


I'm not robot  reCAPTCHA

**Continue**

## Sentence with big words that makes no sense

Have you ever heard a phrase in English and wondered if your ears were working correctly? You might have found yourself wondering: "Is that really a word?" or "Why doesn't this make sense?" We've all experienced those moments. Unfortunately, knowing the definition of each word doesn't always help. So, how do you remember what all those nonsensical phrases mean? Luckily, this list of British English phrases and their meanings should be able to help you out. Top British phrases and their meanings
Feeling under the weather
Despite what it says, this phrase has nothing to do with the weather. In good health.
It's used as a way to say you're sick. Keep in mind, however, that you should only use it for less serious illnesses, like a cold. "I'm sorry I couldn't make it to your party. I was feeling under the weather."
As right as rain
Rain is cold, wet, and often inconvenient. So, why would you say it's right? Still, this phrase is used to mean that someone is in the good health. For example, "Sue was sick over the weekend, but now she's feeling right as rain."
The importance of punctuation in English
Head over heels
Does this involve some kind of exercise? Not exactly, but your heart might still be racing. The phrase is used to express excitement in love. "He's head over heels in love with that girl."
Stop waffling/ Stop what?
Well, you know those times when you're nervous, or perhaps you're really excited about something, and you just keep talking until you eventually (hopefully) realise that you've forgotten what you were saying? That's known as "waffling" and you're likely to hear "Stop waffling!" when someone has been rambling. "Stop waffling and get to the point already!"
American slang in different states
Jump on the bandwagon
There's a real jump involved with this phrase. Instead, it's used to refer to someone who goes along with the crowd or starts supporting something that's already popular or successful. "Last month, she said she hated that band. Now, she's decided to jump on the bandwagon."
Steal someone's thunder
How exactly do you "steal thunder"? In this case, the word "thunder" is meant to reference someone's big moment or accomplishment. So, this phrase actually means to steal someone's praise or recognition by doing or saying something first. For example, if one of your friends tells everyone about your new job before you get a chance to say anything, they might say, "Sorry to steal your thunder, but I just couldn't keep it in!"
Bits and bobs
Separately, these words have a few different meanings. However, when used together in a phrase, they refer to lots of small objects or a various collection of things. For example, "There might be a matching button in that drawer full of bits and bobs in the kitchen."
Funny English words
Neck and neck
Yes, this is just the same word repeated in a sentence. You'll probably hear it in reference to a competition or sports game. When two people or teams are both doing well and either could easily win, they're said to be "neck and neck" or "Who's winning?"
They're neck and neck right now."
Pull someone's leg
Why would you pull a person's leg? Well, you wouldn't do it seriously. This phrase is another way to say you're making a joke or playing a prank on someone. "You're pulling my leg! That didn't really happen!"
Cost an arm and a leg
It costs how much? That's exactly the idea behind this phrase, which is used to say that something is expensive or overpriced. "I would buy it if it didn't cost an arm and a leg."
10 ways that German and English are similar
By the skin of your teeth
This one just sounds unpleasant. Fittingly, it also means that you've narrowly missed or escaped something. For instance, "That car almost hit me! I only escaped by the skin of my teeth!"
Do these English phrases make more sense? We hope so!
Use of more words than is necessary for clear expression
This article needs additional citations for verification. Please help improve this article by adding citations to reliable sources. Unsourced material may be challenged and removed.Find sources for "Pleonasm" - news - newspapers - books - scholar - JSTOR (July 2014)
(Learn how and when to remove this template message)
Pleonasm (/pliːəˈnæzəm/; from Ancient Greek πλεονασμός, *pleonasmós*, from πλέων, *pleon* – to be in excess)[1][2] is the use of more words or parts of words than are necessary or sufficient for clear expression (for instance, "black darkness", "burning fire"). Such redundancy is a manifestation of tautology by traditional rhetorical criteria, and might be considered a fault of style.[3] Pleonasm may also be used for emphasis, or because the phrase has become established in a certain form. Tautology and pleonasm are not consistently differentiated in literature.[4] Usage Most often, pleonasm is understood to mean a word or phrase which is useless, clichéd, or repetitive, but a pleonasm can also be simply an unremarkable use of idiom. It can aid in achieving a specific (sic) linguistic effect, be it social, poetic or literary. Pleonasm sometimes serves the same function as rhetorical repetition—it can be used to reinforce an idea, contention or question, rendering writing clearer and easier to understand. Pleonasm can serve as a redundancy check; if a word is unknown, misunderstood, misheard, or if the medium of communication is poor—a wireless telephone connection or sloppy handwriting—pleonastic phrases can help ensure that the meaning is communicated even if some of the words are lost.[5]
Idiomatic expressions
Some pleonastic phrases are part of a language's idiom, like "tuna fish" and "safe haven" in American English. They are so common that their use is unremarkable and often even unnoticeable for native speakers, although in many cases the redundancy can be dropped with no loss of meaning. When expressing possibility, English speakers often use potentially pleonastic expressions such as It may be possible or maybe it's possible, where both terms (verb may or adverb maybe along with the adjective possible) have the same meaning under certain constructions. Many speakers of English use such expressions for possibility in general, such that most instances of such expressions by those speakers are in fact pleonastic. Others, however, use this expression only to indicate a distinction between ontological possibility and epistemic possibility, as in "Both the ontological possibility of X under current conditions and the ontological impossibility of X under current conditions are epistemically possible" (in logical terms, "I am not aware of any facts inconsistent with the truth of proposition X, but I am likewise not aware of any facts inconsistent with the truth of the negation of X"). The habitual use of the double construction to indicate possibility per se is far less widespread among speakers of most other languages (except in Spanish; see examples); rather, almost all speakers of those languages use one term in a single expression: French: Il est possible or Il peut arriver. Romanian: Este posibil or se poate întâmpla. Typical Spanish pleonasm *Voy a subir arriba* - I am going to go up upstairs, "arriba" not being necessary.
