

《科技论文的阅读与写作》课程主页：<http://inpluslab.com/paperwriting>

# Course -6: Being Concise and Removing Redundancy

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学院个人主页：

<http://sdcs.sysu.edu.cn/content/4989>



# Motivation



## ■ Factoids

- ❖ The English language has **evolved** by **eliminating unnecessary elements**: **gender** (Old English had masculine, feminine and neuter), **case** (no nominative (主格), accusative (宾格) etc), **verb endings** (only the -s of the third person remains), and all the **different forms of you** (the current day **you** was originally the second person plural, and not the second person singular as is commonly thought - i.e. it is the equivalent of the French **vous** rather than **tu**).
- ❖ The language with the least number of words is **Toki Pona** (道本语) . With its 123 word vocabulary its inventor, Sonja Lang, claims that you can say anything with no ambiguity. It takes **30 hours to master the language**.

道本语亦称人工皮钦语 (道本语: *toki pona*, 含义: “好的语言”), 是一种由加拿大翻译员 *Sonja Lang* 创造的人工语言。在 2001年夏天首次在网上公布。它不是按照国际辅助语来设计的, 而是围绕道教哲学简朴的生活设计 <sup>[4]</sup>。



桑積·埃倫·科莎

语言学家



生于: 1978 年 11 月 1 日 (40 岁), 加拿大新不倫瑞克

图书: *Toki Pona: The Language of Good*

# Motivation (cont.)



## ■ Factoids

- ❖ Many journals, particularly widely-read ones such as *Science and Nature*, have restrictions on **the number of words** per article.
- ❖ On its website, Nature states: *Our experience has shown that a paper's impact is maximized if it is as short as is consistent with providing a focused message, with a few crucial figures or tables.*
- ❖ A study conducted by **Jakob Nielsen** in 2006 tracked the movements of readers' eyes as they read webpages.
- ❖ He found that **as the number of words on a page increased, the time spent by readers on reading a whole page only increased slightly.**
- ❖ He told his clients, i.e. webpage producers for companies, that when **'verbiage'** (**extra unnecessary words**, 废话) is added to a page, **only 18% of such verbiage will actually be read.**

# Motivation (cont.)



## ■ Factoids

- ❖ Researchers at **University College London** revealed that
  - ❖ readers typically **stop reading** an online article or a book **after only two pages**
- ❖ The study concluded that
  - ❖ readers today **read in a new way**, which the researchers named '**power browsing**'.





# What is the buzz (嗡嗡声, 吸引你的注意)?



Your aim is **NOT** to receive a referee's report like this one:

- ❖ *It is the duty of the authors to present their manuscript (MS) in a way that it is readable and to the point. Only then can a reviewer critically evaluate the most essential data on which the conclusions are built.*
- ❖ When a manuscript is written in a **highly redundant way** it takes too much time and effort to judge whether or not all the analyses have been done correctly.
- ❖ The MS is **far too detailed** making it *unreadable*. There is a lot of **redundancy** in the text, some parts are written as if this is a chapter in a text book. There are 144 references!!! And 12 pages of discussion!!
- ❖ *The result is that the actual findings that could be interesting are completely lost. There is no focus on what the authors really want to tell to the readers.*
- ❖ My suggestion to the editor is to **reject** this MS and give the authors the opportunity to **resubmit** a much more **focused** and **condensed** (浓缩的) manuscript.

# What is the target of this course?



- This chapter begins by giving you good reasons
  - to **avoid redundancy**,
  - and then shows you **how to be concise**.
- However, being concise does **NOT** always mean using **the least number of words**.
- It means using the least number of words that **make the meaning 100% clear**.

# Course-6 目录



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# 6. 1 Write less



- You will make fewer mistakes in English, and your key points will be clearer

- S1. The activity aimed **at / to** the extrapolation of the curve is not trivial.

- S2. We did the calculation manually. This **choice / choose** meant that ...

- S1. The ~~activity aimed at / to the~~ extrapolation of the curve is not trivial.

- S2. We did the calculation manually. This ~~choice / choose~~ meant that ...



