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**Avoidance of Redundancy in Academic Writing:
An Analysis from the Perspectives of Prominence, Cohesion, Logicality,
and Coherence**

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1. Introduction

Reports written by undergraduate international students (referred to hereinafter as “students”) sometimes give the reader an impression of being written in an unpolished style due to the use of needless repetition of words and expressions. One would presume that in order to avoid redundancy, instruction aimed at heightening students’ awareness of the problem would be effective, which raises the issue of what sort of approaches instructors should take. The full paper begins with an overview of previous research on repetition and abbreviation, and proceeds to an examination of how published teaching materials deal with this issue. Finally it takes up reports written by students and classifies those parts that were judged by three or more judges (the authors and research collaborators) to be redundant, in terms of prominence, cohesion, logicality and coherence, and seeks for effective strategies to avoid giving readers an impression of redundancy. This summary is limited to the four-way classification and examination of the data.

Here redundancy is defined as repetition of words and phrases that could be omitted without impairing comprehension of the meaning, and that impart to the whole text an impression of being written in an unpolished style, or that make the text harder to understand. Besides the verbatim repetition of the same words or phrases, the redundant use of synonyms and expressions of similar meaning is also considered.

2. Data

The data used in this study consists of the first drafts of reports (opinion pieces incorporating diagrams and tables) written by first-year students as term papers for a course. Below are the requirements for the assignment, and the report structure given in the grading criteria handed out to the students.

- (1) The word count should be in the range of 1,600 to 2,000 characters.
- (2) The basic structure of the main section is two grounds for argument, each including two presentations of data; at least one of the grounds should include a counter-argument and its

refutation.

(3) Two of the presentations of data are to be in the form of diagrams or tables.

(4) Textual quotations must be used.

Table1 Report structure:

Introduction	background explanation ⇒ raising of issue ⇒ action preview
Main argument	Ground 1: data ⇒ interpretation ⇒ section result
	section confirmation ⇒ section preview
	Ground 2: data ⇒ interpretation ⇒ section result
	counter-argument ⇒ refutation
	overall result
Conclusion	action confirmation ⇒ section result confirmation ⇒ overall result confirmation ⇒ evaluation ⇒ remaining issues

Identification of redundant parts was performed by six judges, including the authors of this study. The full paper includes analyses of 31 passages that were judged to be redundant by three or more judges.

3. Classification of redundancy

The full paper analyzes the redundancies in terms of prominence, cohesion, logicity and coherence. These four factors are not mutually exclusive: more than one may be relevant for a particular passage, such as “prominence and logicity,” or “cohesion and coherence.” Hereunder, analyses and examinations of redundancies are given illustrating the four factors, as well as comparisons with parts that were not judged to be redundant.

3.1 Redundancy involving prominence

Redundancy involving prominence is defined as places where old and new information are given equal treatment in the text, making highlighting difficult and giving the structure of the text a disorderly appearance. More concretely this involves repetition of old information that could be recovered even if omitted from the text.

The full paper gives the three following examples:

- (5) Old information is presented in the sentence topic, in the form noun + topic particle *wa*, overlapping with the object of the main clause verb.
- (6) An attribute expression in the form of noun + possessive particle *no* is repeated several times in a sentence, even though the referent is easy to guess.
- (7) Several subordinate clauses all use the same verb.

On the other hand, sentences that were not judged to be redundant highlighted new information with the following strategies:

- (8) Discourse topics already established in the preceding context are not restated out with an explicit *wa*-marked sentence topic.
- (9) The demonstrative *sono* is used to avoid redundancy.
- (10) Repetition of verbs is avoided by omitting all but the final instance of the verb.

3.2 Redundancy involving cohesion

Redundancy involving cohesion is defined as places where the linking of sentences is not made smoothly due to repetition. More concretely, there are two such cases: one where the same words, synonymous words or words of similar meaning are repeated where demonstratives, substitutes or ellipsis could be used, and another where the same conjunctive expression itself is repeated.

