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## **RE-VISION: THE LAST CHANCE TO MAKE IT GLOW**

У статті розглянуто прийоми редагування текстів, писаних англійською, задля покращання професійної комунікації у глобальному контексті за допомогою цієї мови. Увагу зосереджено на універсальних аспектах англомовного редагування, релевантних як для носіїв англійської, так і для тих, для кого вона не є рідною мовою, а саме: перефразування, скорочення, переміщення, а також ланцюжки еквівалентів, колокації, структурація за допомогою заголовків. Розглянутий матеріал рясно ілюстрований відповідними прикладами.

**Ключові слова:** *прийоми редагування, перефразування, скорочення, переміщення, ланцюжки еквівалентів, колокації, заголовки*

В статье рассмотрены приемы редактирования англоязычных текстов с целью повышения эффективности профессиональной коммуникации на английском языке в глобальном контексте. Особое внимание уделяется универсальным аспектам англоязычного редактирования, релевантных как для носителей английского языка, так и для тех, для кого этот язык не является родным. Рассмотрены приемы перефразирования, сокращения, перемещения, а также цепочки эквивалентов, коллокации, структурирование при помощи заголовков. Материал статьи хорошо иллюстрирован соответствующими примерами.

**Ключевые слова:** *приемы редактирования, перефразирование, сокращение, перемещение, цепочки эквивалентов, коллокации, заголовки*

This paper presents the editing techniques that make professional writing more effective to help people develop their ability to communicate clearly and persuasively in English in its global context. It focuses specifically on those universal writing techniques that help the writers connect with other people whose first language may or may not be English. These include: paraphrasing, reduction and deletion, relocation, equivalency chains, collocations, and headings. The material is amply illustrated with relevant examples.

**Key words:** *editing techniques, paraphrasing, reduction and deletion, relocation, equivalency chains, collocations, headings*

*Is there time for vision and revision?*

T.S. Eliot

Revising and editing are traditionally defined as the process of preparing written and/or visual material through a complex procedure involving the correction of punctuation, spelling, grammar, word usage mistakes, as well as editing jobs because many people with the appropriate training and talent are attracted to the occupation [18]. Sure, if editing is in decline that's bad for literature [8]. As Blake Morrison once put it, answering the question

“But can you really teach creative writing?”, “...certain skills can be passed on. But maybe it’s the wrong question. Better to ask: “Can you teach would-be writers to edit?” Yes, absolutely, yes. Give the reader more signposts... Don’t parade your research, integrate it. Show, don’t tell.” [13].

Preparation and editing of reports and proposals, manuals, journal articles and other written documents – for science and technology, medicine, engineering, and business is inevitable part of every professional’s activity – be it a scientist who wants to submit a research to an international journal, or a business person who is sending a proposal to another company or *country*. Almost any document could be made more powerful, more persuasive, more interesting – and, as the final test – more *successful*. Is this process culture-flavored? Yes. In fact, there is a specialization in the field, called *localizing*, that adapts written material (manuals, proposals, etc.) to the audience that will be using the information. On the other hand, we are facing “globalizing” phenomenon [7; 10; 12]. Creating “successfully translatable material” [15] is the key – “a clearly written text is a joy to translate” [11]. And the editor’s task is to learn how to understand written language, and how to cooperate with written texts [16; 17].

One of the chief ways we learn to write is from reading. If we want to *write* short stories, we should *read* short stories. If we want to write *proposals*, we should *read* proposals. The one thing reading *doesn’t* teach – and it’s *one of the most important things* – is **revising**: we see only the finished product. The finished document is like any other finished product: it goes through a lot of changes before it reaches the consumer, who in our case is the reader. Think of the first draft of *any* writing – as raw material from the mine (i.e., the mind). The first great effort is getting it out of the mine of the mind, and onto the screen, or on to paper. Then we start to *polish*. Revising is another word for polishing. Revising – if we split the word into its two parts (re-vision) means – looking at something again; in this case, at our written documents. The question is: what are we looking for? The answer is: *clarity, understanding, remembering, persuasion*.