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# 6. 2 Cut individual redundant words



## ● Examples

- It was small [*in size*], round [*in shape*] yellow [*in color*] and heavy [*in weight*].
- This will be done in [*the month of*] December for [*a period of*] size days.
- Our research [*activity*] initially focused [*attention*] on [*the process of*] designing the architecture.
- The [*task of*] analysis is not [*a*] straightforward [*operation*] and there is a [*serious*] danger that [*the presence of*] errors in the text...
- The analyses [*performed in this context*] highlighted [*among other things*] the [*fundamental and critical*] importance of using the correct methodology in a consistent [*and coherent (一致的)*] manner [*of conduction*].
- This was covered in the Materials and Methods [*section*].

## 6. 2 Cut individual redundant words (cont.)



- Avoid using strings of words with **little/no differences** in meaning
  - S1. So far, researchers have failed to solve this equation due to various *issues, problems* and *difficulties*.
  - S2. This point is *critical* and *fundamental* for our research purposes.

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# 6.3 Consider cutting abstract words



## ➤ Cut abstract (抽象的) words

- Words such as *activity* and *task* add no value to what you are saying.
- They are very **abstract** and **not memorable** words for the reader.
- If you find that your paper is *full of the words listed below*, first decide if you could cut them

*activity, case, character, characteristics, choice, circumstances, condition, consideration, criteria, eventuality, facilities, factor, instance, intervention, nature, observation, operation, phase, phenomenon, problem, procedure, process, purpose, realization, remark, situation, step, task, tendency, undertaking*

- For example what value does “*the process of*” add in the follow sentence?

*The process of registration can take up to ten minutes.*

## ➤ Ask yourself:

- *What is important about my work?*
- *What is new about it?*
- *What real contribution am I making?*

**Only write in a concrete way !**

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## 6.4 Avoid *generic* + *specific* constructions



### ■ Example

Add no value !

Meetings will be held **twice a year** in June and December.

Add no value !

We investigated **two countries** (i.e., Italy and France), both of which show their different characteristics.

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# 6.5 Using least # of words to draw attention



- **All** the phrases below could be replaced by

*Note that ...*

- It must be emphasized / stressed / noted / remarked / underlined ...
- It is interesting to observe that
- It is worthwhile bearing in mind/noting/mentioning that...
- It is important to recall that ...
- As the reader will no doubt be aware ...
- We have to point out that ...

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## 6.6 Reduce the number of link words



### ■ **Excessive** promptings such as:

- It is worthwhile noting that ...
- As a matter of fact ...
- Experience teaches us that ...

### ■ The following link words -> *since*

- *Considering that, given that, due to the fact that, on the basis of the fact that, in view of the fact that, in consequence of that fact that*

## 6.6 Reduce the number of link words (cont.)



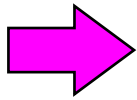
### ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)

Our data highlighted a significant toxic effect.

- (1) *In fact*, cell survival in cultures (培养基) inoculated (接种) with elutriates (淘洗) was about 75% of the control, respectively.
- (2) *Considering that* several heavy metals (HMs) are known to be *carcinogenic compounds* (致癌化合物), the metal contamination (污染) may explain some of the toxicity.
- (3) *Moreover*, in complex mixtures, HMs may also act as co-mutagens (诱变剂),
- (4) increasing the toxic activity of other compounds (Brogdon, 2011).
- (5) *In particular*, cadmium (镉) could be responsible for the *mutagenic effects* (诱变效应).
- (6) *In addition*, the high concentrations (浓度) of chromium (铬) may be responsible for the toxic effects,
- (7) *given that* chromium (铬) is a *potent mutagenic compound* (强有力的诱变化合物) and it is also...



## 6.6 Reduce the number of link words (cont.)



### REVISED VERSION (RV)

Our data highlighted a significant toxic effect.

(1) *In fact*, cell survival in cultures (培养基) inoculated (接种) with elutriates (淘洗) was about 75% of the control, respectively.

(2) ~~Considering that~~ Several heavy metals (HMs) are known to be *carcinogenic compounds* (致癌化合物), the metal contamination (污染) may explain some of the toxicity.

(3) ~~Moreover,~~ In complex mixtures, HMs may *also* act as co-mutagens (诱变剂),

(4) *thus* increasing the toxic activity of other compounds (Brogdon, 2011).

