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Wordiness in academic writing: a systematic scoping review

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Abstract. *Background:* Excessive use of empty words in academic texts is a significant impediment to effective communication, often complicating the clarity and reducing the comprehensibility of scholarly writing. *Purpose:* This systematic scoping review investigates the nature, causes, and consequences of excessive use of empty words, alongside strategies for mitigating this issue in academic writing, differentiating between the nuanced connotations of ‘verbosity’ and ‘wordiness’. *Methods:* Employing a detailed search strategy, the review engaged two electronic databases – Scopus and Google Scholar, initially identifying 256 studies. Employing the PRISMA-ScR protocol and the ‘PCC’ mnemonic (Population, Context, Concept) for inclusion and exclusion criteria, 30 English-language studies directly addressing the excessive use of empty words and strategies for reduction were included. *Results:* The synthesis of the selected research revealed that while the excessive use of empty words is widely recognized as a challenge for authors and academics, the problem remains underexplored. The analysis clarified the distinction between ‘verbosity’ and ‘wordiness’ – terms often used interchangeably but with distinct implications for academic writing. Key factors contributing to this issue include complex sentence structures, unnecessary nominalizations, and the use of redundant phrases or overly complex vocabulary. Effective strategies for reducing excessive wordiness involve simplifying sentence constructions, employing more direct language, eliminating redundancy, and strategically using verbosity for positive rhetorical effects. *Conclusion:* The review emphasises the importance of awareness and strategic management of empty word usage in academic texts to enhance readability and engagement. By adopting a critical approach to the elimination of unnecessary verbiage, authors can significantly improve the quality of academic writing.

Keywords: Academic writing; Text verbosity; Wordiness reduction; Writing clarity; Scholarly communication; Excessive word use; Readability

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«Водность» текста в академическом письме:
систематический обзор предметного поля

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Аннотация. Введение: Чрезмерная водность текста в академических текстах является существенным препятствием для эффективной научной коммуникации, осложняя однозначность восприятия информации и снижая глубину понимания научной информации. Цель: В данном систематическом обзоре предметного поля исследуются природа, причины и последствия чрезмерной водности текста, а также стратегии решения этой проблемы в контексте академического письма с разграничением нюансов, связанных с неоднозначностью понимания терминов "водность" и "многословность". Методы: Данный обзор был реализован с опорой на две электронные базы данных, Scopus и Google Scholar. В результате поискового запроса было выявлено 256 исследований. Используя протокол PRISMA-ScR и мнемоническую технику "PCC" (популяция, контекст, концепт) для формулирования критериев включения и исключения источников, авторы выявили 30 англоязычных исследований, непосредственно посвященных изучению водности текста и стратегий её нивелирования. Результаты: Анализ исследований, вошедших в обзор, продемонстрировал, что, хотя чрезмерное использование пустых слов и рассматривается как значимая проблема для авторов научных статей, она не получила должного освещения в научной литературе. Проведенный анализ позволил разграничить глубину и объем синонимично воспринимаемых терминов "водность текста" и "многословность", оказывающих разное влияние на эффективность академического письма. Ключевыми факторами, провоцирующими водность текста, являются сложные структуры предложений, излишние номинализации, использование избыточных фраз или чрезмерно сложной лексики. Эффективные стратегии сокращения избыточной многословности включают упрощение конструкций предложений, устранение словесной избыточности и стратегическое использование многословия для достижения положительного риторического эффекта. Заключение: Данный обзор подчеркивает важность осознания и стратегического управления использованием «пустых» слов в академических текстах для повышения индекса читабельности текста и уровня вовлеченности читательской аудитории. Применяя критический подход к устранению ненужного многословия, авторы способны значительно улучшить качество академической коммуникации.

Ключевые слова: Академическое письмо; Многословность текста; Снижение водности; Ясность письма; Научная коммуникация; Чрезмерное словоупотребление; Читательность

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Introduction

Since the early 2000s, the academic landscape has been reshaped by a global trend toward requiring publications in prestigious journals indexed in international citation databases (Tikhonova et al., 2023a; Haghani, 2023; Çakir et al., 2024). This movement has particularly affected emerging scholars, such as doctoral candidates. Amidst the prevailing 'publish or perish' culture, early-career researchers find themselves navigating a minefield of pressure. They face several hurdles in their quest for publication, including the lack of structured mentorship (Ramsay and Harries, 2014; Martin et al., 2022; Zhu et al., 2024), unfamiliarity with the nuances of publishing, absence of adequate support from their institutions, and language obstacles (Pinheiro et al., 2014; Lua and Hyland, 2016; Baxter and Neumann, 2023).

In tackling these difficulties, academic institutions have rolled out various forms of support. These measures range from publication workshops and retreats to extended writing support networks (Matthew et al., 2006; Rodríguez et al., 2022), courses focused on Language for Academic Purposes and Language for Research Publication Purposes (Li and Flowerdew, 2020; Cui et al., 2023), one-on-one mentoring programs (Linnehan, 2001; Busse et al., 2022), and ability to use multiple digital instruments and sources for writing (Strobl, 2019; Allagui, 2023; Chigbu et al., 2023).

This context highlights the critical need for brevity and clarity in academic writing, both in native languages and in English, underscoring the reality that many researchers are not fully prepared to publish in leading journals and engage their readers effectively. Despite substantial support efforts from

academic institutions, these measures have not been sufficient to fully equip researchers with the necessary academic writing skills for the successful dissemination of scientific knowledge (Imani and Habil, 2012; Raitskaya and Tikhonova, 2022). A significant number of authors demonstrate a lack of expertise in academic writing, a fundamental skill for the effective communication of research results. Mere theoretical understanding of scientific communication's rhetoric does not suffice without the advanced ability to process and present academic information proficiently (Tikhonova et al., 2023b).

A prevalent issue among modern researchers is their use of unnecessary filler words in manuscript texts, often stemming from an inadequate grasp of Academic Search Engine Optimization (ASEO) principles (Tikhonova, 2023). This skill deficit highlights the multifaceted nature of academic publishing, where simply recognising the value of clarity and succinctness falls short of addressing the broader challenges. In the vast expanse of textual communication, the clarity and conciseness of written language stand as pillars of effective information transfer (Prasetyo, 2015; Li, 2022). However, the widespread issue of verbosity (with many researchers treating 'wordiness' as an exact synonym) across academic, professional, and creative texts poses a significant challenge to these principles. The issue of verbosity is not merely a stylistic concern but impacts readability, comprehension, and engagement, thus bearing profound implications for both the author and the audience (Barrass, 1996; Ibrahim et al., 2016). Despite its ubiquity, the mechanisms underlying verbosity, its effects on reader perception, and strategies for

mitigation have only begun to be systematically explored in recent literature.