Entra para adentro - enter inside, "para adentro" not being necessary.
Turkish has many pleonastic constructs because certain verbs necessitate objects: yemek yemek - to eat food, yaz yazmak - to write writing, dışarı çıkmak - to exit outside, iyeri girmek - to enter inside, oyun oynamak - to play a game.
In a satellite-framed language like English, verb phrases containing particles that denote direction of motion are so frequent that even when such a particle is pleonastic, it seems natural to include it (e.g. "enter into"). Professional and scholarly use
Some pleonastic phrases, when used in professional or scholarly writing, may reflect a standardized usage that has evolved or a meaning familiar to specialists but not necessarily to those outside that discipline. Such examples as "null and void", "terms and conditions", "each and every" are legal doublets that are part of legally operative language that is often drafted into legal documents. A classic example of such usage was that by the Lord Chancellor at the time (1864), Lord Westbury, in the English case of *ex parte Gorely*,[6] when he described a phrase in an Act as "redundant and pleonastic". Although this type of usage may be favored in certain contexts, it may also be disfavored when used gratuitously to portray false erudition, obfuscate, or otherwise introduce verbiage. This is especially so in disciplines where imprecision may introduce ambiguities (such as the natural sciences).[7]
Of the aforementioned phrases, "terms and conditions" may not be pleonastic in some legal systems, as they refer not to a set provisions forming part of a contract, but rather to the specific terms conditioning the effect of the contract or a contractual provision to a future event. In these cases, terms and conditions imply respectively the certainty or uncertainty of said event (i.e. in Brazilian law, a testament has the initial term for coming into force the death of the testator, while a health insurance has the condition of the insured suffering a or one of a set of certain injuries from a or one of a set of certain causes). Stylistic preference
In addition, pleonasm can serve purposes external to meaning. For example, a speaker who is too terse is often interpreted as lacking ease or grace, because, in oral and sign language, sentences are spontaneously created without the benefit of editing. The restriction on the ability to plan often creates much redundancy. In written language, removing words not strictly necessary sometimes makes writing seem stilted or awkward, especially if the words are cut from an idiomatic expression. On the other hand, as is the case with any literary or rhetorical effect, excessive use of pleonasm weakens writing and speech; words distract from the content. Writers working to conceal a thought or to purposefully obscure their meaning with verbiage, William Strunk Jr. advocated concision in *The Elements of Style* (1918): Vigorous writing is concise. A sentence should contain no unnecessary words, a paragraph no unnecessary sentences, for the same reason that a drawing should have no unnecessary lines and a machine no unnecessary parts. This requires not that the writer make all his sentences short, or that he avoid all detail and treat his subjects only in outline, but that every word tell. Yet, one has only to look at Baroque, Mannerist, and Victorian sources for different opinions.[citation needed]
Literary uses
"This was the most unkindest cut of all." —William Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar* (Act 3, Scene 2, 183) "I will be brief: your noble son is mad/Mad call I it; for, to define true madness, 'What is't but to be nothing else but mad?'" —Hamlet (Act 2, Scene 2)
"Beyond the garage were some decorative trees trimmed as carefully as poodle dogs." —Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*
"Let me tell you this, when social workers offer you, free, gratis and for nothing, something to hinder you from swooning, which with them is an obsession, it is useless to recoil..." —Samuel Beckett, *Molloy*
Types This section possibly contains original research. Please improve it by verifying the claims made and adding inline citations. Statements consisting only of original research should be removed. (September 2010)
(Learn how and when to remove this template message)
There are various kinds of pleonasm, including bilingual tautological expressions, syntactic pleonasm, semantic pleonasm and morphological pleonasm:
Bilingual tautological expressions
A bilingual tautological expression is a phrase that combines words that mean the same thing in two different languages.[8]:138 An example of a bilingual tautological expression is the Yiddish expression טראַגן און טראַגן אַקרוינען *vaser*. It literally means "water last water" and refers to "water for washing the hands after meal, grace water".[8]:138 Its first element, *mayim*, derives from the Hebrew root מַי [májim] "water". Its second element, *vaser*, derives from the German *Wasser* "water". According to Ghil'ad Zuckermann, Yiddish abounds with both bilingual tautological compounds and bilingual tautological first names.[8]:138 The following are examples of bilingual tautological first names (אנטרונונים) in Yiddish: דאָס איז דאָו-בער, literally "bear-bear", traceable back to the Hebrew word דאָו *do* "bear" and the German word Bär "bear".[8]:138 אַרײַן-לײב *Tsvi-Hirsch*, literally "deer-deer", traceable back to the Hebrew word אַרײַ *tsvi* "deer" and the German word Hirsch "deer".[8]:138 זע-ען-װײל, literally "wolf-wolf", traceable back to the Hebrew word אַרײַ *ze'ev* "wolf" and the German word Wolf "wolf".[8]:138 אַרײַ-לײב *Arye-Leyb*, literally "lion-lion", traceable back to the Hebrew word אַרײַ *arye* "lion" and the German word Löwe "lion".[8]:138 Examples occurring in English-Luaque contexts include: the Al-Qaeda base, literally "the The-Base base", from Arabic, the La Brea Tar Pits, literally "The Tar Tar Pits", from Spanish, the hoi polloi, literally "the many", from Greek. An example of English embedded tautologically in German is coffee to go zum mitnehmen, where zum mitnehmen is German equivalent to English to go.[9]
Syntactic pleonasm
Syntactic pleonasm occurs when the grammar of a language makes certain function words optional. For example, consider the following English sentences: "I know you're coming." "I know that you're coming." In this construction, the conjunction that is optional when joining a sentence to a verb phrase with know. Both sentences are grammatically correct, but the word that is pleonastic in this case. By contrast, when a sentence is in spoken form and the verb involved is one of assertion, the use of that makes clear that the present speaker is making an indirect rather than a direct quotation, such that he is not imputing particular words to the person he describes as having made an assertion; the demonstrative adjective that also does not fit such an example.
