

# **THE UTILITY POTENTIAL OF CONTEXTUAL REDUNDANCY IN THE TEACHING OF ESL**

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Teaching a foreign language on the undergraduate level is a task as intricate as making the wild animals understand classical music. A plethora of methods and techniques have already been recommended for this. But, to our dismay, we have to regretfully say that none is so efficiently useful in teaching English in all the conditions. Even when these methods are utilized in the Indian classrooms, one finds their inefficacy in making the learners understand what they are taught. It may be because the incorrect use of the same or incompetency of the teachers to use them wisely. Indeed, there are many mistakes that the ESL teachers do in his speech. Many a times, they use English wrongly not knowing its proper use in proper situation and these blunders have their own consequences. However, there is one such language mistake which has more benefits than repercussions and which has been in recent times found to be 'a fruitful fault'. It came to be called as 'redundancy'?

Redundancy is known to be a negative quality of a language. In linguistics, redundancy means the use of more words when expressing an idea than necessary. A notable scholar Campbell has defined it as "the extra ratio of predictability" and Stantland writes that "redundancy is overdetermination." Both these qualities, that is, predictability and overdetermination suggests that repetition of information is the essence of redundancy. In other words, it is the type of wordiness, pleonasm or repetitions in one's writing or speech. The linguistic or contextual redundancy is, unlike grammatical redundancy, non-obligatory, in the sense that it can happen in any circumstances as it is the commonest mistake in the language. However, no considerable research has been done on the usefulness of this contextual redundancy.

The present paper attempts to explain through examples how redundancy can prove to be a boon for the learners, if manipulated wisely in the teaching of ESL, especially in Indian conditions.

## **Contextual Redundancy: Concept and Types:**

As has been stated above, contextual redundancy is non-obligatory and it consists of the reproduction of the identical or synonymous elements. "It's not systematically generated, but any kind of circumstances may suggest or require its use." (Dr. Wit and Dr. Gillette) Such circumstances include socio-linguistic and psycholinguistic factors. Dr. Wit and Dr. Gillette have given four types of contextual redundancies. Let us first understand these types.

- 1) **Identical or Synonymous repetitions:-** When two or more words are given in an expression that are identical or synonymous, there occurs this redundancy. For

example, “The green, green grass of home.”, “I am completely and entirely crazy about her.”

2) **Isolating repetitions:-** When the expression contains at least two sub-expressions of which one explicitly contains one or more features or characteristics of the other occurs this redundancy. For example, “I love the salty sea.’

3) **Contrasting repetitions:-** It occurs when two or more words or expressions that semantically constitute the contrast are repeated. For example the words in an English sentence that are contrasted can receive additional emphasis – even though the words are themselves sufficient to express the contrast.

4) **Differentiating repetitions:-** It is a form of repetition of information in context of differentiating one object from another. This redundancy occurs when words or expressions that are not ambiguous in one context and that may be ambiguous in another, are repeated.

The above forms of redundancy are not rare happenings in the English language. These types of redundancies can be seen at each and every writing or day to day conversations. Because, they give a rhetorical and artistic effect to the writing or speech despite the fact that the redundant words are superficial and unnecessary words in a sentence, they remain to be a very important linguistic virtue that gives effectiveness to the language. As one observes, “All of these forms of redundancies can be used unintentionally for positive artistic and rhetorical effects, frequently for humorous purpose and for a number of other non-manipulative purposes. So their appearance in speech and writing is not a fault. For example, duplicative language used as “parallelism” can have a strong rhetorical effect.” So, whenever there is a need of giving a rhetorical effect or making the language more artistic, the use of redundant words and expressions should unhesitatingly be suggested to the pupils by the teacher. In this way, the learners will not only learn more words to say one particular thing, but also their habit of remembering and choosing new synonymous words will also be strengthened.

### **The Functions and Advantages of Redundancy:**

It will be interesting to know that all the above types of redundancies, though erroneously called as negative quality of language or linguistic blunder, present additional source of information to the listeners, as a result of which even if the message sent by the speaker becomes incomprehensible due to the obscurity of pronunciation of consonants or any other problem, the listener is able to understand the message owing to the presence of additional words expressing the same idea. In this regard, a linguistic scholar says, “However, it (Redundancy) remains a linguistic valid way of placing emphasis on some expressed idea. Through the use of repetition of certain concepts, redundancy decreases the odds of predictability of message meaning and understanding to others.” Through the repetitions of words and expressions, on the one hand, the message expressed by the speaker or the writer becomes clear to the message receiver, and on the other, an additional emphasis is also placed on a particular idea, so that it becomes supportive for the comprehension of the message. Further, the receiver of the message, when listens a particular message sent to him, uses his induction to make the

idea clear to his mind. If the words expressing the same idea are repeated in a sentence or speech, the inductions of the listener also become stable by the help of redundancy. As has been remarked, "Redundancy in language allows the child's inductions to be more stable by presenting more salient evidences upon which these inductions are based. Redundancy, therefore, is the sufficient stimulus needed to acquire a complex grammar system." Indeed, even while learning grammar, even the complexity of grammar becomes crystal clear due to the repetition of the same ideas. The difficulty of understanding the methods and the rules is reduced and the learners find it easy to grasp even the complex sort of grammar. This is the reason that grammar can be taught better through redundancy than any other method, because grammar is like mathematics having many obligatory rules governing the behavior of the language. If these rules are not presented through repeated form of expressions, they cannot be absorbed thoroughly. Hence, redundancy is essential in teaching grammar.