Historically, the study of verbosity has spanned several dimensions, including the psychological drivers behind superfluous word use, the impact of excessive wording on reader attention and memory retention, and the development of computational tools for detecting and reducing wordiness. Scholars like Abdollahi-Guilani et al. (2012), Ibrahim et al. (2016) and Boumeddane (2021) have delved into the semantic redundancies that characterise verbose texts, while Barrass (1996), Abdul-Raof (2006), and Śleszyńska (2021) have investigated the linguistic ignorance and rhetorical motivations that contribute to this phenomenon.

Compounding the issue is the lack of a unified understanding and terminology for text verbosity. This absence of consensus hinders the effective addressing of verbosity, which detracts from the readability, comprehension, and engagement of academic texts. Despite the significant implications of verbosity on text quality, existing research has only begun to unravel the complexity of this issue. This systematic scoping review aims to synthesise the body of research on text verbosity to elucidate the complexity of its causes, manifestations, and impacts. It seeks to bridge the gap between linguistic theory and practice, offering insights into the nuanced interplay between authorial intent and reader experience. The review is guided by several research questions: (1) What are the primary factors that contribute to verbosity in text? (2) How does verbosity affect the reader's ability to understand and engage with the content? (3) What strategies or tools have proven effective in identifying and mitigating verbosity? Through a comprehensive analysis of existing literature and empirical studies, this review endeavours to offer a holistic understanding of text verbosity, providing valuable perspectives for

writers, editors, educators, and software developers alike.

Methods

Transparency Statement

To address our research question, we undertook a systematic scoping review to map out the existing literature on our selected topic. This review aimed to delineate the scope of research conducted, highlight key findings, identify emerging evidence, and pinpoint areas lacking in study, thereby contributing to the discourse in research and educational policy. We adhered to the PRISMA-ScR protocol (PRISMA extension for Scoping Reviews) for conducting this review. A protocol was outlined before commencing the study. The authors ensure that this manuscript presents a truthful, precise, and complete report of the research conducted; that it covers all significant facets of the study; and that any deviations from the original plan have been duly noted and explained.

Eligibility Criteria

This systematic scoping review was executed through a structured process that included: 1) formulating the research question; 2) identifying relevant literature; 3) selecting appropriate studies for inclusion; 4) extracting key data from these studies; and 5) summarising and presenting the findings.

The selection criteria for the literature were divided into four categories, based on the suggested mnemonic (Population, Concept, and Context) for framing research questions in scoping reviews, with an additional focus on the type of publication (detailed in Table 1). The research materials encompassed a range of document types, including articles, reviews, book chapters, editorials, conference proceedings, workshops and website materials, university blogs all discussing the concept of text wordiness. The diverse genres of sources analysed reflect the limited breadth of research specifically dedicated to this topic.

Table 1. Eligibility criteria
Таблица 1. Критерии отбора

Criterion	Inclusion	Exclusion	Justification
Population	All the studies describing wordiness in academic writing	All the studies outside the defined field	The review focuses on wordiness and all participants in writing and comprehending.
Concept	Journal articles, editorials, book chapters, conference papers, reviews, workshop and website materials, blogs which discuss wordiness and its nature	Studies which do not relate to the concept of wordiness in academic writing	The aim of the review is to synthesise the body of research on text verbosity to elucidate the complexity of its causes, manifestations, and impacts.
Context	Studies that relate to writing settings	Studies outside writing context	Focus of the research is wordiness in writing. Extending beyond it would be unmanageable with review resources.
Language	English	Non-English	Scholarly communication is carried out in English worldwide.
Time period	1965-2023	None	To get a full picture of wordiness we aim to grasp all the information dated from both the 20 th and 21 st centuries.
Types of sources	Any types	Unavailable sources	The purpose is to gather all the sources possible.
Geographical location	Any location	None	Getting international perspective

Information Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search was conducted in two databases: Scopus and Google Scholar. Figure 1 illustrates our compliance with the PRISMA-ScR protocol.

Initially, a preliminary search on Google Scholar was carried out to pinpoint articles pertinent to our subject of interest. This search facilitated the identification of key terms and index terms closely associated with the topic, focusing on aspects such as the definition of text wordiness, its characteristics, causes, and consequences for both authors and readers, as

well as the publication type, including reviews and original research. Using these terms, a comprehensive search strategy was crafted and executed on December 30, 2023.