(5) ~~In particular,~~ Cadmium (镉) could be responsible for the *mutagenic effects* (诱变效应).

(6) *In addition*, the high concentrations (浓度) of chromium (铬) may be responsible for the toxic effects,

(7) ~~given that~~ Chromium (铬) is *in fact* a *potent mutagenic compound* (强有力的诱变化合物) and it is also...

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## 6.7 When connecting sentences, use the shortest form possible



- When **drawing consequences** or **introducing the next point** that follows on **from information given in the previous sentences**, avoid redundancy (italics in S1 and S2), instead simply insert *thus* (as in S3 and S4):

S1 \*. *From the previous list of properties, it emerges that* cooperation with devices is a complex task.

S2 \*. *Under this respect*, the design of a suitable gateway is necessary in order to guarantee the interoperability between the gateway and other communication protocols.

S3 \*. Cooperation with devices is *thus* a complex task.

S4 \*. The design of a suitable gateway is *thus* necessary in order to guarantee the interoperability between the gateway and other communication protocols.

# Course-6 目录



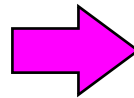
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## 6.8 Choose the shortest expressions



- An adjective + a generic noun (*way, mode, fashion*)  
-> **adverb form** (副词形式)

### ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)



### REVISED VERSION (RV)

To do this, the application searches for solutions *in an automatic way / fashion / mode*.

This should be avoided since *it is generally the case* that it will fail.

From *a financial standpoint*, it makes more sense to ...

To do this, the application searches for solutions *automatically*.

This should be avoided since it *generally* fails.

*Financially*, it makes more sense to ...

### ❖ Other examples:

A number of times (frequently), from time to time (occasionally),  
In a rapid manner (rapidly), in an efficient way (efficiently)

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## 6.9 Cut redundant adjectives ( 形容词 )



- Whenever you use an adjective, decide if it really is necessary
  - A *real* challenge, a *novel* solution, an *interesting* result, an *appropriate* method
- Don't use **pairs of adjectives** or nouns that essentially mean the same thing
  - This is [*absolutely*] necessary as the reader could interpret the sentence in a [*completely*] different way.
  - This has made it possible to review the analysis of important [*fundamental and practical*] problems [*and phenomena*] of engineering.

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## 6.10 Cut pointless introductory phrases



- **Avoid an introductory phrase** when it is **preceded** (前置) by a heading, e.g., after a heading entitled *Results*,
  - The results of this work are summarized in the following.
  - Let us analyze the results obtained in this study.
  
- Likewise, under a heading **Conclusions**, **don't say**:
  - In conclusion, we can say that ...

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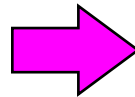
# 6.11 Replace impersonal (客观的) expressions beginning *it is ...*



- Expressions that **begin** a sentence with *it is ...* tend to delay the subject.
- You **can replace impersonal expressions** by (a) (b) (c):

(a) using modal verbs 情态动词 (*can, must* etc.).

ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)  
*It is necessary / mandatory* to use X.



REVISED VERSION (RV)  
X *must* be used.  
X *is necessary / mandatory*.

*It is advisable* to clean the recipients  
(容器).

The recipients *should be* cleaned.

*It is possible* that inflation (通货膨胀)  
will rise.

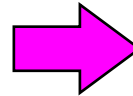
Inflation *may* rise.

## 6.11 Replace impersonal (客观的) expressions beginning *it is ...* (cont.)



(b) using adverbs (*surprisingly, likely* etc.).

ORIGINAL VERSION(OV)



REVISED VERSION(RV)

*It is surprising* that no research has been carried out in this area before.

*Surprisingly*, no research has been carried out in this area before.

*It is regretted* that no funds will be available for the next academic year.

*Unfortunately*, no funds will be available for the next academic year.

*It is clear / evident / probable* that inflation will rise.

Inflation will *clearly / probably* rise.