Some writers may use "that" for technical clarity reasons.[10] In some languages, such as French, "that" is not optional and should therefore not be considered pleonastic. The same phenomenon occurs in Spanish with subject pronouns. Since Spanish is a null-subject language, which allows subject pronouns to be deleted when understood, the following sentences mean the same: "Yo te amo." "Te amo." In this case, the pronoun *yo* (I) is grammatically optional; both sentences mean "I love you" (however, they may not have the same tone or intention—this depends on pragmatics rather than grammar). Such differing but syntactically equivalent constructions, in many languages, may also indicate a difference in register. The process of deleting pronouns is called pro-dropping, and it also happens in many other languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Hungarian, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian languages, Swahili, Slavic languages, and the Lao language. In contrast, formal English requires an overt subject in each clause. A sentence may not need a subject to have valid meaning, but to satisfy the syntactic requirement for an explicit subject a pleonastic (or dummy pronoun) is used; only the first sentence in the following pair is acceptable English: "It's raining." \* "I'm raining." In this example the pleonastic "it" fills the subject function, however, it does not contribute any meaning to the sentence. The second sentence, which omits the pleonastic it is marked as ungrammatical although no meaning is lost by the omission.[11]
Elements such as "it" or "there," serving as empty subject markers, are also called (syntactic) expletives, and also dummy pronouns. Compare: "There is rain." \* \* "Today, it rains."
The pleonastic *ne* (ne pleonastique), expressing uncertainty in formal French, works as follows: "Je crains qu'il ne pleuve." ("I fear it may rain.") "Ces idées sont plus difficiles à comprendre que je ne pensais." ("These ideas are harder to understand than I thought.")
Two more striking examples of French pleonastic construction are *aujourd'hui* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The word *aujourd'hui* is translated as "today", but originally means "on the day of today" since the now obsolete *hui* means "today". The expression *aujourd'hui* (translated as "on the day of today") is common in spoken language and demonstrates that the original construction of *aujourd'hui* was lost. It is considered a pleonasm. The phrase *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* meaning "What's that?" or "What is it while literally, it means "What is that is it?". There are examples of the pleonastic, or dummy, negative in English, such as the construction, heard in the New England region of the United States, in which the phrase "so don't" is intended to have the same positive meaning as "So do".[12][13] When Robert South said, "It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in Scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify one notable thing",[14] he was observing the Biblical Hebrew poetic propensity to repeat thoughts in different words, since written Biblical Hebrew was a comparatively early form of written language and was written using oral patterning, which has many pleonasm. In particular, very many verses of the Psalms are split into two halves, each of which says much the same thing in different words. The complex rules and forms of written language as distinct from spoken language were not as well-developed as they are today when the books making up the Old Testament were written.[15][16] See also parallelism (rhetoric). This same pleonastic style remains very common in modern poetry and songwriting (e.g., "Anne, with her father / is out in the boat / riding the water / riding the waves / on the sea", from Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street").
Types of syntactic pleonasm
Overinflection: Many languages with inflection, as a result of convention, tend to inflect more words in a given phrase than actually needed in order to express a single grammatical property. Take for example the German, Die alten Frauen sprechen ("The old women speak"). Even though the use of the plural form of the noun Frau ("woman", plural Frauen) shows the grammatical number of the noun phrase, agreement in the German language still dictates that the definite article, the adjective *alten*, and the verb *sprechen* must all also be in the plural. Not all languages are quite as redundant however, and will permit inflection when there is an obvious numerical marker, as is the case with Hungarian, which does not use a plural proper, but would express two "flowers" as *two flowers*. The same is the case in Coltic languages, where numerical markers precede singular nouns. The main contrast between Hungarian and other tongues such as German or even English (to a lesser extent) is that in either of the latter, expressive plurality when almost evident is not optional, but pleonastic; making the neglect of these rules result in an ungrammatical sentence. As well as for number, our aforementioned German phrase also overinflects for grammatical case. Multiple negation: In some languages, repeated negation may be used for emphasis, as in the English sentence, "There ain't nothing wrong with that". While a literal interpretation of this phrase would be "There is not nothing wrong with that," i.e. "There is something wrong with that", the intended meaning is, in fact, the opposite: "There is nothing wrong with that" or "There isn't anything wrong with that". The repeated negation is used pleonastically for emphasis. However, this is not always the case. In the sentence "I don't like it," the repeated negative may be used to convey ambivalence ("I neither like nor dislike it") or even affirmation ("I do like it"). (Rhetorically, this becomes the device of litotes; it can be difficult to distinguish litotes from pleonastic double negation, a feature which may be used for ironic effect.)