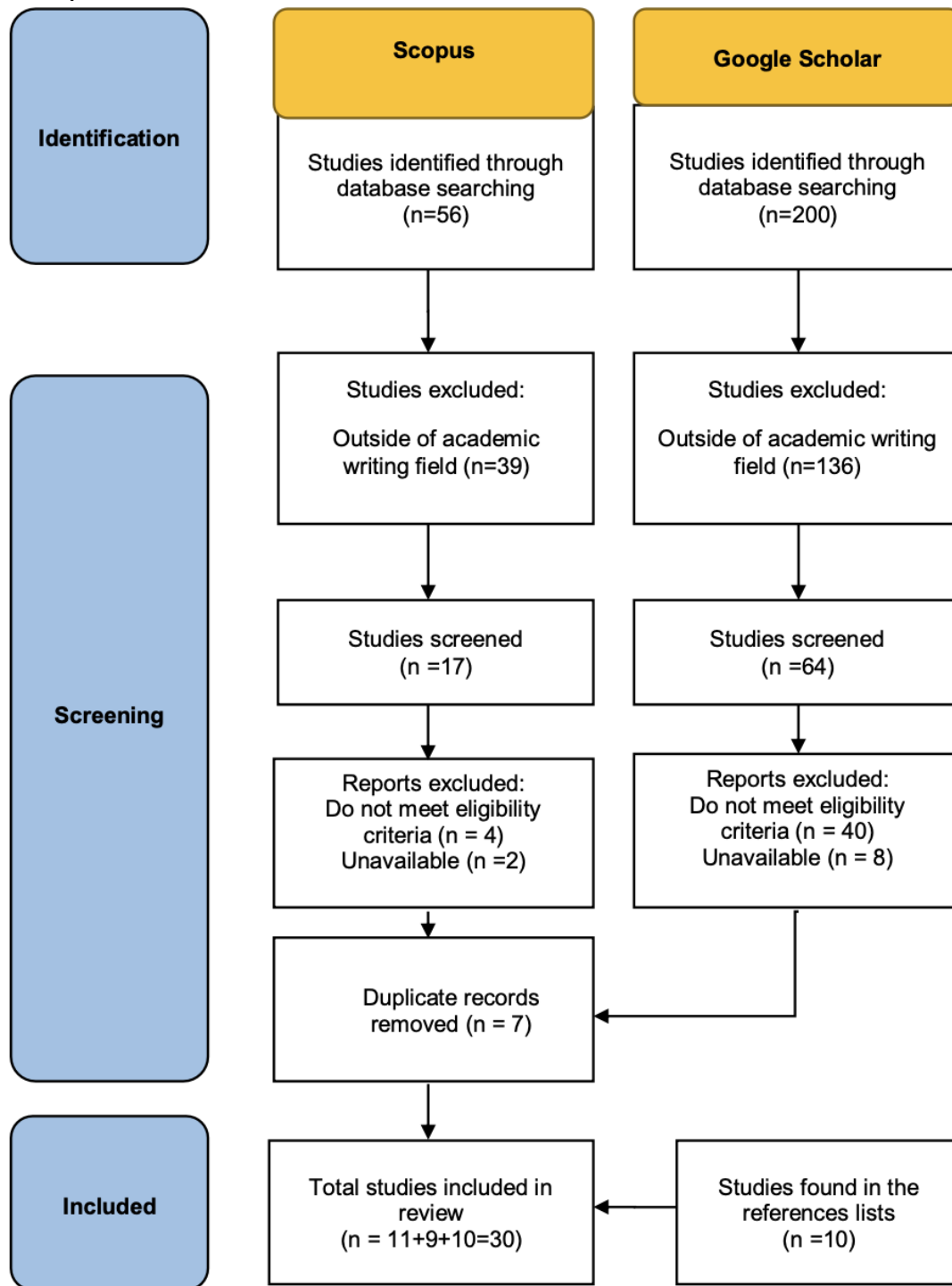
In both Scopus and Google Scholar, the search was limited to the singular terms ‘wordiness’ and ‘verbosity’. This approach was adopted because combining terms or linking them with Boolean operators yielded an exceedingly low number of relevant sources, despite the expectation that the subject would be well-covered in contemporary academic writing research. This might indicate a lack of terminological

consensus. For Google Scholar, only the first 100 results from each query were reviewed, based on the observation that subsequent entries increasingly diverged in relevance and alignment with the review's focus.

Additionally, the reference lists of selected studies were examined to uncover further pertinent research.

From this search, 256 studies were retrieved (as shown in Figure 1).

Figure 1. PRISMA-ScR protocol
Схема 1. Протокол PRISMA-ScR



Selection of Sources of Evidence

The titles of the sourced references were catalogued in a Zotero library, with duplicate entries being removed via a reference management tool. This library, containing all potentially relevant titles, was then systematically reviewed by two reviewers in separate phases: (1) screening by title and abstract, followed by (2) assessment of the full text. At each stage, consensus meetings were held to deliberate on studies meeting the inclusion criteria. Any discrepancies between reviewers were resolved through consultation with a third reviewer.

Through the initial screening of titles and abstracts, 175 studies were excluded based on the predefined criteria. The full-text review of the remaining 81 studies led to the removal of those unavailable or duplicated and exclusion of 44 studies that did not meet the inclusion criteria, leaving 20 studies for incorporation into the survey. An additional ten sources were identified and included during the reference list screening process. For the list of 30 sources included in the review see Appendices 1,2 and 3.

Data Charting Process

Data extraction was conducted by two independent reviewers, with each being assigned half of the selected documents for initial analysis. The complete data set extracted by one reviewer was then cross-checked by the other to ensure accuracy and consistency. Any differences between reviewers were addressed and resolved through consensus meetings.

To systematically organise the extracted data, a standardised Excel spreadsheet was created. This spreadsheet captured a range of data points critical for our analysis, including: the name of the institution involved in the study; geographical coverage of the document; publication year of the document; objectives and a brief description of the document; the target population addressed by the study (including university administrators, teachers, professors, and doctoral students); definitions of text verbosity; characteristics of text verbosity; types of text verbosity; factors

influencing text verbosity; consequences of text verbosity for both authors and readers; tools and strategies for reducing text verbosity.

This structured approach facilitated a comprehensive and systematic review of the literature, enabling us to identify and synthesise key findings related to text verbosity in academic writing.

Summarising and Reporting the Results

Following the data charting phase, the same reviewers synthesised information concerning each aspect of the text verbosity phenomenon identified during the charting stage.

The terminological ambiguity encountered during the source selection phase necessitated a detailed analysis of the identified definitions of text verbosity to extract their core characteristics. These characteristics were essential for establishing a consensus definition of text verbosity. The identified definitions of text verbosity were transcribed and organised in sequentially numbered Microsoft Word documents. The coding process, conducted by the first and second authors, followed the methodology proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). Initially, the first author examined the text to generate a preliminary set of codes. These initial codes were then reviewed and refined in collaboration, leading to the development of potential themes. Subsequently, each researcher independently performed a thematic analysis using these codes, a step critical for ensuring a thorough and impartial evaluation of the data.

Discussions between the coders achieved over 94% consensus on the themes, codes, and references, indicating a high degree of inter-coder reliability. Any differences were addressed through detailed comparison and dialogue, which led to the modification of some codes and the reclassification of certain themes. A second round of coding was conducted based on these adjusted themes, further refining the analysis.

Similarly, the factors leading to and the implications arising from the excessive incorporation of superfluous words in scholarly texts, as identified by the researchers of the studies encompassed in this review, were systematically coded and conceptualised.

