Guidelines for Shortening Rating Task

Many documents that we create to communicate have length or size restrictions. For example, we may be asked to provide a one-page description of an event or to prepare an announcement that will fit in three lines of a page. In these cases we often scan our draft for places that are verbose and work on shortening them. Sometimes, we need to omit some of the original information in order to fit the text in the required size.

In this task you will see pairs of **Original Text** and **Shortened Text** where the **Shortened Text** is a proposed version of the original text, which fits in 25% less space and aims to convey as much of the original information as possible, while also maintaining fluency and grammatically.

The goal of the present Shortening Rating task is to evaluate the shortened text along the two dimensions of meaning retention and language quality. The HIT App Interface has two multiple-choice questions with the following options.

How much of the meaning expressed in the original text is also expressed in the shortened version?

□ The Most Important Meaning (The shortened text omits the least important details or nuances and conveys the most important meaning.)

□ Much of the Meaning (Much of the meaning is maintained but critical details are omitted.)

□ Little or None the Meaning (Little of the meaning is maintained, the meaning is distorted, or the text talks about something else entirely.)

How do you evaluate the language quality of the shortened version?

□ Flawless English (The shortened text is fluent, there are no errors, and the writing is appropriate for the type of source document.)

□ Minor Errors (May have minor spelling, capitalization, punctuation, or grammar errors or be somewhat inappropriate for the source document type.)

□ Disfluent or Incomprehensible English (Fragmentary, makes no sense, or word salad.)

Meaning Evaluation Examples

We begin with giving examples of shortened text with perfect English quality and varying levels of meaning retention.

Example for the Most Important Meaning
Most often if we have a high-quality shortened text, the shortening will retain the most important information in the original text and have perfect language quality.

Original Text: The minister who has a personal website on the internet, further said that he wanted Dubai to become the best place in the world for the advanced (hitech) technological companies.

Shortened Text: The minister stated that he wanted Dubai to become the best in the world for advanced technological companies.

Meaning: The Most Important Meaning

Language Quality: Flawless English

In this case the shorted text omits a factual detail that "the minister has a personal website on the internet". It does a very good job skipping other details that contribute very little meaning, such as "further" in "further said" and "place" from "best place". Overall, the most important meaning of the original text is conveyed by the shortened version.

Example for Much of the Meaning
In other cases the shorted text omits some important information from the original text. Still, much of the meaning of the original is maintained.

Original Text: Travelers Corp.'s third-quarter net income rose 11 %, even though claims stemming from Hurricane Hugo reduced results $40 million.

Shortened Text: Travelers Corp's third-quarter net income rose 11 %.

Meaning: Much of the Meaning

Language Quality: Flawless English

In this case the shorted text conveys much of the meaning, but omits the information regarding the impact of Hurricane Hugo entirely. The Hugo-related clause makes up about half the meaning of the original text and thus major information is lost in the shortening.

Examples for Little or None of the Meaning

The lowest rating of meaning retention: ***Little or None of the Meaning,*** is most often needed when the shortened version is not a reasonable and honest attempt to derive a good shortening, or when the meaning is distorted.

Here is an example with meaning distortion:

Original Text: The preliminary stages of the project, the only one of its kind according to its designers, are estimated at $200 million.

Shortened Text: According to its designers the project is estimated to cost $200 million.

Meaning: Little or None of the Meaning

Language Quality: Flawless English

Since the preliminary stages are estimated at $200 million, and not the whole project, the shortened text misrepresents the meaning of the original.

And here is an example which retains none of the original meaning.

Original Text: Travelers estimated that the California earthquake last month will result in a fourth - quarter pre-tax charge of less than $10 million.

Shortened Text: The temperature today was above-average for the season.

Meaning: Little or None of the Meaning

Language Quality: Flawless English

Grammar Evaluation Examples

So far we have been showing examples where the shortened version were written in flawless English. In many of the shortened versions you will see, there might be different types of language errors. We demonstrate the criteria for evaluation using some examples.

Good English Example

Original Text: The minister who has a personal website on the internet, further said that he wanted Dubai to become the best place in the world for the advanced (hitech) technological companies.

Shortened Text: The minister stated that he wanted Dubai to become the best in the word for advanced technological companies

Meaning: The Most Important Meaning

Language Quality: Minor Errors

This shortened version contains the misspelling "world" -> "word" and also lacks a period at the end of the sentence.

In other cases the shortened version is understandable but contains errors in preposition and determiner usage, or word order. These are errors that non-native English speakers might make.

Shortened Text: Minister stated that he wanted Dubai to become the best in the world about advanced technological companies.

Language Quality: Minor Errors

In this case "minister" does not have a determiner, which makes the sentence ungrammatical. There is also a misuse of the proposition "about".

Disfluent or Incomprehensible English Example I

Shortened Text: The minister stated that wanted Dubai the best in the world for advanced technological companies.

Language Quality: Disfluent or Incomprehensible English

In this case it is hard to make out the meaning of the shortened text because it is fragmentary, omitting the subject "he", and the verb "to become".

Disfluent or Incomprehensible English Example II

Shortened Text: The minister Dubai advanced technological.

Language Quality: Disfluent or Incomprehensible English

And another example is some text that could have been created by a monkey typing on a keyboard.

Shortened Text: Abc abd abd abd abf abh.

Language Quality: Disfluent or Incomprehensible English