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Mediating Punctuation in English Arabic Translation

The paper investigates some of the salient differences in punctuation between Arabic and English. Although the two languages share many of the basic punctuation marks such as the period (full-stop), the comma, the question and exclamation marks, Arabic has its own conventions of punctuation which are not strictly governed by the same rules applicable to English. In fact, even those punctuation marks that were transferred from European languages through translation have been adapted to the writing conventions of Arabic. While the comma, quotation marks and parentheses have been utilized with multiple and sometimes overlapping functions, other marks like the apostrophe and the semicolon have rarely if ever been used in original Arabic texts. In some cases, English punctuation marks are either deleted or substituted by Arabic lexical insertions. In such cases, in translating between English and Arabic, one has to realign meaning and reorder structures in order to retain the function of missing punctuation marks.