Data Visualisation

The metadata of the articles included in the review were processed using VOSviewer, a software tool designed for constructing and visualising bibliometric networks. This software enables the clear representation of relationships among the analysed sources and facilitates the identification of clusters within the research. Through VOSviewer, it's possible to visually discern the main research directions, showing how topics are interconnected and which areas have garnered more focus.

Results

Demographics of the Included Studies

Among the included studies and sources, only 4 papers were published in the 20th century, starting from 1965. 26 studies were released during the last 24 years. Half of the studies chosen for this review ($n = 15$) were published from 2010 to 2019 which indicates an immense interest in wordiness during these years. In comparison, only 3 sources discussed the topic for the last 4 years. A total of 16 countries contributed to the topic. Around half of the studies ($n = 12$) were published in the USA. The only 3 other countries that published more than 1 study was the UK ($n = 2$), Malaysia ($n = 2$), and Sri Lanka ($n = 2$). The rest of the countries contributed equally ($n = 1$) which shows an extremely low level of interest to the wordiness problem. Figure 2 displays a visualisation of the year-wise and Figure 3 summarises country-wise distribution of the included sources.

Figure 2. Publication years of the included studies

Схема 2. Годы публикаций исследований

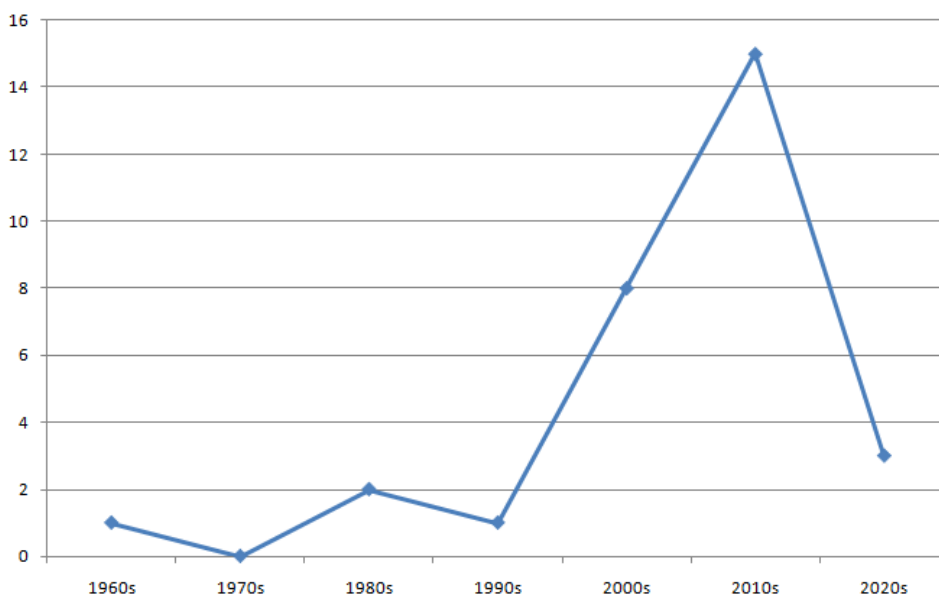


Figure 3. Countries of corresponding authors
Схема 3. Географическая принадлежность авторов

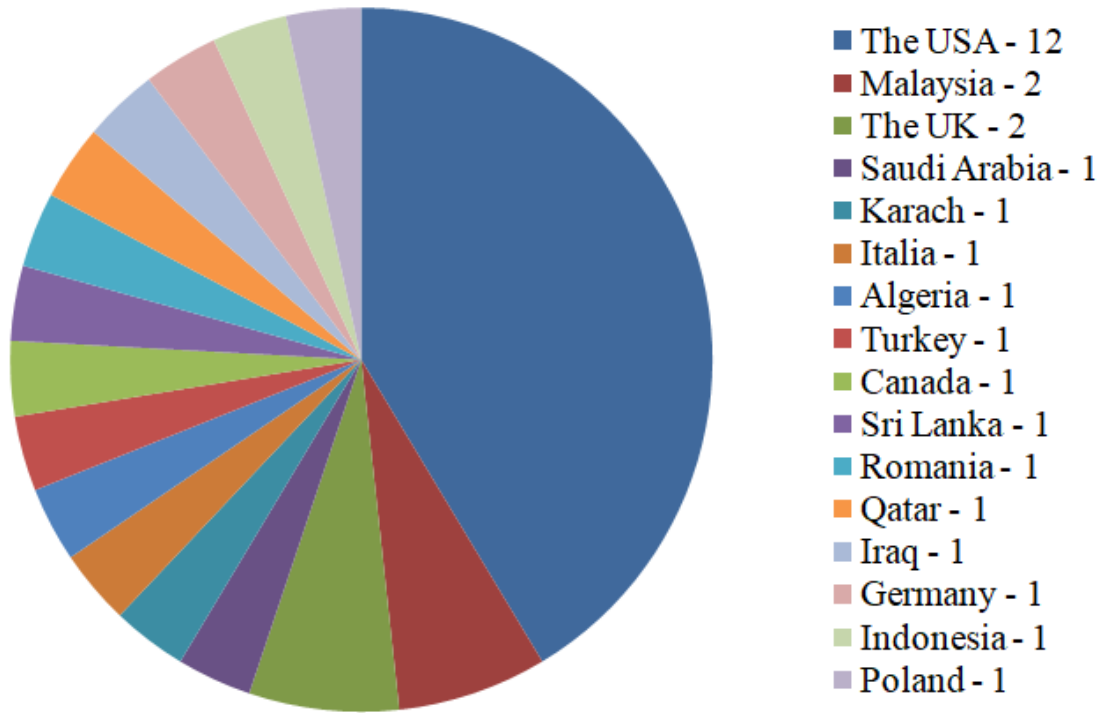
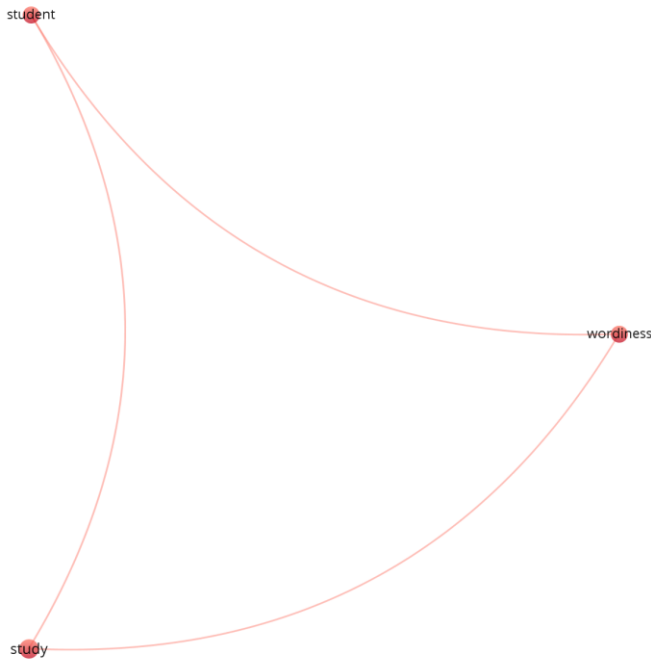


