A Subject Review of Pleonasm in English: Research Trends in Writing and Speech

Zainab Faiz Jasim

Collage pf Arts, AL-Iraqia University, Baghdad, Iraq

Abstract. *This research paper reviews the linguistic phenomenon of pleonasm, the use of unnecessary words or phrases, in both written and spoken English. It is a synthesis of new studies and tendencies in the exploration of the definitions, functions, and communicative influence of pleonastic constructions. Although considered as a stylistic defect, as it has been proven by linguistics, rhetoric, and communication studies, pleonasm is used strategically to make speech clearer, more persuasive, and more engaging. Through the critical analysis of a variety of modern research works, this review gives a detailed picture of the intricate roles of pleonasm and offers future research directions.*

Key words: *Pleonasm, redundancy, English language, rhetorical devices, communication strategies, linguistic studies, stylistic functions, language clarity.*

1. Introduction

Pleonasm is a style used in linguistics where an unnecessary word or phrase is used to convey no meaning to a statement. Typical examples in English are such phrases as ATM (in which the word machine is unnecessary) and gift (in which the word gift is already free). Though the use of the pleonasm is often considered a sort of writing or speaking defect, pleonasm has some valuable stylistic purposes. This has led to the growing scholarly interest in the recent past in figuring out precisely why we repeat ourselves and the influence of clarity. Pleonasm had been found in speech, writing, and literature long before rhetoricians and grammarians sought it. Rhetoric scholars have observed that persuasion and presentation of important points can also be done through the repetition of major points. As an example, one can consider the situation when a politician repeats the words to build up an idea; that is one of the brightest examples of how the idea of redundancy is beneficial in communication.

On a language-centric viewpoint, pleonasm raises some interesting questions on the economy of words and clarity. There are even studies that discuss that it might be beneficial to add additional words in order to process the information even in the cases when it becomes very thick and this may generalize the presumptions about the negative impact of repeating information at all times. Research - such as the ones by Gupta (2019) and Thompson (2021) - has actually demonstrated its usefulness in explaining ideas, with paraphrasing or reinforcing ideas potentially helping in understanding them by the reader. Pleonasm occurs in different situations, whether it is in advertisements and political speech or in everyday speech, which makes it flexible. It does not only emphasize but also gives language rhythm, which makes it more interesting in general. Nevertheless, the studies that specifically focus on the pleonasm in English are rather scarce. In most instances, additional research is necessary, particularly, those studies that measure its prevalence and effect. The given paper is a critical analysis of the current English pleonasm research, summarizing the existing information, but pointing at gaps and directions of future investigation. This is to give a decent overview of pleonasm

in the English language with respect to how it impacts on effective communication and the general transfer of a certain message.

2. Methodology

2.1. Search Strategy

An extensive literature search was held, including such sources as Google Scholar, JSTOR, Linguistics and Language Behavior Abstracts (LLBA). This search was performed in September of the year 2025, and the major words that were used in the search were pleonasm, redundancy in language, stylistic devices, and English writing and speech. In order to narrow our focus and make it comprehensive, we employed Boolean operators (AND, OR) in the process.

2.2. Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

➢ **Inclusion Criteria**:

✓ Peer-reviewed articles published between 2015 and 2025.

✓ Studies of pleonasm in written and spoken English contexts are examined for this review.

✓ Research providing empirical data or theoretical advancements on pleonasm.

➢ **Exclusion Criteria**:

✓ Articles not written in English are excluded from this review

✓ Studies that do not specifically address pleonasm or its implications in communication.

✓ Publications that came from way outside fields such as linguistics or communication—or other closely related fields—well, or related disciplines.

3. Theoretical Background

3.1. Definition of Pleonasm

Pleonasm is defined as the use of redundant expressions that do not contribute additional meaning to a statement. Examples include phrases like "ATM machine" (where "machine" is redundant) and "PIN number" (where "number" is unnecessary). Some might see pleonasm as just poor writing, but it actually has a purpose in writing and speech, providing style and emphasis to the message, generally speaking (Loch & O'Connor, 2021).

3.2. Historical Perspective

For ages, pleonasm has been a point of interest in language studies, going all the way back to comments made by scholars of rhetoric and grammar. There are various views on pleonasm; some people consider it to be a beautiful touch, nevertheless, some think that pleonasm is a language vice (Baker, 2022).

4. Literature Review

The pleonasm is apparently a field of growing interest in recent years, both oral and written. The following is a summary of major research studies on pleonasm given in the table below that underscores their methodologies, findings and their implications.

Table 1: Summary of Pleonasm studies

Study	Methodology	Key Findings	Implications
Loch & O'Connor (2021)	Corpus analysis of written texts	Identified common pleonastic phrases in modern media.	Highlights the persuasive function of pleonasm.
Baker (2022)	Survey of spoken language	Found that pleonasm is more prevalent in informal speech.	Suggests context affects the use of pleonasm.

Thompson (2023)	Experimental study on comprehension	Pleonasm can enhance clarity in complex information contexts.	Indicates potential positive effects of pleonasm.
Smith & Jones (2024)	Analysis of political speeches	Politicians often use pleonasm for emphasis and memorability.	Shows the rhetorical benefits of pleonasm in speech.
Green & Hall (2025)	Comparison of written vs spoken	Found pleonasm occurs more frequently in spontaneous speech.	Suggests differences in language use context.

4. Discussion of Findings

On searching into the issue, we get divergent views on pleonasm. Some research shows that the pleonasm usage can actually help to increase clarity and make the impact more significant. Conversely, there are those who perceive it as mere useless duplication that increases the shortness of communication. Indicatively, Loch and O'Connor (2021) highlight the use of pleonasm to persuade in the media, whereas Baker (2022) demonstrates its frequent occurrence in an ordinary conversation, which means that this device depends on the circumstances a lot. Moreover, Thompson (2023) demonstrates that the application of pleonasm in politics can be used strategically as a rhetorical effect, thus is used as an instrument of communication in the speech. The results of Green and Hall (2025) suggest that pleonastic forms are significantly higher in spontaneous communication, which is why the informality of the conversation predisposes to redundancy.

5. Conclusion

This use of pleonasm in both written and spoken English reflects some degree of complexity. Such redundant phrases are certainly considered as rather critical but pleonasm may serve quite interesting stylistic and rhetoric functions, enhancing the degree of clarity as well as the interest of the audience in a wide range of situations. Pleonasm may be a device of persuasion in rhetoric, e.g. in a political speech where unnecessary words make up catchy slogans. Research has shown that pleonastic expressions could help to make the meaning clear, especially in the learning environment where repeating important information was found to be more understandable. Moreover, they encourage the engagement of the audience through the establishment of a relatable and friendly tone of conversations.

The critical analysis of the available literature appears to reveal that pleonasm does have the potential of being used, in fact, strategically, in order to achieve certain communicative objectives, and that its overall position in language is multifaceted and intricated.

Future Directions

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