There’s a wagonload of things to look for when revising. The number depends on how much time we have for the job, how important the document is, and how much we know about the process. Also, there’s often more than one person working on the project. There are probably as many systems for revising as there are islands in the South Pacific. The thing to do is develop one’s own system(s) for revising, and stick to it – which also means refining it as we learn more about the process. What we’ll now be looking at are simply a few suggestions on building such system, and a few specific tools for revising. They include, but are not limited to:

- Paraphrase
- Reduction and Deletion
- Relocation
- Equivalency Chains
- Collocations

■ Headings

One approach is: deciding on a few big questions. Some answers, of course, work for more than one question.

**Big Question 1: How Well Did I Get the Message Across?**

The *main theme* of a document should be *repeated* – either verbatim (i.e., exactly) or **paraphrased** – throughout the document. Decide what *other* things are important – facts, arguments, actions. Emphasize them – in all the different ways. We can emphasize things in lots of ways – verbal, graphic, typographic. By emphasizing information, we're telling the reader what's most important in the material, without them having to wade through each page to figure it out. It says: "Pay attention to this. And remember it!" In speaking, of course, we use intonation and gesture to emphasize information. There are lots of words and phrases that show up in speech but not in writing. Using them in written reports adds to the conversational tone of the document and makes the job easier for the reader as well. A little technique, that's a special form of emphazier, is worth keeping in mind. Basically, we're trying to double-guess the reader, about something that could be troubling them. It speaks to the old sales suggestion of anticipating possible objections, and meeting them even before they arise. To this end, it's worth using such phrases as these:

- Perhaps you're wondering...
- You may be asking yourself...

*Mild imperatives* are another way of calling the reader's attention to the information. Some examples:

- Look at it from another point of view.
- Think about the various combinations
- After you've looked at everything else, consider this option.

*Rhetorical questions* – a feature of spoken language – work very well in writing. They not only add to the conversational tone but get the reader more involved in the material; they make the reader think! Questions invite answers. And even though a rhetorical question may be answered by the writer, it makes the reader curious about the answer (and more attentive). Things like:

- What are the implications of a fact like this? For one thing...
- Can you really afford numbers like this? Not if you want to...
- They were sure to win...or were they?

Another way of emphasizing material is to *state* the information, then *paraphrase* it *immediately after*. In which case we might want to use the *marker* like the following, to indicate the paraphrase:

- What I mean is... / What I'm suggesting is..
- In other words... /putting it another way
- To be more exact, /more specifically, /more precisely/ more properly

- i.e.,
- That is (to say) ...
- Again, ...
- Or rather/or better
- Simply put/said/stated,

Paraphrase is a very powerful and *versatile* tool – for speaking and listening, reading and writing. In listening, it's called *reflecting back* (a basic technique in interviewing): reflecting back in different words what the speaker said. It tells them you're listening and that you understand what they're saying. In speaking, it helps *your* listener understand much better what *you* are saying. It serves the same purpose on the printed page. When information is difficult or complex, consider paraphrasing it. As we've seen, paraphrase is also useful for defining. A few diverse examples:

- Good governance in a country requires transparency; meaning having clear laws and financial records that are easy to understand.
- Packaging and advertising have shorter life cycle in China than in other countries. What I'm saying is: If you want to attract the Chinese consumer, you need to change your packaging and advertising fairly often.
- Logistics – or ways of delivering goods – can contribute as much as 30-40% to the cost of a product.

A typical example of paraphrasing is restating information by replacing the overused word or phrase. In the following example, paraphrasing the word involve(s) goes way beyond its dictionary synonymy, implying a wider context:

(1) A major fact of corporate life is that problems often involve several departments or specializations or both. (2) For this reason, the heart of the report – the tough analysis and recommended solutions – ~~involves~~ requires a group or team effort. (3) This is almost inevitable, given all the research ~~involved~~ that goes into a report and all the areas that can be affected by it. [(4) If the problem ~~involves~~ falls within only the department, the team only needs to include department members. (5) If it also ~~involves~~ affects a division, it should draw members from both levels.

Another case of restating is *avoiding nominalizations*. Nominalization is a fancy term for a process that happens all too often in writings: using formal sounding noun phrases instead of simpler verbs (verbs move, they grab the reader). Notice the following examples of nominalization and their rewrites:

ORIGINAL: Failure to include the information will result in the claim not being traced. →

REWRITE: If you fail to include the information, we can't trace the claim.