Figure 4. Co-occurrence of the terms from the metadata
Схема 4. Совпадение терминов в метаданных



Main Research Directions

The analysis of the co-occurrence network of terms from the titles and abstracts of articles included in the review revealed a stable network primarily among three terms: 'student', 'study', and 'wordiness' (See Figure 4).

This observation reveals a uniform research focus on matters concerning students and the crafting of academically sound texts. Such emphasis implies that the issue of text verbosity is scrutinised especially within the realm of student writing, underscoring the necessity for educational measures and

strategies aimed at improving students' capacity to generate clear and succinct academic documents.

Definitions

Identified Definitions

The analysed sources identified two terms frequently mentioned by researchers (wordiness and verbosity), associated with the saturation of academic texts with empty words. The term 'wordiness' was employed in 11 articles, 'verbosity' in 5, and 8 researchers used both terms synonymously. Each of the terms has a range of definitions, which, to a greater or lesser extent, share a similar connotation (see Tables 2 and 3).

Table 2. Definitions of wordiness

Таблица 2. Определения водности

Source	Reference
Graham (1965)	The inclusion of words, phrases, clauses, and sentences which make no contribution to the thought, emotion, or rhythm.
Dulek (1982)	Wordiness is like inflation: it can be controlled, but only at a cost.
Langan (2008)	A sign of lazy or careless writing; using more words than necessary to express a meaning.
Cleaveland and Larkins (2004)	Containing more words or longer words than necessary.
Procter (2010)	Using more words than necessary just to use up space.
Fruehwald (2010)	Using several words when one will do.
Pieland Schuchart (2014)	Number of words.
Prasetyo (2015)	Unnecessary words that are removable without changing the sentence's meaning or losing clarity.
Aziz et al. (2016)	Excessive words.
Hicks and Douglas (2018)	Rubric items that have too much text or too many evidence items may reduce grader attention and focus.
Greavu (2019)	The excessive use of adjectives and adverbs, but also of abstract nouns, prepositions, and other parts of speech used in long expressions that have shorter equivalents.

Source	Reference
Provost (2019)	Using long words when there are good short ones available; using uncommon words when familiar ones are handy; using words that look like the work of a Scrabble champion, not a writer.
Śleszyńska (2021)	Taking more words than necessary to convey information.

Table 3. Definitions of verbosity

Таблица 3. Определения многословности

Source	Reference
Barrass (1996)	Verbosity arises from ignorance of the exact meaning of words; it may be a result of confusion of thought, a failure to take writing seriously, or laziness in sentence construction and revision.
Abdul-Raof (2006)	A rhetorical technique that aims to provide informativity to the addressee using more lexical items than is actually required.
Ibrahim et al. (2016)	A pronouncement exceeds the meaning without benefit.
Nordquist (2020) ¹	The use of more words than necessary to effectively convey meaning in speech or writing.
Boumeddane (2021)	The use of more words than are necessary, which is also referred to as prolixity or wordiness; an expressive style that uses extra words for no semantic benefit, makes reading uneasy and understanding likely to be not full; a flaw when lesser words within sentences can suffice to convey meaning in correct grammar; a stylistic deficiency (a wrong way to reinforce ideas).

¹ Nordquist, R. (2020). "Wordiness", *ThoughtCo*, retrieved from <https://www.thoughtco.com/wordiness-definition-1692507> (In English)

General Definition

The data extracted from all the defined terms were coded, and through a detailed review of the textual content, researchers discussed and refined the analysis, leading to the identification of potential characteristics of the text verbosity phenomenon. Subsequently, each researcher carried out an independent thematic analysis using the initial codes.

This analysis enabled the review authors to highlight the key characteristics of this phenomenon. Each characteristic was linked to the study mentioning it (Tables 4 and 5), ensuring the highest level of verifiability for the identified data. These characteristics were considered foundational for developing a unified definition of the term and for comparing the scope of the two analysed terms (wordiness and verbosity).

Table 4. Wordiness characteristics

Таблица 4. Характеристики водности

Characteristic	Reference	Explanation
Use of Excess Words	Graham, 1965; Cleaveland and Larkins, 2004; Langan, 2008; Procter, 2010; PielandSchuchart, 2014; Prasetyo, 2015; Aziz et al., 2016; Nordquist, 2020 ² ; Śleszyńska, 2021	Descriptions that highlight the inclusion of superfluous words, phrases, or sentences that do not contribute to the core message.
Preference for Complexity	Provost, 2019	Emphasising the use of long, uncommon, or complex words where simpler or more familiar alternatives exist.
Repetitiveness	Fruehwald, 2010	Mentioning the unnecessary repetition of words or ideas.
Overuse of Certain Parts of Speech	Greavu, 2019	Specifically pointing out the excessive use of adjectives, adverbs, abstract nouns, prepositions, etc., especially in long expressions.
Impact on Readers	Dulek, 1982; Hicks and Douglas, 2018	Discussing how wordiness affects reader engagement, understanding, or attention.

² Nordquist, R. (2020). "Wordiness", *ThoughtCo*.

Table 5. Verbosity Characteristics
Таблица 5. Характеристики многословности

Characteristics	Reference	Explanation
Excessive Word Use Without Semantic Benefit	Abdul-Raof, 2006; Ibrahim et al., 2016; Boumeddane, 2021	Emphasising the inclusion of additional words that do not contribute to the meaning or clarity of the text.
Difficulty in Understanding and Reading	Boumeddane, 2021	Highlighting how verbosity can make texts harder to read and understand.
Lack of Language Precision	Barrass, 1996	Pointing out verbosity arising from a misunderstanding of words' exact meanings or from confusion in thought.
Rhetorical Technique for Effect	Abdul-Raof, 2006	Discussing verbosity as a deliberate rhetorical choice to achieve certain effects, such as influencing the reader or providing clarification.
Flaw in Conciseness	Boumeddane, 2021	Identifying verbosity as a flaw when fewer words could effectively convey the same meaning.