Many a times it happens that when the teacher is explaining a particular poem or a passage, he/she makes use of some difficult words that are impossible for the learners to understand. At such a time, to give the pupils some hints of the meaning of those respective words, redundancy can come to the help of a teacher if he knows how to use it in the best of the manners to make the idea clearer to the pupils. He/She can resort to redundant words and expressions while giving an explanation, while narrating a drama or summarizing a poem and also while teaching grammar. For example, suppose, the teacher is explaining how the moon "shines" in the night, he/she can cite some identical words in the same sentence one after another to simplify like, "The moon is shining and glittering so brightly." The use of these synonymous words may seem odd to the teacher as well as the learners, but the ultimate goal of strengthening the vocabulary power of the learners is fulfilled. Besides, it also has some advantages of its own as well. Firstly, the redundant words increase the student's ability to understand a difficult or unknown words or idea, and secondly, they also build the pupil's vocabulary power.

Similarly, some psycho-linguistic scholars argue that the development of the children's mind coincide with the development of the language competency. And as regards language, it is not devoid of redundancy, but replete with repetitions of words and ideas. That is, full of synonymous and contrasting words and expressions. As has already been said that redundancy is used in a language with different purposes, such as, to surprise, to horrify, to please, to mock, to hurt etc. Therefore, it becomes largely essential to make the development of language in children along with the mental development of them. And the redundancy production is the earliest feature of the language the children learn at their initial stage. As Dr. Earnst-Jan C. Wit and Dr. Marie Gillette has opined, "Although, language redundancy has had its critics, a place for redundancy has also been recognized in the psycho-linguistic and linguistic literature. Some have argued that redundancy production seems to coincide with the mental development of a child, whereas others have explicitly set out to prove the value of redundancy in communication." This makes it clear that redundancy is not only one of the chief qualities of the language, but also holds a vital place in the development of the communication skills in children.

Indeed, the greater the proportion of the redundancy in one's language, the greater will be the clarity in his language and so the possibility of the development of the comprehension potential of the listeners. And this is the greatest advantage of redundancy as far as foreign language teaching is concerned. Apart from these, let us see some other beneficial features of redundancy:

1) **Comprehension Ability:-** Contextual redundancy has a potential of enhancing the understandability. "A child increasingly uses redundancy to ensure that his/her message is understood. One way to do that is by adhering to grammatical rules that apply to the utterance." This shows that the greater proportion of the use of redundant words enhances the comprehensibility of the learners in the same proportion.

2) **Resolving Ambiguity:-** To give precision to the expression, no other language feature can come to one's help than redundancy. Using only a single word in writing or a speech can create ambiguity or confusion in one's mind. But when the same idea is expressed through repetitions of some words, there remains no ambiguity and all the confusions fly away. For example, when the witness is asked in the court "to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth" he understands that he has to tell the court not less than the truth and not more than what he knows.

3) **Emphasizing or Intensifying:-** In a writing or a speech, people frequently want to focus on a salient characteristic of certain object or emphasize a particular quality of it. This requirement can also be fulfilled through redundancy. For example, in the sentence "I love the salty sea." the saltiness of the sea is emphasized.

4) **Creating Poetic Effect:-** As has been clarified above, redundancy in language does not harm the message, but gives it a rhetoric or artistic effect. With a special arrangement of words, it also has a potential to give poetic effect to one's language. It is because redundancy encapsulates all the above qualities of redundancy with an intention of shocking, pleasing, horrifying or moving effects. The line like "The green, green grass of home." creates a charming and poetic effect.

Of several advantageous qualities of redundancy, the above cited are only the chief ones. Besides this, redundancy is also very important factor in the task of interpreting and reconstructing the message. Peter Nubold and John Turner state this faculty of redundancy in very apt words, "Redundancy is a feature of information source which insures that the communication receiver is able to reconstruct a message that has somehow suffered from transmission, interference or deletion, and so interpret it satisfactorily."( Nubold and Turner, P. 32) Heard messages tend to be vanished immediately after the words are spoken and the written words may undergo deletion or become obscure. Hence, it becomes necessary to know such a method to keep the message intact even though it may have suffered through the above problems. This can be done only through redundancy.

### **Conclusion:-**

Thus, as regards the teaching of ESL, the primary objective before a teacher should be to expose the learners to as much English as possible so that the learners would

come in contact with the language and would feel to be in the English environment at least inside the classroom. Because, knowing the synonyms and antonyms is the basic study a student has to do and if this study is done through the use of redundant words by means of any possible channel- oral, written or electronic- at the very initial stage, the learners become proficient enough at the small age to use the language wisely in their speech and writing. This happens owing to the frequent encounter of the learners with the English words to which their subconscious mind continuously catch up and store in it, and they begin subconsciously to make use of those heard-words afterwards whenever the conditions demand. In this way, the objective of teaching English is achieved without any impediment through the use of redundancy.

### **References:-**

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