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Techniques for Improving Clarity and Conciseness, Including the Use of Parallel Structure and Eliminating Redundancy

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Abstract

This article explores major techniques for improving clarity and conciseness in writing, with special attention to the use of parallel structure and the elimination of redundancy. The study examines theoretical perspectives and scholarly opinions regarding effective writing strategies and linguistic.

Key Words: clarity, conciseness, parallel structure, redundancy, effective writing, academic discourse, stylistics, coherence, grammar, readability.

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Introduction. Writing is one of the most significant tools of communication in academic, professional, and social contexts. Effective writing requires not only grammatical correctness but also clarity and conciseness. Readers expect information to be presented logically, directly, and efficiently. When ideas are expressed clearly, communication becomes more understandable and persuasive. Conversely, vague expressions, unnecessary repetition, and overly complicated sentence structures may confuse readers and weaken the intended message.

According to William Strunk Jr. and E. B. White in *The Elements of Style*, effective writing should “omit needless words.” [6] This principle has become one of the foundational guidelines of modern English writing. Similarly, George Orwell argued in his essay *Politics and the English Language* that unclear and inflated language often conceals weak thinking [4]. Orwell emphasized that good prose should be transparent “like a windowpane.” These scholarly perspectives indicate that clarity and conciseness are closely connected to logical thought and successful communication.

Modern linguistics and stylistics also recognize the importance of concise expression. Joseph M. Williams states that readers understand texts more effectively when sentences are direct and structurally organized [7]. Clarity reduces cognitive effort, allowing readers to focus on meaning rather than decoding complex language. In academic discourse especially, concise writing reflects intellectual discipline and precision. One of the most important techniques for improving clarity is the use of parallel structure. Parallelism refers to the balanced arrangement of grammatical elements within a sentence. It creates rhythm, coherence, and logical consistency. For example, in the sentence “The study aims to analyze linguistic patterns, to identify stylistic features, and to evaluate communicative functions,” the repeated infinitive structure creates balance and readability. Without parallelism, sentences may appear awkward or confusing. Another essential technique is eliminating redundancy. Redundancy occurs when writers use unnecessary words or repeat information already implied. Expressions such as “basic fundamentals,” “future plans,” or “final conclusion” contain repetitive meanings that reduce stylistic efficiency. Linguists argue that redundancy often emerges from an attempt to sound formal or academic, but excessive repetition may actually weaken the text.

Clarity in writing means presenting ideas in a manner that readers can understand easily and accurately. Clear writing eliminates ambiguity and ensures that the intended message is communicated effectively. Scholars in rhetoric and linguistics agree that clarity is achieved through organization, precision, and simplicity. One major technique for improving clarity is the use of simple and direct sentence structures. Overly long and complicated sentences often confuse readers because they contain too many ideas at once. Bryan A. Garner explains that readers process information more efficiently when sentences follow a logical subject-verb-object pattern [1]. For example, the sentence “The committee approved the proposal after reviewing the evidence” is clearer than “Following the process of evidence review, approval of the proposal was conducted by the committee.”

Active voice also contributes significantly to clarity. In active constructions, the subject performs the action directly, making the sentence more dynamic and understandable. Compare the sentences “The researcher conducted the experiment” and “The experiment was conducted by the researcher.” Although both are grammatically correct, the active version is clearer and more concise. According to Joseph M. Williams, active voice improves readability because readers identify the agent and action immediately [7].

Logical organization is another essential component of clarity. Effective paragraphs present one central idea supported by coherent explanations and examples. Transitional words such as “therefore,” “however,” and “in addition” guide readers through the argument and establish relationships between ideas. Without clear organization, even grammatically correct writing may appear fragmented or confusing. Furthermore, writers should avoid ambiguity. Ambiguous pronouns, unclear references, and poorly constructed modifiers may distort meaning. For example, the sentence “The teacher told the student that he was careless” is ambiguous because the pronoun “he” may refer to either person. Clear writing resolves such uncertainties by restructuring the sentence. Clarity also depends on audience awareness. Writers must consider the knowledge, expectations, and linguistic competence of their readers. Technical terminology may be appropriate for specialized audiences but confusing for general readers. Therefore, adapting language to audience needs improves communicative effectiveness.