Researchers define the scope and content of the terms ‘wordiness’ and ‘verbosity’ differently. Goonaratna (2002a, 2002b), Aziz et al. (2016), Brohaugh (2007), and Boumeddane (2021) view these concepts as interchangeable. The analysis of these definitions reveals that ‘wordiness’ includes a spectrum of writing challenges, ranging from the total number of words used to the selection and complexity of the language, affecting reader engagement and comprehension. While ‘verbosity’ often carries negative implications, highlighting its excessive nature, some scholars attribute positive qualities to it, advocating for its use as a deliberate rhetorical strategy to enhance communication. Abdul-Raof (2006) notes its utility in influencing the reader, garnering sympathy and affection, ensuring affirmation, demonstrating respect, preventing ambiguity, and providing clarification. Ibrahim et al. (2014) suggest verbosity can serve for emphasis or to eliminate ambiguity. They also argue it helps in clarifying the communicator's

messages. Furthermore, they view verbosity as beneficial elaboration, where the extensive use of words serves a purposeful function. Bianco (2024) contends that in verbosity, every word plays an essential role, ensuring no part of the message is deemed extraneous.

Mapping the identified characteristics for each term

The initial four characteristics for ‘wordiness’ and ‘verbosity’ align in content, yet their fifth attributes diverge: wordiness has a negative impact on readability, whereas verbosity can serve as a positive rhetorical tool (See Table 6). ‘Verbosity’ in academic writing denotes the problematic overuse of words, impacting clarity and reader comprehension. ‘Verbosity’ and ‘wordiness’ both illuminate this issue, but ‘verbosity’ offers a broader view by addressing the effects of word choice and complexity on reader engagement. This distinction renders ‘verbosity’ as the more apt descriptor for the academic writing phenomenon, where excessive or complex language can obscure meaning or, conversely,

enhance communication depending on its application. Thus, ‘verbosity’ is defined as the presence of superfluous words or complex expressions in writing, which can either merely bloat the text or strategically enhance it for clarity, precision, or reader engagement. This variance influences how readers interpret and interact with the text.

Types of Text Wordiness

The sources included in the review outline different types of wordiness. Hamid (2013) described 6 forms of wordiness: nominalization, redundant expressions, passive voice, negative expressions, empty expressions and expletives (Table 7).

Table 6. Mapping of characteristics

Таблица 6. Сопоставление характеристик

Wordiness	Verbosity
Use of Excess Words	Excessive Word Use Without Semantic Benefit
Preference for Complexity	Difficulty in Understanding and Reading
Repetitiveness	Lack of Language Precision
Overuse of Certain Parts of Speech	Flaw in Conciseness
Impact on Readers	Rhetorical Technique for Effect

Table 7. Types of wordiness

Таблица 7. Виды водности

Type	Definition
Nominalization	The writer uses both a noun and a verb when the verb alone would be enough.
Redundant expressions	Redundant pairs: phrases that contain two words both of which mean the same thing. Redundant modifiers: the same words require no modification. Redundant Categories: one term is the general category to which the other term belongs
Passive voice	Passive voice often produces unclear, wordy sentences whereas active voice produces clearer, more concise sentences.
Negative expressions	Negative words need more effort from the reader to understand causing information overload.
Empty expressions	Empty words do not add any meaning.
Expletives	An expletive construction is a common device that often robs a sentence of energy before it gets a chance to do its work (there + be, it + be).

Note. The table is adapted from Hamid, S. A. (2013). Syntactic Problems of Translating English Wordiness into Arabic, *Surra Man Ra'a*, 9 (33), 363-377, available at: <https://www.iasj.net/iasj/article/83975> (Accessed 13 January 2024) (*In English*).

Demir (2019) suggested 8 categories of wordiness (Table 8). The classifications given by Hamid (2013) and Demir (2019) coincide

in the following types of wordiness: passive voice, redundant expletives, and empty words.

Table 8. Taxonomy for categorization of wordiness

Таблица 8. Таксономия для категоризации водности

Category	Definition
Meaningless intensifiers	Empty fillers that unnecessarily intensify a noun or situation such as “many, much, quite, so, very” etc.
Long phrases and sentences	Some phrases are unnecessarily long, and can be pruned to a single (or shorter phrasal) adjective, adverb, verb, or noun.
Unnecessary passive voice	The use of passive constructions instead of the active voice.
Redundant expletives and introductory phrases	A phrase of there+be or it+be
Adjectival and Adverbial verbosity	Some useless adjectives and adverbs as either boosters (assertive words) or hedges (mitigating words).
Double negation	The use of two negative forms in the same sentence.
Long conjunctions and subordinators	They may be either redundant or unnecessarily long.
Repetition and needless information and redundant word	Writers repeat themselves through paraphrasing; provide gratuitous information through non-defining clauses; use redundant words.

Note. The table is adapted from Demir, C. (2019). Writing Intelligible English Prose: Conciseness vs. Verbosity, *SöylemFilolojiDergisi*, 4 (2), 482-505. <https://doi.org/10.29110/soylemdergi.617184> (In English)

Brohaugh (2007) provides the most comprehensive typology so far distinguishing 16 types (See Table 9). The types of

wordiness, such as *the redundant*, *the already understood*, and *the empty* are common to both classifications mentioned above.

