

PSEUDOREDUNDANCY

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In the November 1982 Kickshaws, Edward Wolpov asked readers to supply pseudoredundant expressions of the form "BORN NATAL, South Africa" and "COLORFUL COLORADO" from the real world. There are many such groups of words, and the list can be further extended if non-dictionary phrases similar to his "When will BEGIN START peace talks?" are allowed.

Clearly, the most meritorious pseudoredundant expressions are dictionary entries: ICE WATER, WATER VAPOR, RAVEN BLACK, OLEO OIL, NANNY GOAT, BILLY GOAT, BUNNY RABBIT, LEAF BLADE, SWORD BLADE, SEED PLANT, GROUND FLOOR, SUM TOTAL and TOGETHER WITH. Although not actually found as main entries, phrases in common use such as LORD GOD ALMIGHTY or TWELVE DOZEN can also be construed as pseudoredundant. The excellent example NULL CIPHER does not appear to be a dictionary entry, but it can be found in Helen F. Gaines' Cryptanalysis (Dover, 1956) as a term denoting a concealment or open-letter cipher.

There are a large number of dictionary phrases that are deliberately redundant: KITH and KIN, LARES and PENATES, CEASE and DESIST, FAR and AWAY, CHECKS and BALANCES, OVER and ABOVE, THUS and SO, PICK and CHOOSE, AID and ABET, and WAYS and MEANS (Committee).

The components of a dictionary word can be pseudoredundant: PITTER-PATTER, TEETERTOTTER, KITTY-CAT, CRYSTAL-CLEAR, HOUND-DOG, PUPPY-DOG, JACK-TAR, PUSSYCAT, LAMPLIGHT, AUTOCAR, MOTORCAR, TAXICAB, ZIGZAG, FOREFRONT, JACKDAW, TIPTOP and OLEOMARGARINE. Even LOGOLOGY can be regarded as pseudoredundant: LOGO- = speech, the act of speaking; -LOGY = a speaking, both taken from Webster's Second. Is nothing sacred?

All examples given in the preceding paragraphs are either dictionary-sanctioned phrases or ones in common use. Extending the concept of pseudoredundancy slightly, one can construct artificial phrases of the BEGIN START variety:

The RED CARDINAL schemed to become the new Pope
Does the Holy SEE UNDERSTAND the world situation?
The rectory's PREVIOUS PRIOR had committed suicide
The CHRISTMAS NOEL had been expecting did not materialize
The SONG CAROL sang was a popular one

Don't TORMENT HARRY!
 ROSE GOT UP from her seat
 Let ROBERT BOB for apples
 Did you PEG MARGARET as a trouble-maker?
 She WILL BILL WILLIAM for the goods he purchased (3-way example)
 The PIGEON DOVE into the water
 Did the ROOSTER COCK its head?
 I saw the TRUOP SKULK along the edge of the forest (both words mean
 'a pack or group of foxes; see cloud in the Funk & Wagnalls unabr.)
 The river's PRESENT CURRENT is too strong for me
 Can MAY ever follow JUNE? (an ambiguous sentence, because these
 are both girls' names)
 I SHALL WILL all my money to charity
 Reggie Jackson hit the LONE SINGLE of the ball game
 A GOOD WELL produces a lot of oil
 Is CHINA PORCELAIN as well-known as India ink?
 CAN TIN replace aluminum? (tin is British for 'can')
 Does this BOUGH BRANCH into twigs?
 The artist who PAINTS DOES / DOES HINDS as well
 Does your SPEECH ADDRESS important issues?
 Is the orange juice in TANGIER MORE FLAVORFUL than in the rest
 of Morocco?
 Was the weather in NICE PLEASANT during your French stay?
 Have you been PERUSING READING or Allentown newspapers lately?
 German soldiers SHINE POLISH officers' boots
 On what months does AUTUMN FALL in leap years?
 Nomads FORSAKE desert life for the pleasure of the city
 FINISH END tables before starting work on other furniture
 I did not expect the horse to REAR BACK
 To what are the BUTTOCKS POSTERIOR?
 The old shoemaker used his FINAL LAST
 Did you MISS SENORITA SANCHEZ at the arts festival?
 This dress is a LITTLE SMALL on me, and that one is ALSO TOO tight.
 The Soviet Union ARMS WEAPONS-hungry nations
 He GUIDES STEERS through giant labyrinths built for cattle
 Where can I APPROPRIATE SUITABLE tools for this job?
 Did the man standing at the ENTRANCE ENRAPTURE you?
 He TEASED RAGGED street urchins
 He also DOGGED DETERMINED researchers
 They ELABORATE INTRICATE designs
 I know how to PRECIPITATE IMPETUOUS reactions from others
 We SLOUGH SWAMP buggies off on noncommissioned officers
 Did he ENTRUST DELEGATE responsibility to a subordinate?