ORIGINAL: The scope of the transaction is dependent on the finalization

of the suggested changes in depreciation methods. →

REWRITE: The scope of the transaction depends on the finalizing the suggested changes in depreciation methods.

ORIGINAL: I managed a project in West Virginia, which focused on productivity improvement through the prioritization of service delivery.

REWRITE: I managed a project in West Virginia, which focused on improving productivity through prioritizing service delivery.

When it comes to paraphrasing, *avoiding passive voice* is another good idea. In the active voice, the subject is the actor – the subject is doing something. In the passive, something is being done *to* the actor, or there may be no actor at all. Notice the examples:

PASSIVE: The offer *was* seriously *considered* by the Executive Committee.

ACTIVE: The Executive Committee seriously *considered* the offer.

In general – and that doesn't **mean** always – it's better to use the active voice instead of the passive. But there *are* times when the passive is preferable: when the subject is unimportant or unknown (“the policy was changed”), if making a request seems too harsh (“attendance at the meeting is required”), if you want to conceal the subject or avoid taking responsibility (“your application was rejected”) if one wants to avoid placing blame (“the list wasn't filled out correctly”). A separate case is scientific writing, especially lab reports and research articles – to make a statement sound more objective [7; 9]. But even in the language of science, there is some leeway. For instance, instead of:

“A large amount of iron was found in the water,”

it is possible to write:

“The water contained a large amount of iron.”

Another important point in editing is *avoiding long strings of nouns*. Long “chains” of nouns (with an occasional adjective) – where the first nouns modify the following ones – are often hard for readers to understand. They give a bureaucratic tone to documents. Breaking long noun strings into shorter phrases can make writings much easier to read. For example:

ORIGINAL: You must prepare a group technical report which includes a one-page executive summary.

REWRITE: You must prepare a technical report for/by the group, which includes a one-page executive summary.

ORIGINAL: The company assumes total project management responsibility.

REWRITE: The company assumes total responsibility for project management.

One Washington official back in the 1970s came up with the phrase “bafflegab,” to describe the fine-sounding often meaningless phrases you

sometimes find in business- and government documents. It works whenever you want to impress someone and you don't quite know what you're talking about: choosing any word from each of the three columns, and putting them together could easily sneak the phrase into a sentence:

<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>
integrated	management	options
heuristic	organizational	flexibility
systematized	monitored	capability
parallel	reciprocal	mobility
functional	digital	programming
responsive	logistical	scenarios
optional	transitional	contingency

Another good point here is *avoiding negative statements*. Positive sentences are easier to UNDERSTAND than negative ones. They're also easier to REMEMBER. Two or more negative words in a sentence make it hard for the reader to understand. When sentences have two or more negatives, the reader will often stop and ask himself: "What did that say?" and then have to reread (not exactly easier for the reader). Positive sentences can also be judged TRUE or FALSE faster and more accurately than negative sentences. There are different kinds of negative words. The most obvious are words such as: *no, not, none, never, nothing*. Another common type is those with negative affixes, such as: *nonexistent, ineffective; pointless* etc. Less obvious words include those with a negative meaning, that don't necessarily look negative; e.g.: *absent, empty, fail, reduce, deny, doubt, limit, forbid, terminate, or wrong*. Used alone in a sentence, any of these negatives is usually fine: "That is not my argument." "The engine failed." In some cases, a negative may be preferable. For example, a warning can be stronger in the negative: "Never send the report off without your supervisor's signature," versus "Get your supervisor's signature before you send the report off." The problem starts when one adds more negatives. It takes a little more time to understand the sentences in the left-hand column below. It would take even longer if multiple negatives were in long sentences with complex ideas:

*He was not absent*

*He was present.*

*Wyoming is not unlike Utah.*

*Wyoming is like Utah.*

*The procedure will not be ineffective.*

*The procedure will be effective.*

One of the most common problems in business and government documents is double negatives of the sort: *not...unless; not...except; not...until* etc. What they really mean is:

*not...unless = only if*

*not...except = only if*

*not...until = only when*

## Big Question 2: What's the Best Way to Say It?

What happens when we've written a sentence that just won't come out right? We push it, pull it, try moving around the parts. We all do this naturally, but in an unsystematic way. Here are some specific techniques for reworking a sentence until it does what we want it to do.