Table 9. 16 Types of wordiness by W. Brohaugh

Таблица 9. 16 видов водности по W. Brohaugh

Type	Definition
The redundant	Superfluous repetition, especially repetition of items on a page.
The already understood	Such repetition can take place between writing and reader—when what’s in the reader’s head repeats what’s on the page.
The empty	Empty words, phrases and sentences which include empty modifiers, empty introductions, empty transitions and connections, empty summation, empty

Type	Definition
	reaction (meaningless words of response, repetitions and questions) and empty comments.
The evasive (intentional or otherwise)	This type of wordiness comprises qualifiers, apologies and indecisive waffling (the simple weak and wordy waffle), euphemisms and dodge words, “aesthetic” evasion and “um” words.
The weak-kneed and the passive	Some passive forms convey “weak-kneed emptiness” which softens the text unnecessarily.
The weak, the noncommittal and the hesitant	Weak writing is meek and timid writing, it includes such words that either delay what the author is about to say or implicit that what follows isn’t particularly pleasant.
The affected	Affected writing is closely related to euphemistic writing, though here the writer has something to show off instead of something to hide. Even though pretension moves toward actualization of pomposity and vocalisation of the same, it recesses verbal meaning.
The circuitous	Winding, twisting sentences add words and detract from comprehension. Circuitous writing is characterised by not presenting information in a clear order appropriate to the topic at hand.
The self-indulgent	The first person both introduces greater length to a manuscript and another “character” the reader must keep track of. Self-indulgence can commandeer but only small sections of a manuscript, also entire manuscripts.
The overkill	Too much argumentation, words and concepts, or words and concepts repeated too many times reduce credibility and lead the audience away from the conclusion the author would like them to draw.
The inflated and the deflated	Word inflation results from stretching the words themselves. So sentence inflation, paragraph inflation and manuscript inflation result from swallowing other elements of flab whole.
The invisible and therefore unnecessary	understood words, so familiar that they become indistinct (clichés, inseparable adjective-noun combinations, standardised phrases and tired word pairs).
The imprecise	The less specifically the thoughts are expressed, the more likely it will turn into an empty, space-filling cliché or a jury-rigged series of words.
The clever and the show-offy	the arresting alliteration, the pow-pow-pow of onomatopoeia, the sublime internal rhyme, multiple puns, or being cute or offbeat in introductions, in transitions or in conclusions.
The nonsensical	Nonsense increases the length of both physical and mental meanings in the sentence. It can take the form of the oxymoron, the impossible or the illogical.
The beautiful	Sophisticated words and phrases which sound fancy, but do not fit the writing context and make the text difficult to comprehend.

Note. The table is adapted from Brohaugh, W. (2007). *Write Tight: Say Exactly What You Mean with Precision and Power* (1st edition), Sourcebooks (*In English*).

Causes of Wordiness

Upon investigating the determinants contributing to the overuse of superfluous verbiage in academic prose, intended to

exemplify structured, transparent, and efficient communication, the researchers have pinpointed a notably uniform set of causes (Table 10).

Table 10. Causes of wordiness
Таблица 10. Причины водности

Cause	Source
The use of overly complex sentence structures, excessive use of passive voice, redundancy in expressions, and the inclusion of qualifiers and modifiers.	Brohaugh, 2007; Willbers, 2010 ³ ; Prasetyo, 2015; Every, 2017; Hicks and Douglas, 2018
Unnecessary repetitions and vague adjectives.	Goonaratna, 2002b; Silverman et al. 2009; Fruehwald, 2010; Willbers ⁴ , 2010
The lack of clarity in conveying ideas.	Eisenberg, 1984; Goonaratna, 2002b; Fruehwald, 2010; Hamid, 2013
The pressure to meet length requirements, the desire to sound more authoritative, particularly in introductions, methodologies, and discussions.	Goonaratna, 2002a; Hamid, 2013; Aziz et al., 2016; Śleszyńska, 2021; Boumeddane, 2021
Overwritten references; i.e. both the reference writer and their statements are given separately.	Demir, 2019
A low level of academic writing skills.	Boumeddane, 2021

Consequences of Wordiness

Verbosity in academic writing can have detrimental effects on reader comprehension, leading to confusion, cognitive overload, and decreased engagement with the text (See Table 11). Moreover, excessive verbiage can obscure the main message, dilute the impact of key

arguments, and diminish the overall quality of scholarly work. In a competitive academic landscape where clarity and precision are paramount, wordiness poses a significant barrier to effective communication and knowledge dissemination (Aziz et al., 2016; Boumeddane, 2021).

³ Willbers, S. (2010). Effective Writing: Prune those Patterns of Redundancy, Wordiness, *Concise Writing*, Technological Leadership Institute, retrieved from <https://www.wilbers.com/ConciseWriting.htm> (In English)

⁴ Willbers, S. (2010). Effective Writing.

Table 11. Consequences of wordiness for readers
Таблица 11. Последствия водности для читателей

Consequence	Explanation	Source
Decreased reader engagement	Wordiness increases the time required for readers to comprehend the text, potentially leading to frustration and disengagement. Readers get stuck in long sentences containing excess verbiage	Ibrahim et al., 2016; Demir, 2019; Śleszyńska, 2021; Fruehwald, 2010
Increased potential for misunderstanding	A less wordy style provides fewer opportunities for misinterpreting facts too.	Śleszyńska, 2021
Loss of impact in the communication of the message	Unnecessary words interfere with the message, diffuse its impact and tax the readers' comprehension and patience.	Fruehwald, 2010; Hamid, 2013; Śleszyńska, 2021

Approaches for Enhancing Clarity and Brevity to Avoid Wordiness

To streamline academic writing and mitigate wordiness, recommendations from various scholars can be categorised into strategic approaches for enhancing clarity and brevity:

(1) *Preliminary and contextual edits*: Mikelonis and Constantinides (2005) emphasise the importance of conducting an extensive contextual edit before focusing on the specifics. This initial step is crucial for identifying sentence-level errors and ensuring the coherence of paragraphs. Such an approach not only enhances the clarity of the text but also lays a solid foundation for further detailed analysis.

(2) *Sentence-level refinement*: This approach encompasses several key strategies aimed at enhancing sentence quality: *Eliminating redundancy*: According to Fruehwald (2010), Every (2017), and Stott and Avery (2001), it is essential to remove redundant phrases and expressions to ensure that each word contributes meaningfully to the text; *Positive expression*: Fruehwald (2010) advocates for the use of positive statements rather than negations to foster directness and clarity in writing;

Simplification: Stott and Avery (2001) and Hamid (2013) recommend employing simpler, active voice constructions and eschewing unnecessary jargon, thereby improving readability and conciseness.