Although the use of "double negatives" for emphatic purposes is sometimes discouraged in standard English, it is mandatory in other languages like Spanish or French. For example, the Spanish phrase *No es nada* ("It is nothing") contains both a negated verb ("no es") and another negative, the word for nothing ("nada"). Multiple affirmations: In English, repeated affirmation can be used to add emphasis to an affirmative statement, just as repeated negation can add emphasis to a negative one. A sentence like *I do love you*, with a stronger intonation on the *do*, uses double affirmation. This is because English, by default, automatically expresses its sentences in the affirmative and must then alter the sentence in one way or another to express the opposite. Therefore, the sentence *I love you* is implicitly affirmative, and the extent to which it is made negative is determined by the speaker. In contrast, the word *love* in other languages, such as Spanish, is not optional and should therefore not be considered pleonastic. The same phenomenon occurs in Spanish with subject pronouns. Since Spanish is a null-subject language, which allows subject pronouns to be deleted when understood, the following sentences mean the same: "Yo te amo." "Te amo." In this case, the pronoun *yo* (I) is grammatically optional; both sentences mean "I love you" (however, they may not have the same tone or intention—this depends on pragmatics rather than grammar). Such differing but syntactically equivalent constructions, in many languages, may also indicate a difference in register. The process of deleting pronouns is called pro-dropping, and it also happens in many other languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Hungarian, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian languages, Swahili, Slavic languages, and the Lao language. In contrast, formal English requires an overt subject in each clause. A sentence may not need a subject to have valid meaning, but to satisfy the syntactic requirement for an explicit subject a pleonastic (or dummy pronoun) is used; only the first sentence in the following pair is acceptable English: "It's raining." \* "I'm raining." In this example the pleonastic "it" fills the subject function, however, it does not contribute any meaning to the sentence. The second sentence, which omits the pleonastic it is marked as ungrammatical although no meaning is lost by the omission.[11]
Elements such as "it" or "there," serving as empty subject markers, are also called (syntactic) expletives, and also dummy pronouns. Compare: "There is rain." \* \* "Today, it rains."
The pleonastic *ne* (ne pleonastique), expressing uncertainty in formal French, works as follows: "Je crains qu'il ne pleuve." ("I fear it may rain.") "Ces idées sont plus difficiles à comprendre que je ne pensais." ("These ideas are harder to understand than I thought.")
Two more striking examples of French pleonastic construction are *aujourd'hui* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The word *aujourd'hui* is translated as "today", but originally means "on the day of today" since the now obsolete *hui* means "today". The expression *aujourd'hui* (translated as "on the day of today") is common in spoken language and demonstrates that the original construction of *aujourd'hui* was lost. It is considered a pleonasm. The phrase *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* meaning "What's that?" or "What is it while literally, it means "What is that is it?". There are examples of the pleonastic, or dummy, negative in English, such as the construction, heard in the New England region of the United States, in which the phrase "so don't" is intended to have the same positive meaning as "So do".[12][13] When Robert South said, "It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in Scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify one notable thing",[14] he was observing the Biblical Hebrew poetic propensity to repeat thoughts in different words, since written Biblical Hebrew was a comparatively early form of written language and was written using oral patterning, which has many pleonasm. In particular, very many verses of the Psalms are split into two halves, each of which says much the same thing in different words. The complex rules and forms of written language as distinct from spoken language were not as well-developed as they are today when the books making up the Old Testament were written.[15][16] See also parallelism (rhetoric). This same pleonastic style remains very common in modern poetry and songwriting (e.g., "Anne, with her father / is out in the boat / riding the water / riding the waves / on the sea", from Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street").
Types of syntactic pleonasm
Overinflection: Many languages with inflection, as a result of convention, tend to inflect more words in a given phrase than actually needed in order to express a single grammatical property. Take for example the German, Die alten Frauen sprechen ("The old women speak"). Even though the use of the plural form of the noun Frau ("woman", plural Frauen) shows the grammatical number of the noun phrase, agreement in the German language still dictates that the definite article, the adjective *alten*, and the verb *sprechen* must all also be in the plural. Not all languages are quite as redundant however, and will permit inflection when there is an obvious numerical marker, as is the case with Hungarian, which does not use a plural proper, but would express two "flowers" as *two flowers*. The same is the case in Coltic languages, where numerical markers precede singular nouns. The main contrast between Hungarian and other tongues such as German or even English (to a lesser extent) is that in either of the latter, expressive plurality when almost evident is not optional, but pleonastic; making the neglect of these rules result in an ungrammatical sentence. As well as for number, our aforementioned German phrase also overinflects for grammatical case. Multiple negation: In some languages, repeated negation may be used for emphasis, as in the English sentence, "There ain't nothing wrong with that". While a literal interpretation of this phrase would be "There is not nothing wrong with that," i.e. "There is something wrong with that", the intended meaning is, in fact, the opposite: "There is nothing wrong with that" or "There isn't anything wrong with that". The repeated negation is used pleonastically for emphasis. However, this is not always the case. In the sentence "I don't like it," the repeated negative may be used to convey ambivalence ("I neither like nor dislike it") or even affirmation ("I do like it"). (Rhetorically, this becomes the device of litotes; it can be difficult to distinguish litotes from pleonastic double negation, a feature which may be used for ironic effect.)