At this point, let's deal with **reduction** and **deletion**. Sometimes a sentence has too many words: it doesn't flow, it's hard to understand, or we've used too many words for a small amount of meaning. Reducing the number of words is a possible way out. Shorter phrases are closer to spoken language and have a more conversational tone. Speaking often reduces clause to phrase, phrase to word. Reduction eliminates unnecessary words and improves the clarity of the message. For example, relative clauses (*The man that you spoke to is Mr. Smith*) are much less common in speaking than in writing. Speech almost never uses the so-called nonrestrictive relative clause – the kind that adds information about the subject instead of limiting it to a particular case (*The people in the audience, who paid 40 dollars a seat, expect a good show*). For that reason, I'd avoid using it in writing, if possible. The which of writing usually becomes that in speaking, or is dropped altogether, or reduced. Some examples:

- The project which they mentioned will cost about \$80,000 →
- The project that they mentioned will cost about \$80,000 →
- The project they mentioned will cost about \$80,000.

If we want a conversational tone, we should use that for which, or drop the pronoun altogether – as long as the sentence still sounds natural. Notice the following:

- 1a. This will probably add a new dimension to that which is already known.  
b. This will probably add a new dimension to what is already known.
- 2a. The people who were seated at the back could barely hear the speaker.  
b. The people        seated                at the back could barely hear the speaker.  
c. The people                                at the back could barely hear the speaker.

The phrase who were seated could be reduced to seated or eliminated altogether. Some other examples include replacing redundant phrases like “end result”, “final outcome” etc.:

end result	result
final outcome	outcome
small in size	small
light in weight	light
square in shape	square
oftentimes	often
time period	time OR period
really very	really OR very

kind of/sort of/ type of

–

Another way of improving the clarity and effectiveness of a sentence is **relocation** – moving around words, phrases, or clauses to different locations. Relocation works well with reduction. For example:

ORIGINAL: Women’s participation rates are higher where the income is in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 range.

REWRITE: Women’s participation rates are higher in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 income range.

Apart from relocating the phrase, the rewrite also reduces it from 10 words to 7. Here’s another example:

ORIGINAL: It is not possible to measure the changes in the amount of work done in the home with any degree of accuracy.

REWRITE: It is not possible to measure accurately the changes in the amount of work done in the home.

What’s especially important is *keeping subject and verb close together*. The further the verb gets from the subject, the more confusing the sentence. Compare the following:

ORIGINAL

REWRITE

The “right” decision from a logical viewpoint, which people feel uncommitted to (i.e., they “forget” to implement it, or resist it actively) is indeed not a particularly good decision at all.

Though it may be a logical one, a decision is not the right decision if people are not committed to it; that is, if they “forget” to implement it, or actively resist it.

A summary of plant operation management services as we are proposing based on this survey is given in Section Two.

We propose a summary of plant operation management services based on this survey in Section Two.

The key benefits to be received from the program in addition to the cost savings are quality control and more efficient accounting procedures.

The key benefits to be received from the program include not only quality control and more efficient accounting procedures, but also cost savings.

The cost savings, and even more important – an increase of manpower available for responding to other customers’ requests is favorable with

The new arrangement favors the cost savings, and even more important – an increase of manpower available for responding to other customers’



the new arrangement.

requests.

Students of the behavior of animals in relation to their environment have long been interested in the biological clock question.

The biological clock question has long interested students investigating the behavior of animals in relation to their environment.

Another way of improving the clarity and effectiveness of a sentence is – moving around words, phrases, or clauses to different locations. Relocation works well with reduction. And also with paraphrase. Both examples below deal with a study of women’s labor force participation:

ORIGINAL: Women’s participation rates are higher where the income is in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 range.

REWRITE: Women’s participation rates are higher in the \$20,000 to \$25,000 income range.

Apart from relocating the phrase, the rewrite also reduces it from 10 words to 7. Here’s another example:

ORIGINAL: It is not possible to measure the changes in the amount of work done in the home with any degree of accuracy.

REWRITE: It is not possible to measure accurately the changes in the amount of work done in the home.

Consider some more relevant examples:

Changes in the nature of work may ~~well continue to be~~ *remain* an important influence on the female labor force.

~~—The focus of this paper is on~~ *This paper focuses on* changes affecting mothers of pre-school children.