Conciseness refers to expressing ideas in the fewest words necessary without sacrificing meaning. Concise writing values efficiency and precision. In professional and academic contexts, readers prefer texts that communicate information directly rather than through unnecessary elaboration. One of the primary barriers to conciseness is redundancy. Redundancy occurs when words repeat information already expressed. Examples include phrases such as “absolutely essential,” “past history,” “unexpected surprise,” and “advance planning.” Each example contains words with overlapping meanings. Eliminating redundant expressions strengthens the text and improves readability.

Richard Lanham argues that concise prose demonstrates respect for the reader’s time and attention [3]. Wordy sentences force readers to process unnecessary information, increasing cognitive burden. For example:

Wordy: “Due to the fact that the experiment failed, the researchers decided to repeat it again.”

Concise: “Because the experiment failed, the researchers repeated it.”

The concise version communicates the same meaning more efficiently.

Another common source of redundancy is excessive nominalization. Nominalizations are nouns formed from verbs, such as “implementation,” “development,” or “analysis.” While such forms are sometimes necessary, overuse may produce abstract and inflated prose. Compare:

Wordy: “The implementation of the policy resulted in the improvement of performance.”

Concise: “Implementing the policy improved performance.”

The revised sentence is more direct and energetic.

Repetition of ideas also reduces conciseness. Writers sometimes restate the same concept using different words in an attempt to emphasize importance. However, unnecessary repetition may irritate readers and weaken argumentative force. Effective emphasis should emerge from strong evidence and organization rather than repetitive wording.

Filler expressions should also be avoided. Phrases such as “it is important to note that,” “in my personal opinion,” and “the fact that” often add little meaning. Eliminating these expressions produces more concise prose. For instance:

Wordy: “It is important to note that students benefit from regular practice.”

Concise: “Students benefit from regular practice.”

According to Steven Pinker, concise writing aligns with the cognitive processes of readers because the human brain prefers efficient information processing [5]. Readers understand and remember concise statements more effectively than verbose ones. Editing plays a central role in achieving conciseness. Skilled writers revise drafts multiple times to remove unnecessary words, repeated ideas, and weak constructions. Editing transforms initial thoughts into polished communication.

Parallel structure, also known as parallelism, refers to the use of grammatically similar forms within sentences or series. It is one of the most effective stylistic techniques for improving clarity, coherence, and rhythm in writing. Parallelism creates balance and symmetry. When grammatical elements follow the same structure, readers process information more smoothly. Consider the following sentence:

“The project requires collecting data, analyzing results, and presenting conclusions.”

Each item in the series uses the same verb form, creating a clear and balanced structure. In contrast, the nonparallel version appears awkward:

“The project requires collecting data, analysis of results, and conclusions should be presented.”

Parallel structure is especially important in lists, comparisons, and coordinated ideas. It helps readers recognize relationships between concepts and understand organizational patterns. According to Martha Kolln, parallelism contributes to textual cohesion because similar grammatical forms signal conceptual similarity [2].

Parallelism also enhances rhetorical effectiveness. Many influential speeches and literary works employ parallel structures to create rhythm and memorability. For example, Martin Luther King Jr. repeatedly used parallel constructions in his speech *I Have a Dream* to strengthen emotional and persuasive impact. Repetition of grammatical patterns produces emphasis and musicality. In academic writing, parallel structure improves analytical clarity. When comparing theories, describing procedures, or presenting arguments, parallelism ensures consistency. For example:

“The study examines linguistic variation, identifies discourse patterns, and evaluates communicative strategies.”

The balanced structure allows readers to follow the progression of ideas logically. Parallelism is also useful

in headings and bullet points. Consistent grammatical forms create professional appearance and organizational clarity.

Conclusion. Clarity and conciseness are essential characteristics of effective writing. They enable writers to communicate ideas accurately, efficiently, and persuasively across academic, professional, and public contexts. Techniques such as simplifying sentence structure, using precise vocabulary, employing active voice, maintaining logical organization, and adapting language to audience needs significantly improve textual clarity. Conciseness further enhances

communication by eliminating unnecessary repetition and reducing verbal excess. Redundancy weakens writing by increasing cognitive load and distracting readers from central ideas. Removing filler expressions, avoiding repetitive meanings, and revising wordy constructions contribute to stronger and more readable prose. Parallel structure plays a particularly important role in improving both clarity and conciseness. By organizing grammatical elements consistently, parallelism creates balance, coherence, and readability. It strengthens rhetorical impact while guiding readers through complex information logically.

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