(3) *Structural considerations* involving *Direct writing style*: Eisenberg (1984) suggests adopting a straightforward writing style that avoids nominalizations and focuses on delivering informative abstracts and well-founded theoretical backgrounds, thereby enhancing the text's accessibility and impact; and *Sentence structure*: Boumeddane (2021) highlights the importance of simplifying sentence structures and favouring noun compounds to declutter the text and promote a more streamlined presentation of ideas.

(4) *Review and feedback* requiring: *Thorough revisions*: Stott and Avery (2001) underscore the value of engaging in comprehensive revisions and soliciting peer feedback to uncover and address areas in need of improvement; and *Self-editing*: Abdul-Raof (2006) emphasises the necessity of developing self-editing skills to critically assess and eliminate verbosity, ensuring that the writing is as clear and concise as possible.

(5) *Writing practices* aimed at *Concise language implementation*: The pursuit of

concise language, as advocated by Fruehwald (2010) and Mikelonis and Constantinides (2005), involves avoiding vague qualifiers and ensuring that adjectives and manner words do not contribute to wordiness; and *Fewer words usage*: Dulek (1982) and Hicks and Douglas (2018) promote the principle of brevity, advising writers to use fewer words and omit nonessential information to enhance the text's effectiveness and readability.

Discussion

This review was aimed to delve into the complexity of text verbosity in academic contexts, seeking to delineate its origins, manifestations, consequences, and possible reduction techniques. Our investigation was structured around key questions concerning verbosity's impact on the readability and comprehension of scholarly texts and the effectiveness of strategies designed to mitigate its presence. The findings illuminate a more intricate landscape of text verbosity than previously understood, unravelling the nuanced roles of 'verbosity' and 'wordiness' in scholarly communication. This differentiation is pivotal, as it reveals that the excessive use of words, depending on context and purpose, can either obscure or clarify intended messages.

By synthesising diverse viewpoints on verbosity, this study uncovers new insights. While existing literature frequently casts wordiness in a negative light, highlighted by Hamid (2013) and Dulek (1982), we also found arguments in favour of verbosity's strategic application for enhancing textual clarity and reader engagement, notably in Abdul-Raof (2006). This dualistic view invites a reassessment of verbosity's potential to contribute positively to academic discourse, challenging entrenched perceptions and suggesting a more balanced appreciation of its utility.

By integrating findings from individual studies with our broader thematic analysis, this review offers a comprehensive understanding of text verbosity, distinguishing itself from narrower investigations. While studies such as those by Eisenberg (1984) and

Boumeddane (2021) provide deep dives into specific facets of verbosity, our synthesis elucidates the overarching challenges and opportunities presented by verbosity in academic writing, thereby contributing a holistic view to the discourse on scholarly communication effectiveness.

To varying degrees, nearly all studies examined in this review mentioned overwriting - a phenomenon characterised by the inclusion of unnecessary detail, description, or elaboration in a text, exceeding what is required for clarity or impact (Boumeddane, 2021). Such practices contribute to verbosity, extending the length of the text without enhancing its value, which may obscure key points and challenge reader engagement and comprehension. Overwriting emerges as a prevalent challenge across both creative and academic writing domains, where finding the optimal balance between comprehensive expression and brevity poses a significant difficulty for authors.

The umbrella term 'overwriting' requires analysis in terms of how its scope overlaps with the typology of text verbosity. This examination should consider the extent to which overwriting's characteristics - such as unnecessary detail, excessive descriptions, or redundant explanations - mirror the various types identified within text verbosity. By comparing these aspects, it's possible to elucidate the nuances of overwriting within the broader context of verbosity, identifying shared elements as well as distinguishing features that specifically contribute to the overburdening of textual content.

The aggregated data culminate in the conclusion that, although the phenomenon under study has been illuminated in the extant literature, a markedly limited number of works directly address the exploration of terminological representation (Cleaveland and Larkins, 2004; Ibrahim et al., 2016; Greavu, 2019; Boumeddane, 2021), the justification and examination of typologies (Brohaugh, 2007; Hamid, 2013; Demir, 2019), the analysis of causes leading to the saturation of texts with irrelevant words and constructions

(Goonaratna, 2002a, 2002b; Abdul-Raof, 2006; Boumeddane, 2021) and the development of tools aimed at eradicating irrelevant practices in academic writing (Stott and Avery, 2001; Mikelonis and Constantinides, 2005; Fruehwald, 2010). Moreover, despite the active integration of neural networks into the fabric of oral and written academic communication, as discussed by scholars such as Malik et al. (2023), Ou et al. (2024) and Khalifa and Albadwy (2024), these technological advancements have yet to mitigate the detriment that text verbosity inflicts on the architecture of information presentation. This underscores the persistent need for further research aimed at understanding and addressing the root causes of text verbosity, thereby enhancing the efficacy and clarity of academic discourse.

Nonetheless, this review acknowledges certain limitations, most notably our dependence on accessible literature, which might not capture the full spectrum of contemporary scholarship on text verbosity. Moreover, the exclusive focus on academic writing restricts the generalizability of our conclusions to other writing forms, where perceptions of verbosity and wordiness might diverge significantly.

Conclusion

This review conducted a thorough examination of text verbosity, uncovering its complex nature and impact on academic writing. By analysing scholarly sources, it identified key characteristics, causes, and consequences of verbosity and wordiness, alongside mitigation strategies. The distinction between verbosity and wordiness was clarified, demonstrating how each affects text clarity, readability, and effectiveness. Contrary to the predominantly negative views on verbosity, evidence suggests it can be used strategically to improve clarity, reduce ambiguity, and engage readers. These insights have significant implications for writing instruction, suggesting the integration of conciseness and effective language use into academic writing curricula and workshops.

Additionally, the strategies identified for reducing verbosity can guide the development of tools and aids to help authors enhance their writing's conciseness.

Future research should explore the potential benefits of verbosity in certain contexts, examine its perception and management across different disciplines, and assess its impact on reader comprehension and engagement. It is also necessary to explore strategies for reducing verbosity that are applicable and effective across the broad spectrum of academic writing, from student assignments to peer-reviewed research articles. This exploration is essential for developing a balanced view of verbosity's role in academic writing and for creating tailored writing support services. By understanding and managing verbosity and wordiness, scholars can improve the persuasiveness and clarity of their work, advancing scholarly discourse. The commitment to further research in this area will enable the refinement of these findings and the discovery of new approaches to effective academic communication.

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