~~It appears that it is~~ The presence of very young children ~~that is~~ *seems to be* the most important factor.

The analysis, which is confined to participation rates of married women, ~~involves—a comparison between~~ compares women with children under or over six years old.

~~There have been~~ Several long-run changes in the US, ~~that~~ have helped to reduce the constraints on mothers’ employment.

A further change reducing the time conflict between housework and outside employment is the increasing number of ~~that more and more~~ economic functions ~~have been~~ transferred from the home to the factory.

~~In an analysis, they~~ An analysis found that several factors had an influence on the differences.

At the same time, changes in participation rates may reflect ~~trends which are due to~~ factors other than employment.

Some information ~~which has~~ with an indirect bearing on this issue is available in the current study.

The results of these surveys do not suggest ~~that there has been~~ a marked change in attitudes towards married women working.

One more noteworthy point in revising is **equivalency chains**. A good unified paragraph has one main idea, sometimes two, *never* more than three. Think of this main idea as a chain – a common topic that runs through the paragraph. It is signaled by links – words or phrases that in some way refer back to the topic. Here are several kinds of links we use to form equivalency chains:

**Synonym** **The President** addressed the nation last night. In a prepared speech, **Mr. Obama** spoke about his economic policies. In particular, **he** discussed the balance-of-payments problem, describing measures such as the

**Pronoun** recently enacted import taxes. **He** stated that these alone were no enough, and that some may even have to be repealed if they reduced foreign trade too greatly.

**Determiner**

Here's another example, in context: a booklet on leadership, written for first-year officer trainees at the US Naval Academy. "Guy," of course, is a bit informal (in US slang, it can refer to a man *or* a woman):

Look at it this way: If you always degrade a **person**, **their** morale and self-esteem will plummet. Then you will have many more problems on your hands, including a **guy** who may refuse to do anything at all, or **someone** who always makes a mistake because **he's** so afraid of making mistakes. Now if you take that **same person** and praise **him** for his good work and help **him** with his poor work, you'll have a much more successful **individual**. You will also have an **individual** who respects you and who sees you as a good leader.

**Collocation** is a fancy term for words that go together – not for grammatical reasons, but more out of custom; which, as you know, is a powerful

reason for doing lots of things, including the way we write. An example? Take the word *campaign* – in the military or political sense. What do you do with a campaign? You can start or begin a campaign. Ho hum. You can also *mount* a campaign. What words, for example, can you use for mentioning a hypothesis? You can form or state a hypotheses. But it's more professional to *frame* or *formulate* one.

Here are some examples:

We captured 70% of the domestic market last year (hi-impact).

We confirmed this opinion by a careful reading of our competitors' annual reports.

### **Big Question 3: How Clear is My Presentation?**

Proper structuring and formatting the material is the key. First, a page should have at least three paragraphs. Second, effective headings are vital. They provide a *visible structure* for the reader. They show the reader how the material *is organized*, and what is *key material* to focus on. Also, they help the reader locate information more *quickly*. This is especially important in documents used for reference purposes (such as manuals and procedures). Headings help the reader *remember* (headings are *emphasizers*). Experiments show that a group reading paragraphs with headings – recalled twice as much as a group reading the same material *without* headings. Headings activate the reader's *schema*: the information about the topic, that the reader has stored away in his or her mental filing cabinet. Finally, they serve as both an *introduction* and *summary* for the material. Thus headings should be *all-encompassing, clear, self-contained, interesting, informational* (one- or two-word headings seldom provide enough useful information for the reader, and can be ambiguous). They should employ *action* verbs whenever possible. The heading can present the question that the section answers, *matching the probable readers' questions*. Consider the following pairs of heads. Notice how much more interesting the second version is:

OLD: Use of Fiberglass

NEW: What if You Use a Fiberglass Body?

OLD: Conversion of the Engine to Gasohol

NEW: Can I Convert the Engine to Gasohol?

Several specific editing techniques considered in this paper are aimed at developing the authors' ability in written language, to a point where he or she will be able to communicate more successfully in English, with people in all parts of the world where English is used professionally: in business, in science, and in other areas where people work together for a common purpose. Writing can be a tool, a weapon, an instrument: a tool for digging deeply into almost

anything, a weapon for conquering whatever it is you want to conquer, an instrument for playing some of the sweetest music in the world.

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