Pushing pseudoredundancy to its logical extreme, it is possible to
 construct sentences consisting solely of pseudoredundant elements:
 THAT WHICH / HURTS IS PAINFUL, THAT WHICH / SCARES IS
 FRIGHTENING, etc.

It's now time to step beyond the confines of English in the search for
 pseudoredundancies. Consider the following specimens:

TAG DAY (TAG = 'day' in German)
 LETTER BRIEF (BRIEF = 'letter' in German)
 LASPRING (LAS = old English LEAX = 'salmon'; PRING = dialect
 German PINKE = 'small salmon')
 PILLICOCK (PILLI = dialectal Norwegian PILL = 'the penis';
 COCK = 'penis')
 FISNOGA (FIS = German FUSS = 'foot'; NOGA = Russian NOGA =
 'foot')
 REINDEEK (REIN = old Norse HREINN = 'reindeer'; DEER = old
 Norse DȳR = 'deer')
 OUIJA (OUI = 'yes' in French; JA = 'yes' in German)
 CHERSONESE (CHERSONO = Greek CHERSOS = dry land; NESE =
 Greek NĒSOS = 'island')
 LEAL (LE = French 'the'; AL = Arabic 'the')
 ELDER (EL = Spanish 'the'; DER = German 'the')
 LATHE (LA = Italian 'the')
 LEDERLE Laboratories (LE = French 'the'; DER = German 'the')

What about geographical pseudoredundancies? At least three all-English ones exist: MOUNT HILL (an Australian town, in the Times Index-Gazetteer), DOWN UNDER (Australia), and UP OVER (a sobriquet for the state of Alaska, found in The American Language by H. L. Mencken). Interlingual examples can be added:

VERMONT, the GREEN MOUNTAIN state (VERT MONT = 'Green Mountain' in French)
 MURDERKILL RIVER, in east-central Delaware (MURDER = KILL; KILL = akin to East Frisian KILLE = 'watercourse', or RIVER)
 RIO GRANDE RIVER (RIO = 'river' in Spanish)
 TORPENHOW HILL, a ridge near Plymouth, England (TOR = 'hill' in Saxon; PEN = 'hill' in Celtic; HOW = Scandinavian HAUGH = 'hill')

If not placenames, why not personal names? The actor RIP TORN has a pseudoredundant name. In similar vein, one can undoubtedly locate many people with names such as MARGARET PEARL (MARGARET is from the Greek word meaning 'pearl') and ROY KING (ROY is derived from the Latin for 'king').

Two words well-known to the logologist are deliberately pseudoredundant in more than two ways:

QUASIHEMIDEMISEMIQUAVER, a 128th note in The American Language by H. L. Mencken (QUASI = 'as if' in Latin, but contextually construable as 'half'; HEMI = 'half' in Greek; DEMI = 'half' in French; SEMI = 'half' in Latin)
 PREANTEPENULTIMATE, adjective referring to the next-next-next-to-last syllable of a word, below the line in Webster's Second (PRE = 'before' in Latin; ANTE = 'before' in Latin; PEN = Latin PAENE = 'almost', contextually construable as 'before').