Although the use of "double negatives" for emphatic purposes is sometimes discouraged in standard English, it is mandatory in other languages like Spanish or French. For example, the Spanish phrase *No es nada* ("It is nothing") contains both a negated verb ("no es") and another negative, the word for nothing ("nada"). Multiple affirmations: In English, repeated affirmation can be used to add emphasis to an affirmative statement, just as repeated negation can add emphasis to a negative one. A sentence like *I do love you*, with a stronger intonation on the *do*, uses double affirmation. This is because English, by default, automatically expresses its sentences in the affirmative and must then alter the sentence in one way or another to express the opposite. Therefore, the sentence *I love you* is implicitly affirmative, and the extent to which it is made negative is determined by the speaker. In contrast, the word *love* in other languages, such as Spanish, is not optional and should therefore not be considered pleonastic. The same phenomenon occurs in Spanish with subject pronouns. Since Spanish is a null-subject language, which allows subject pronouns to be deleted when understood, the following sentences mean the same: "Yo te amo." "Te amo." In this case, the pronoun *yo* (I) is grammatically optional; both sentences mean "I love you" (however, they may not have the same tone or intention—this depends on pragmatics rather than grammar). Such differing but syntactically equivalent constructions, in many languages, may also indicate a difference in register. The process of deleting pronouns is called pro-dropping, and it also happens in many other languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Hungarian, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian languages, Swahili, Slavic languages, and the Lao language. In contrast, formal English requires an overt subject in each clause. A sentence may not need a subject to have valid meaning, but to satisfy the syntactic requirement for an explicit subject a pleonastic (or dummy pronoun) is used; only the first sentence in the following pair is acceptable English: "It's raining." \* "I'm raining." In this example the pleonastic "it" fills the subject function, however, it does not contribute any meaning to the sentence. The second sentence, which omits the pleonastic it is marked as ungrammatical although no meaning is lost by the omission.[11]
Elements such as "it" or "there," serving as empty subject markers, are also called (syntactic) expletives, and also dummy pronouns. Compare: "There is rain." \* \* "Today, it rains."
The pleonastic *ne* (ne pleonastique), expressing uncertainty in formal French, works as follows: "Je crains qu'il ne pleuve." ("I fear it may rain.") "Ces idées sont plus difficiles à comprendre que je ne pensais." ("These ideas are harder to understand than I thought.")
Two more striking examples of French pleonastic construction are *aujourd'hui* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The word *aujourd'hui* is translated as "today", but originally means "on the day of today" since the now obsolete *hui* means "today". The expression *aujourd'hui* (translated as "on the day of today") is common in spoken language and demonstrates that the original construction of *aujourd'hui* was lost. It is considered a pleonasm. The phrase *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* meaning "What's that?" or "What is it while literally, it means "What is that is it?". There are examples of the pleonastic, or dummy, negative in English, such as the construction, heard in the New England region of the United States, in which the phrase "so don't" is intended to have the same positive meaning as "So do".[12][13] When Robert South said, "It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in Scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify one notable thing",[14] he was observing the Biblical Hebrew poetic propensity to repeat thoughts in different words, since written Biblical Hebrew was a comparatively early form of written language and was written using oral patterning, which has many pleonasm. In particular, very many verses of the Psalms are split into two halves, each of which says much the same thing in different words. The complex rules and forms of written language as distinct from spoken language were not as well-developed as they are today when the books making up the Old Testament were written.[15][16] See also parallelism (rhetoric). This same pleonastic style remains very common in modern poetry and songwriting (e.g., "Anne, with her father / is out in the boat / riding the water / riding the waves / on the sea", from Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street").
Types of syntactic pleonasm
Overinflection: Many languages with inflection, as a result of convention, tend to inflect more words in a given phrase than actually needed in order to express a single grammatical property. Take for example the German, Die alten Frauen sprechen ("The old women speak"). Even though the use of the plural form of the noun Frau ("woman", plural Frauen) shows the grammatical number of the noun phrase, agreement in the German language still dictates that the definite article, the adjective *alten*, and the verb *sprechen* must all also be in the plural. Not all languages are quite as redundant however, and will permit inflection when there is an obvious numerical marker, as is the case with Hungarian, which does not use a plural proper, but would express two "flowers" as *two flowers*. The same is the case in Coltic languages, where numerical markers precede singular nouns. The main contrast between Hungarian and other tongues such as German or even English (to a lesser extent) is that in either of the latter, expressive plurality when almost evident is not optional, but pleonastic; making the neglect of these rules result in an ungrammatical sentence. As well as for number, our aforementioned German phrase also overinflects for grammatical case. Multiple negation: In some languages, repeated negation may be used for emphasis, as in the English sentence, "There ain't nothing wrong with that". While a literal interpretation of this phrase would be "There is not nothing wrong with that," i.e. "There is something wrong with that", the intended meaning is, in fact, the opposite: "There is nothing wrong with that" or "There isn't anything wrong with that". The repeated negation is used pleonastically for emphasis. However, this is not always the case. In the sentence "I don't like it," the repeated negative may be used to convey ambivalence ("I neither like nor dislike it") or even affirmation ("I do like it"). (Rhetorically, this becomes the device of litotes; it can be difficult to distinguish litotes from pleonastic double negation, a feature which may be used for ironic effect.)
