower’s for you.
The giraffe is the tallest animal in the world. It’s neck can be over two meters long.
The giraffe is the tallest animal in the world. It’s its neck can be over two meters long.
Apostrophe – side note (1)

its vs it’s

- its is a possessive form of it
- it’s is a short form of it is or it has

please note:

- The dog’s leg is hurt. Its paw is swollen.
The two MP’s were actually best friends in the 1980’s.
The two MP’s were actually best friends in the 1980’s.
The two MPs were actually best friends in the 1980s.
Apostrophe – side note (2)

**1980s or 1980’s**
- BrE vs AmE (!)

**two MPs or two MP’s**
- MPs (inflection of abbreviations)
If the English language made any sense,
a catastrophe would be an apostrophe with fur.

- Doug Larson
Thank you for your attention!
References