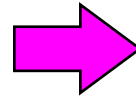


# 6.11 Replace impersonal (客观的) expressions beginning *it is ...* (cont.)



## (c) rearranging the sentence

### ORIGINAL VERSION(OV)



### REVISED VERSION(RV)

- *It is possible* to demonstrate [Kim 1992] that...
  - *It is anticipated / believed* that there will be a rise in stock prices.
  - *It may be noticed* that ... *It is possible to observe* that...
- Kim[1992] *demonstrated* that...
  - We *expect* a rise in stock prices.
  - We *believe* there will be a rise in stock prices.
  - A rise in stock prices is *expected*.
  - *Note that...*

However, impersonal phrases **may be useful** when you want to *hedge* (对冲) your claims.

# Course-6 目录



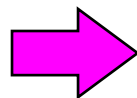
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# 6.12 Prefer verbs to nouns



- English tends to use more verbs than nouns.
- This reduces the number of words needed, makes sentences flow better, and provides variety.
- Too **many nouns** make a sentence **heavy to read**.

## ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)



## REVISED VERSION(RV)

X was used in the *calculation* of Y.

X was used to *calculate* Y.

Symbols will be defined in the text *at their first occurrence*.

Symbols will be defined *when they first occur* in the text.

Lipid (油脂) *identification* in paint samples is based on the *evaluation* of characteristic ratio values of fatty acid amounts and *comparison* with reference samples.

Lipids are generally *identified* in paint samples by *evaluating* the characteristic ratio values of fatty acid amounts and *comparing* them with reference samples.

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## 6.13 Use **one verb** instead of a **verb+noun**



- If you use a verb + noun construction, you have to choose a ‘**helper**’ **verb** to associate with the **noun**

### ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)

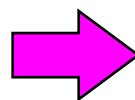
X *showed* a better *performance* than Y.

*Heating* of the probe can be *obtained* in two different ways:

The *installation* of the system is *done* automatically.

The *evaluation* of this index *has been carried out* by *means* of the correlation function.

The *training* of the model was possible by SVM.



### REVISED VERSION(RV)

X *performed* better than Y.

*The probe can be heated* in two different ways:

The system is *installed* automatically.

This index was *evaluated using* the correlation function.

The model *is trained* by SVM.

## 6.13 Use **one verb** instead of a **verb+noun** (cont.)



### ■ Other examples:

*achieve* an **improvement** (**improve**), *carry out* a **test** (**test**),  
*cause* a **cessation** (**stop**),  
*conduct* a **survey** (**survey**), *effect* a **reduction** (**reduce**),  
*execute* a **search** (**search**),  
*exert* an **influence** (**influence**), *exhibit* a **performance** (**perform**),  
*experience* a **change** (**change**),  
*give* an **explanation** (**explain**), *implement* a **change** (**change**),  
*make* a **prediction** (**predict**),  
*obtain* an **increase** (**increase**), *reach* a **conclusion** (**conclude**),  
*show* an **improvement** (**improve**), *subject* to **examination** (**examine**).

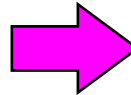
❖ The above *verbs in italics* add no value for the reader.

## 6.13 Use **one verb** instead of a **verb+noun** (cont.)



- The OV below **highlights** the redundancy that such *verb + noun* constructions cause

### ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)



### REVISED VERSION(RV)

In Figure 2 the curve *exhibits* a *downward trend* (portion A-B); then it *undergoes a rapid rise* (part B-C), it then *assumes a leveled state* (zone C-D). It *possesses* a peak at point E before displaying a slow decline ... On the other hand, the curve in Fig 3 is *characterized by a different behavior*.

In Figure 2 the curve initially *falls* (segment A-B) and then *rises rapidly* (B-C). It then *levels off* (C-D). Finally it *peaks* at point E before falling slowly... On the other hand, the curve in Fig 3 *behaves* differently.

# Course-6 目录



1. Write less
2. Cut individual redundant words
3. Consider cutting abstract words
4. Avoid generic + specific constructions
5. Using least # of words to draw attention
6. Reduce the # of link words
7. Use the shortest form possible when connecting sentences
8. Choose the shortest expressions
9. Cut redundant adjectives
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11. Replace impersonal expressions beginning *it is* ...
12. Prefer verbs to nouns
13. Use one verb instead of a verb+noun
14. **Reduce your authorial voice**
15. Be concise when referring to figures and tables
16. Use the infinitive when expressing an aim
17. Remove unnecessary commonly-known or obvious information
18. Consider reducing the length of your paper



# 6. 14 Reduce your authorial voice



- Readers will NOT appreciate being continually given a commentary on **what you are doing** in your paper
- Also, avoid **we** to refer to you and your readers, as in the last example.

## ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)

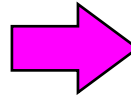
As in the previous case we observe that there are three distributions of this measure:

We can identify two categories of users..

It is now time to turn our attention, in the rest of the paper, to the question of ...

We find it interesting to note that  $x = y$ .

As we can see in Fig. 1, for each network we have a series of different relationships.



## REVISED VERSION(RV)

There are three distributions of this measure:

There are two categories of users..

The rest of the paper focuses on the question of ...

Interestingly,  $x = y$ .

Figure 1 highlights that there is a series of different relationships for each network.

# Course-6 目录



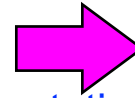
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## 6. 15 Be concise when referring to figures and tables



- The RVs below highlight how **it is not difficult to be concise** when referring to figures and tables.

### ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)



### REVISED VERSION(RV)

Figure 1 shows schematically / gives a graphical representation of / diagrammatically presents / pictorially gives a comparison of two components

Figure 1 shows a comparison of two components.

From the graphic / picture / diagram / drawing / chart / illustration / sketch / plot / scheme that is depicted / displayed I detailed / represented I sketched in Figure 3, we can say that...

Figure 3 shows I highlights / reports that...

The mass spectrum, reproduced in the drawing in Figure 14, proved that...

The mass spectrum (Fig. 14) proved that...

We can observe / As can be seen from Table 3 that...

Table 3 highlights that...

From an analysis / inspection of Table 3 it emerges that...

# Course-6 目录



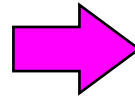
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## 6. 16 Use the infinitive (不定式) when expressing an aim



- You can often save space by expressing your **purposes** and **objectives** in the **shortest form** possible

### ORIGINAL VERSION (OV)



### REVISED VERSION(RV)

We use X *for the purposes of showing* the suitability of Y for the description of Z.

We use X *to show* how Y is suitable for describing Z.

*In order to maximize* channel utilization

*To maximize* channel utilization ...

...

The software is designed *to support* multimedia services.

The *design of software* is aimed at supporting *multimedia services*.

The software *supports* multimedia services.

# Course-6 目录



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## 6. 17 Remove unnecessary commonly-known or obvious information



- **Only** feed your readers with **relevant information**, 以防读者跳读
- In the text below, the redundant information is highlighted in italics.

Devices in a smart environment (SE) can be deployed as stationary or mobile devices. Stationary devices are installed permanently in specific locations *and they are supposed not to change their location*; for example a smart plug and some kinds of environmental sensors or appliances *do not move from their initial deployment*. On the other hand, mobile devices *can change their position over time*; for example a smart phone, a smart watch or a wristband *are not deployed in SE hot spots, but* are worn by people within the SE and their mobility is tightly linked with the mobility of the person carrying them. *The numbers of mobile devices are increasing in our daily lives and thus they are even more present in the SE in which we spend most of the time. We observe that* the mobility of a device affects the way and the quality of the services that are provided by devices.

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18. **Consider reducing the length of your paper**



## 6. 18 Consider reducing the length of your paper



- Often the longer the paper, the less likely it is that author will be focused and the **more difficult** it is for your **supervisor** to make sense of the paper
- Ask yourself:
  - Is my paper 40 pages long, simply because it was easier to report everything rather than taking the time to really consider what was the most important information?
  - How are my editor and reviewers likely to react to my massively long paper?
  - When my 40-page paper is published, will readers naturally want to read it rather than a 10-page paper on a similar topic?
    - 虽然, there is no evidence to prove that a shorter paper is likely to be cited more than a longer paper,
    - 但是, 没有冗余的长文 比起 一篇有冗余的长文更易发表 : get cutting!

## 6. 18 Consider reducing the length of your paper (cont.)



- 虽然,
  - ❖ there is no evidence to prove that a shorter paper is likely to be cited more than a longer paper,
- 但是,
  - ❖ 简洁的长文 比起 一篇充满冗余的长文 **更易发表**
  - ❖ So, get cutting!