Although the use of "double negatives" for emphatic purposes is sometimes discouraged in standard English, it is mandatory in other languages like Spanish or French. For example, the Spanish phrase *No es nada* ("It is nothing") contains both a negated verb ("no es") and another negative, the word for nothing ("nada"). Multiple affirmations: In English, repeated affirmation can be used to add emphasis to an affirmative statement, just as repeated negation can add emphasis to a negative one. A sentence like *I do love you*, with a stronger intonation on the *do*, uses double affirmation. This is because English, by default, automatically expresses its sentences in the affirmative and must then alter the sentence in one way or another to express the opposite. Therefore, the sentence *I love you* is implicitly affirmative, and the extent to which it is made negative is determined by the speaker. In contrast, the word *love* in other languages, such as Spanish, is not optional and should therefore not be considered pleonastic. The same phenomenon occurs in Spanish with subject pronouns. Since Spanish is a null-subject language, which allows subject pronouns to be deleted when understood, the following sentences mean the same: "Yo te amo." "Te amo." In this case, the pronoun *yo* (I) is grammatically optional; both sentences mean "I love you" (however, they may not have the same tone or intention—this depends on pragmatics rather than grammar). Such differing but syntactically equivalent constructions, in many languages, may also indicate a difference in register. The process of deleting pronouns is called pro-dropping, and it also happens in many other languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Hungarian, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian languages, Swahili, Slavic languages, and the Lao language. In contrast, formal English requires an overt subject in each clause. A sentence may not need a subject to have valid meaning, but to satisfy the syntactic requirement for an explicit subject a pleonastic (or dummy pronoun) is used; only the first sentence in the following pair is acceptable English: "It's raining." \* "I'm raining." In this example the pleonastic "it" fills the subject function, however, it does not contribute any meaning to the sentence. The second sentence, which omits the pleonastic it is marked as ungrammatical although no meaning is lost by the omission.[11]
Elements such as "it" or "there," serving as empty subject markers, are also called (syntactic) expletives, and also dummy pronouns. Compare: "There is rain." \* \* "Today, it rains."
The pleonastic *ne* (ne pleonastique), expressing uncertainty in formal French, works as follows: "Je crains qu'il ne pleuve." ("I fear it may rain.") "Ces idées sont plus difficiles à comprendre que je ne pensais." ("These ideas are harder to understand than I thought.")
Two more striking examples of French pleonastic construction are *aujourd'hui* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The word *aujourd'hui* is translated as "today", but originally means "on the day of today" since the now obsolete *hui* means "today". The expression *aujourd'hui* (translated as "on the day of today") is common in spoken language and demonstrates that the original construction of *aujourd'hui* was lost. It is considered a pleonasm. The phrase *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* meaning "What's that?" or "What is it while literally, it means "What is that is it?". There are examples of the pleonastic, or dummy, negative in English, such as the construction, heard in the New England region of the United States, in which the phrase "so don't" is intended to have the same positive meaning as "So do".[12][13] When Robert South said, "It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in Scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify one notable thing",[14] he was observing the Biblical Hebrew poetic propensity to repeat thoughts in different words, since written Biblical Hebrew was a comparatively early form of written language and was written using oral patterning, which has many pleonasm. In particular, very many verses of the Psalms are split into two halves, each of which says much the same thing in different words. The complex rules and forms of written language as distinct from spoken language were not as well-developed as they are today when the books making up the Old Testament were written.[15][16] See also parallelism (rhetoric). This same pleonastic style remains very common in modern poetry and songwriting (e.g., "Anne, with her father / is out in the boat / riding the water / riding the waves / on the sea", from Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street").
Types of syntactic pleonasm
Overinflection: Many languages with inflection, as a result of convention, tend to inflect more words in a given phrase than actually needed in order to express a single grammatical property. Take for example the German, Die alten Frauen sprechen ("The old women speak"). Even though the use of the plural form of the noun Frau ("woman", plural Frauen) shows the grammatical number of the noun phrase, agreement in the German language still dictates that the definite article, the adjective *alten*, and the verb *sprechen* must all also be in the plural. Not all languages are quite as redundant however, and will permit inflection when there is an obvious numerical marker, as is the case with Hungarian, which does not use a plural proper, but would express two "flowers" as *two flowers*. The same is the case in Coltic languages, where numerical markers precede singular nouns. The main contrast between Hungarian and other tongues such as German or even English (to a lesser extent) is that in either of the latter, expressive plurality when almost evident is not optional, but pleonastic; making the neglect of these rules result in an ungrammatical sentence. As well as for number, our aforementioned German phrase also overinflects for grammatical case. Multiple negation: In some languages, repeated negation may be used for emphasis, as in the English sentence, "There ain't nothing wrong with that". While a literal interpretation of this phrase would be "There is not nothing wrong with that," i.e. "There is something wrong with that", the intended meaning is, in fact, the opposite: "There is nothing wrong with that" or "There isn't anything wrong with that". The repeated negation is used pleonastically for emphasis. However, this is not always the case. In the sentence "I don't like it," the repeated negative may be used to convey ambivalence ("I neither like nor dislike it") or even affirmation ("I do like it"). (Rhetorically, this becomes the device of litotes; it can be difficult to distinguish litotes from pleonastic double negation, a feature which may be used for ironic effect.)
