

Call for papers

Full title: **Punctuation marks – Multifaceted ‘Little Things’ 2**

Date: November 10–11, 2025

Venue: University of Agder, Kristiansand (Norway)

Organizers: Łukasz Jędrzejowski (University of Agder) &
Federica Masiero (University of Padova)

Contact person: Łukasz Jędrzejowski (lukasz.jedrzejowski@uia.no)

Call deadline: October 15, 2025

Meeting description:

Punctuation marks are the silent organizers of written language – often overlooked, yet indispensable for structuring syntax, guiding reading, processing and interpretation, and representing discourse relations. Bredel (2008, 2020), Dürscheid (2016), and Kirchhoff & Primus (2016) emphasize that punctuation operates within a system of ‘Schriftgrammatik’ – an autonomous grammar of written language with rules that partly diverge from those of spoken language. Their models demonstrate how punctuation interacts with sentence structure, linear order, and prosodic patterns, enabling writers to control information flow, hierarchy, and focus in written communication. From this perspective, punctuation is not an afterthought to grammar but an integral part of linguistic competence. As such, it is also relevant in DaF/DaZ contexts (cf. Stark 2022; Thurmair 2022).

Building on this foundation, current research increasingly addresses the semantic-pragmatic dimensions of punctuation. Bücking (2022), for example, argues that the colon in German functions as a lexical marker of discourse-structural subordination – a thesis that situates punctuation in the domain of discourse semantics and compositional interpretation. By contrast, Bredel (2020: 84–89) analyzes the colon within the topological field model, foregrounding its syntactic position and markedness. Kirchhoff & Primus (2016) investigate punctuation in a constraint-based framework that connects syntactic dependencies with prosodic structuring, thereby building a bridge between written and spoken language. In German, prosodic dimensions may play a role in the spread of the so-called *Vorfeldkomma* (cf. Hochstadt & Olsen 2016; Rössler 2017; Berg et al. 2020, among others). These theoretical perspectives show that punctuation marks are far more than mere graphic symbols – they actively contribute to meaning-making.

Following the successful launch of the conference in Padua in 2024, we warmly invite you to the second edition of *Punctuation Marks – Multifaceted “Little Things”*. The conference will again focus on the theoretical, historical, and didactic aspects of punctuation. Participants are encouraged to reflect on how seemingly “small” marks – periods, colons, commas, etc. – structure large-scale meanings in written communication.

The international conference *Punctuation Marks – Multifaceted ‘Little Things’ 2* is organized by Łukasz Jędrzejowski (University of Agder) and Federica Masiero (University of Padova), and financially supported by the University of Agder. It will be hosted by the Department of Foreign Languages and Translation.

Invited speakers (all confirmed):

Sebastian Bücking (University of Wuppertal)

Karin Pittner (University of Bochum)

Linda Stark (University of Würzburg)

Call for papers:

The conference will address, among others, the following questions:

- How should particular punctuation marks be interpreted? How do they differ across languages, and how does German fit into this comparison?
- What principles govern the use of punctuation? Is it determined by syntax, prosody, semantics, information structure, discourse relations, and/or their interfaces?
- How have punctuation marks developed historically? Do these developments proceed in similar ways across languages?
- In which written genres can changes in punctuation systems be observed?
- Which functions of punctuation are responsible for difficulties in language acquisition?
- To what extent do the difficulties that DaF/DaZ learners encounter with German punctuation differ from those of L1 learners acquiring written language?

The conference aims to provide an interdisciplinary perspective on punctuation. This year, particular emphasis will be placed on cross-linguistic variation.

Conference languages are German and English.

We invite the submission of abstracts for 40-minute talks (plus 20 minutes for discussion) on topics related to punctuation (preferably with a cross-linguistic perspective).

Abstracts should be submitted in PDF format to: lukasz.jedrzejowski@uia.no and federica.masiero@unipd.it

Abstract Guidelines

- Length: max. 1 page of text; an additional page may be used for data and references
- Format: Letter or A4, margins 2.5 cm, minimum font size 11 pt, single spacing
- Language: German or English
- Abstracts must be anonymous (no identifying information, including metadata)
- Each author may submit at most one single-authored and one co-authored abstract, or two co-authored abstracts

Deadline for submission: October 15, 2025

Notification of acceptance: October 20, 2025

References

- Berg, Kristian, Ursula Bredel, Nanna Fuhrhop & Niklas Schreiber. 2020. Was determiniert das Vorfeldkomma? Untersuchungen zur Verteilung einer nicht-standardisierten Kommatierung. *Linguistische Berichte* 261: 85–116.
- Bredel, Ursula. 2008. *Die Interpunktion des Deutschen. Ein kompositionelles System zur Online-Steuerung des Lesens*. Tübingen: Niemeyer.
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- Dürscheid, Christa. 2016. *Einführung in die Schriftlinguistik*. 5. aktualisierte und korrigierte Auflage. Stuttgart: utb.
- Hochstadt, Christiane & Ralph Olsen. 2016. Zur Kommatierungskompetenz von Lehramtsstudierenden am Beispiel überflüssiger ‘Vorfeldkommata’. In: *Ohne Punkt und Komma – Beiträge zu Theorie, Empirie und Didaktik der Interpunktion* (TRANSFER 10) ed. by Simona Colombo-Scheffold, Christiane Hochstadt & Ralph Olsen (eds.), 157–176. Berlin: RabenStück.
- Kirchhoff, Frank & Beatrice Primus. 2016. Das Komma im mehrsprachigen Kontext. In: *Ohne Punkt und Komma – Beiträge zu Theorie, Empirie und Didaktik der Interpunktion* (TRANSFER 10) ed. by Simona Colombo-Scheffold, Christiane Hochstadt & Ralph Olsen (eds.), 78–97. Berlin: RabenStück.
- Rössler, Paul. 2017. Semantik, Rhetorik, Syntax. Nicht kodifizierte Kommasetzungsprinzipien nach dem Vorfeld. In: *Interpunktion im Spannungsfeld zwischen Norm und stilistischer Freiheit* (MeLiS. Medien – Literaturen – Sprachen in Anglistik/Amerikanistik, Germanistik und Romanistik 24) ed. by Kristin George, 63–94. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang.
- Stark, Linda. 2022. Zur Kommasetzung italienischer DaF-Lernender In: *Vergleichende Interpunktion – Comparative Punctuation* (Linguistik – Impulse & Tendenzen 96) ed. by Paul Rössler, Peter Besl & Anna Saller, 369–396. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.
- Thurmair, Maria. 2022. Interpunktion – (K)ein Thema für Deutsch als Fremdsprache. In: *Vergleichende Interpunktion – Comparative Punctuation* (Linguistik – Impulse & Tendenzen 96) ed. by Paul Rössler, Peter Besl & Anna Saller, 317–341. Berlin: Mouton De Gruyter.

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