An illustration of the first case is:

- (11) In a report's "overall result confirmation," "evaluation and remaining issues," "interpretation" and "section result and counter-argument" portions, there are numerous repetitions of the same words, synonymous words or words of similar meaning in two succeeding sentences.

On the other hand, the following strategies may be seen in places not judged to be redundant:

- (12) Restatement in the form of pronouns.
- (13) Repeating only the key word extracted from a longer expression.
- (14) Making explanations more concise.
- (15) Ellipsis.

Next, repetition of conjunctive expressions was analysed. The full paper takes up examples with following characteristic:

- (16) One first sentence serves as a section result, and the following as an overall result, but both sentences use conjunctives beginning with *ijō* '(as stated) above', making the relative scope of the two statements difficult to grasp.

Thus the when stating section result and overall result in succeeding sentences, the following strategy seems to be necessary:

- (17) Use of conjunctive expressions that clearly indicate the scope of each statement.

3.3 Redundancy involving logicity

Redundancy involving logicity is defined as places where repetitions between grounds and assertion, or within their contents, causes the assertion to lack clarity. Some of such redundancies were found overlapping with redundancies involving prominence and cohesion.

One example discussed in the full paper from the "data and interpretation" portion showing the following characteristic, was judged as redundant because the intended interpretation appeared to be a mere repetition rather than an actual interpretation.

- (18) Following two preceding sentences, the third sentence attempted to present the writer's

prediction, and the fourth an overall interpretation, but the fourth sentence consisted entirely of expressions repeated from the third sentence.

On the other hand, passages not judged as redundant showed the following characteristic:

- (19) Following a presentation of data, the next sentences presents the writer's own interpretation, without repetition from the previous sentences.

In this way, through a presentation the writer's own interpretation, the reader is spared the burden of surmising the writer's intention, which is appropriately conveyed in the text.

3.4 Redundancy involving coherence

Redundancy involving coherence is defined as places where action confirmation and either a preceding or a following sentence contain redundant expressions, and both are so closely juxtaposed that the action confirmation cannot serve its function. In the full paper an examples of this type were found between a section result and section confirmation. Further, all these examples coincided with factors for prominence or cohesion redundancies.

In the example taken up in the full paper, the following characteristic was found, allowing the identification as a redundancy involving coherence and cohesion. The action confirmation sentence served as a confirmation of the preceding statements, and required the insertion of no new information. Nevertheless, when the contents of the preceding sentence are repeated exactly the resulting wording may seem verbose.

- (20) Although the sentences for section result and action confirmation are not exactly the same, there is a repetition of similar contents.

On the other hand, strategies followed in reports where the section result and action confirmation are of the following two types:

- (21) Keywords or their hypernyms are used in an abbreviated summary.
- (22) The two sentences are separated by a chapter or section boundary.

4. Summary and remaining issues

In the full paper, examples of redundancy were extracted from student reports and classified according to the four factors of prominence, cohesion, logicality and coherence. Examples were analyzed and examined, and compared with cases in which redundancy was avoided. As a result, the following strategies for avoiding redundancy were identified:

- (23) Abbreviation or the use of demonstratives (prominence).
- (24) Abbreviation, restatement using demonstrative pronouns or keywords, or choice of conjunctive expressions taking into account the scope of the statements (cohesion).
- (25) Seeking out the implications of the data and furnishing one's own interpretation (logicality).
- (26) Summarizing, or beginning a new chapter or section (coherence).

Since there were restrictions placed on the structure of the reports used as data for this study, in the future it will be necessary to study reports written without such restrictions, verify how completely the four factors considered here cover all redundancies, and further examine the effectiveness of the redundancy-avoiding strategies mentioned here as well as other useful strategies. Further, we hope to study pedagogical methods to help students write reports that will not be judged as containing numerous redundancies.

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