Although the use of "double negatives" for emphatic purposes is sometimes discouraged in standard English, it is mandatory in other languages like Spanish or French. For example, the Spanish phrase *No es nada* ("It is nothing") contains both a negated verb ("no es") and another negative, the word for nothing ("nada"). Multiple affirmations: In English, repeated affirmation can be used to add emphasis to an affirmative statement, just as repeated negation can add emphasis to a negative one. A sentence like *I do love you*, with a stronger intonation on the *do*, uses double affirmation. This is because English, by default, automatically expresses its sentences in the affirmative and must then alter the sentence in one way or another to express the opposite. Therefore, the sentence *I love you* is implicitly affirmative, and the extent to which it is made negative is determined by the speaker. In contrast, the word *love* in other languages, such as Spanish, is not optional and should therefore not be considered pleonastic. The same phenomenon occurs in Spanish with subject pronouns. Since Spanish is a null-subject language, which allows subject pronouns to be deleted when understood, the following sentences mean the same: "Yo te amo." "Te amo." In this case, the pronoun *yo* (I) is grammatically optional; both sentences mean "I love you" (however, they may not have the same tone or intention—this depends on pragmatics rather than grammar). Such differing but syntactically equivalent constructions, in many languages, may also indicate a difference in register. The process of deleting pronouns is called pro-dropping, and it also happens in many other languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Hungarian, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian languages, Swahili, Slavic languages, and the Lao language. In contrast, formal English requires an overt subject in each clause. A sentence may not need a subject to have valid meaning, but to satisfy the syntactic requirement for an explicit subject a pleonastic (or dummy pronoun) is used; only the first sentence in the following pair is acceptable English: "It's raining." \* "I'm raining." In this example the pleonastic "it" fills the subject function, however, it does not contribute any meaning to the sentence. The second sentence, which omits the pleonastic it is marked as ungrammatical although no meaning is lost by the omission.[11]
Elements such as "it" or "there," serving as empty subject markers, are also called (syntactic) expletives, and also dummy pronouns. Compare: "There is rain." \* \* "Today, it rains."
The pleonastic *ne* (ne pleonastique), expressing uncertainty in formal French, works as follows: "Je crains qu'il ne pleuve." ("I fear it may rain.") "Ces idées sont plus difficiles à comprendre que je ne pensais." ("These ideas are harder to understand than I thought.")
Two more striking examples of French pleonastic construction are *aujourd'hui* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The word *aujourd'hui* is translated as "today", but originally means "on the day of today" since the now obsolete *hui* means "today". The expression *aujourd'hui* (translated as "on the day of today") is common in spoken language and demonstrates that the original construction of *aujourd'hui* was lost. It is considered a pleonasm. The phrase *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* meaning "What's that?" or "What is it while literally, it means "What is that is it?". There are examples of the pleonastic, or dummy, negative in English, such as the construction, heard in the New England region of the United States, in which the phrase "so don't" is intended to have the same positive meaning as "So do".[12][13] When Robert South said, "It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in Scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify one notable thing",[14] he was observing the Biblical Hebrew poetic propensity to repeat thoughts in different words, since written Biblical Hebrew was a comparatively early form of written language and was written using oral patterning, which has many pleonasm. In particular, very many verses of the Psalms are split into two halves, each of which says much the same thing in different words. The complex rules and forms of written language as distinct from spoken language were not as well-developed as they are today when the books making up the Old Testament were written.[15][16] See also parallelism (rhetoric). This same pleonastic style remains very common in modern poetry and songwriting (e.g., "Anne, with her father / is out in the boat / riding the water / riding the waves / on the sea", from Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street").
Types of syntactic pleonasm
Overinflection: Many languages with inflection, as a result of convention, tend to inflect more words in a given phrase than actually needed in order to express a single grammatical property. Take for example the German, Die alten Frauen sprechen ("The old women speak"). Even though the use of the plural form of the noun Frau ("woman", plural Frauen) shows the grammatical number of the noun phrase, agreement in the German language still dictates that the definite article, the adjective *alten*, and the verb *sprechen* must all also be in the plural. Not all languages are quite as redundant however, and will permit inflection when there is an obvious numerical marker, as is the case with Hungarian, which does not use a plural proper, but would express two "flowers" as *two flowers*. The same is the case in Coltic languages, where numerical markers precede singular nouns. The main contrast between Hungarian and other tongues such as German or even English (to a lesser extent) is that in either of the latter, expressive plurality when almost evident is not optional, but pleonastic; making the neglect of these rules result in an ungrammatical sentence. As well as for number, our aforementioned German phrase also overinflects for grammatical case. Multiple negation: In some languages, repeated negation may be used for emphasis, as in the English sentence, "There ain't nothing wrong with that". While a literal interpretation of this phrase would be "There is not nothing wrong with that," i.e. "There is something wrong with that", the intended meaning is, in fact, the opposite: "There is nothing wrong with that" or "There isn't anything wrong with that". The repeated negation is used pleonastically for emphasis. However, this is not always the case. In the sentence "I don't like it," the repeated negative may be used to convey ambivalence ("I neither like nor dislike it") or even affirmation ("I do like it"). (Rhetorically, this becomes the device of litotes; it can be difficult to distinguish litotes from pleonastic double negation, a feature which may be used for ironic effect.)
Although the use of "double negatives" for emphatic purposes is sometimes discouraged in standard English, it is mandatory in other languages like Spanish or French. For example, the Spanish phrase *No es nada* ("It is nothing") contains both a negated verb ("no es") and another negative, the word for nothing ("nada"). Multiple affirmations: In English, repeated affirmation can be used to add emphasis to an affirmative statement, just as repeated negation can add emphasis to a negative one. A sentence like *I do love you*, with a stronger intonation on the *do*, uses double affirmation. This is because English, by default, automatically expresses its sentences in the affirmative and must then alter the sentence in one way or another to express the opposite. Therefore, the sentence *I love you* is implicitly affirmative, and the extent to which it is made negative is determined by the speaker. In contrast, the word *love* in other languages, such as Spanish, is not optional and should therefore not be considered pleonastic. The same phenomenon occurs in Spanish with subject pronouns. Since Spanish is a null-subject language, which allows subject pronouns to be deleted when understood, the following sentences mean the same: "Yo te amo." "Te amo." In this case, the pronoun *yo* (I) is grammatically optional; both sentences mean "I love you" (however, they may not have the same tone or intention—this depends on pragmatics rather than grammar). Such differing but syntactically equivalent constructions, in many languages, may also indicate a difference in register. The process of deleting pronouns is called pro-dropping, and it also happens in many other languages, such as Korean, Japanese, Hungarian, Latin, Italian, Portuguese, Scandinavian languages, Swahili, Slavic languages, and the Lao language. In contrast, formal English requires an overt subject in each clause. A sentence may not need a subject to have valid meaning, but to satisfy the syntactic requirement for an explicit subject a pleonastic (or dummy pronoun) is used; only the first sentence in the following pair is acceptable English: "It's raining." \* "I'm raining." In this example the pleonastic "it" fills the subject function, however, it does not contribute any meaning to the sentence. The second sentence, which omits the pleonastic it is marked as ungrammatical although no meaning is lost by the omission.[11]
Elements such as "it" or "there," serving as empty subject markers, are also called (syntactic) expletives, and also dummy pronouns. Compare: "There is rain." \* \* "Today, it rains."
The pleonastic *ne* (ne pleonastique), expressing uncertainty in formal French, works as follows: "Je crains qu'il ne pleuve." ("I fear it may rain.") "Ces idées sont plus difficiles à comprendre que je ne pensais." ("These ideas are harder to understand than I thought.")
Two more striking examples of French pleonastic construction are *aujourd'hui* and *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* The word *aujourd'hui* is translated as "today", but originally means "on the day of today" since the now obsolete *hui* means "today". The expression *aujourd'hui* (translated as "on the day of today") is common in spoken language and demonstrates that the original construction of *aujourd'hui* was lost. It is considered a pleonasm. The phrase *Qu'est-ce que c'est?* meaning "What's that?" or "What is it while literally, it means "What is that is it?". There are examples of the pleonastic, or dummy, negative in English, such as the construction, heard in the New England region of the United States, in which the phrase "so don't" is intended to have the same positive meaning as "So do".[12][13] When Robert South said, "It is a pleonasm, a figure usual in Scripture, by a multiplicity of expressions to signify one notable thing",[14] he was observing the Biblical Hebrew poetic propensity to repeat thoughts in different words, since written Biblical Hebrew was a comparatively early form of written language and was written using oral patterning, which has many pleonasm. In particular, very many verses of the Psalms are split into two halves, each of which says much the same thing in different words. The complex rules and forms of written language as distinct from spoken language were not as well-developed as they are today when the books making up the Old Testament were written.[15][16] See also parallelism (rhetoric). This same pleonastic style remains very common in modern poetry and songwriting (e.g., "Anne, with her father / is out in the boat / riding the water / riding the waves / on the sea", from Peter Gabriel's "Mercy Street").
Types of syntactic pleonasm
Overinflection: Many languages with inflection, as a result of convention, tend to inflect more words in a given phrase than actually needed in order to express a single grammatical property. Take for example the German, Die alten Frauen sprechen ("The old women speak"). Even though the use of the plural form of the noun Frau ("woman", plural Frauen) shows the grammatical number of the noun phrase, agreement in the German language still dictates that the definite article, the adjective *alten*, and the verb *sprechen* must all also be in the plural. Not all languages are quite as redundant however, and will permit inflection when there is an obvious numerical marker, as is the case with Hungarian, which does not use a plural proper, but would express two "flowers" as *two flowers*. The same is the case in Coltic languages, where numerical markers precede singular nouns. The main contrast between Hungarian and other tongues such as German or even English (to a lesser extent) is that in either of the latter, expressive plurality when almost evident is not optional, but pleonastic; making the neglect of these rules result in an ungrammatical sentence. As well as for number, our aforementioned German phrase also overinflects for grammatical case. Multiple negation: In some languages, repeated negation may be used for emphasis, as in the English sentence, "There ain't nothing wrong with that". While a literal interpretation of this phrase would be "There is not nothing wrong with that," i.e. "There is something wrong with that", the intended meaning is, in fact, the opposite