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Stylistic Deviations in Linguistics Introductions: A Move-Step Analysis of Wordiness, Redundancy, and Communicative Impact

Tatiana Golechkova [1], Nadezhda Arupova [2], Elena Golubovskaya [3]

[1] New Economic School, Moscow, Russia
[2] MGIMO University, Moscow, Russia
[3] RUDN University, Moscow, Russia

ABSTRACT

Introduction: Stylistic deviations such as wordiness and redundancy undermine clarity and precision in academic writing. Their frequency and communicative impact, however, are likely to vary across disciplinary traditions. Earlier research has examined these phenomena in education-related corpora and revealed patterned distributions of redundancy in justificatory passages. By contrast, the ways in which such deviations manifest in linguistics research articles remain underexplored.

Purpose: To investigate the distribution, functional localization, and communicative impact of stylistic deviations in linguistics Introductions, with a particular focus on how wordiness and redundancy interact with rhetorical structure.

Method: A corpus of 40 linguistics Introductions (388 sentence-level fragments) was compiled and annotated. Each fragment was coded by rhetorical Move and Step according to the CARS model and further categorized by deviation class (wordiness or redundancy), subcategory, and communicative impact. The taxonomy of deviations previously validated in education corpora was applied in full. Statistical analysis included descriptive profiling of classes and subcategories, chi-square tests of association, and effect size estimation.

Results: Wordiness predominated across the corpus, accounting for 70.6% of all deviations, while redundancy accounted for 29.4%. Class balance was stable across Moves and Steps, but severity was functionally localized: high-impact deviations clustered in M3_S3, M3_S1, M2_S2, and M1_S3. Almost all high-impact cases were linked to wordiness, with syntactic complexity alone responsible for 54 of 61 instances. Redundancy, although frequent in structural and lexical repetition, rarely reached high severity.

Conclusion: These findings show that in linguistics Introductions in English the primary stylistic risk lies not in repetition but in syntactic overload at rhetorically dense points of the text. The results extend previous applications of the taxonomy by demonstrating a discipline-specific pattern of risk concentration. The study highlights the value of combining rhetorical segmentation with fine-grained stylistic annotation and suggests that pedagogical efforts should focus on reducing syntactic complexity in high-pressure rhetorical contexts. Limitations include the modest corpus size and the absence of cross-disciplinary comparison, which future research should address to refine understanding of stylistic risk across fields.

KEYWORDS

stylistic deviations, wordiness; redundancy; syntactic complexity; communicative impact; Move–Step analysis; rhetorical segmentation; academic writing pedagogy

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Correspondence:
Tatiana Golechkova,
tgolechkova@nes.ru

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INTRODUCTION

Inadequate management of rhetorical pressures in research article Introductions gives rise to two recurrent types of stylistic deviation. Wordiness reduces informational density by introducing low-yield formulae, excessive epistemic modification, and nominalizations that weaken verbal force (Tikhonova et al., 2024).

Redundancy repeats meanings already expressed through lexical tautology and structural duplication (Degen et al. 2020). Both phenomena increase processing costs for readers and undermine clarity. Their presence has been widely documented across disciplines and genres, including medicine, law, and applied linguistics (Salager-Meyer, 1994; Biber & Gray, 2010; Goonaratna, 2002a, 2002b; Williams & Bizup, 2017; Flowerdew & Forest, 2015; Leufkens, 2023; Kravtchenko & Demberg, 2022).

These stylistic risks are not evenly distributed across the rhetorical structure of Introductions. In Move 1, where authors establish territory, writers often resort to generalizations and formulaic openings. In Move 2, devoted to identifying a research gap, repetition and vague evaluative language are common (Farneste, 2015). In Move 3, where aims and contributions are presented, templated statements can echo earlier content rather than add new information. Such tendencies have been documented in discipline-specific corpora as well as in cross-disciplinary comparisons of Introduction structures (Samraj, 2002; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Hyland, 2008; Gong & Barlow, 2022). In the Russian academic context, these problems are amplified by the coexistence of different publication cultures and the continuing prominence of Russian as a language of research dissemination. This situation complicates transfer to and from English and sustains local stylistic traditions that privilege elaboration over economy (Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2019; Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2020; Smirnova, Lillis, & Hultgren, 2021).

Within this broader literature, Tikhonova et al. (2025) provide a systematic account of how wordiness and redundancy distribute across the Move and Step structure of Russian language Introductions in education. The association between rhetorical function and deviation type was statistically robust, with a nontrivial share of high impact cases that plausibly distort the uptake of aims and arguments. The study operationalized deviation categories by adapting typologies of wordiness and redundancy previously systematized in scoping reviews on academic Russian, which supports conceptual transparency and reproducibility (Tikhonova & Mezentseva, 2024).

We adopt the methodology of Tikhonova et al. (2025) and apply it to English language Introductions in linguistics for four reasons that are both theoretical and practical. First, it aligns analysis with the CARS model, which is the dominant account of Introduction organization and which enables function sensitive evaluation rather than surface level counting (Swales, 1990; Swales, 2004). Second, the taxonomy distinguishes wordiness and redundancy into analytically tractable subtypes that are grounded in prior reviews and have face validity for Russian academic discourse. This yields observable tags for manual annotation that can be audited and reused across corpora. Third, the IMPACT scale adds a communicative lens to the analysis and allows editors and instructors to prioritize interventions where stylistic deviations most threaten interpretability. Fourth, the protocol closes a known gap, where detailed, rhetorically anchored, corpus-based diagnostics of Introduction writing remain scarce beyond single disciplines. Together these properties make the approach suitable for replication and extension on new data, while ensuring comparability with prior findings (Tikhonova et al., 2025; Tikhonova & Mezentseva, 2024).

At the same time, the original study acknowledged limits. Its corpus was monodisciplinary and exclusively Russian language, which constrains generalization beyond education and beyond one academic culture. The assignment of IMPACT levels relied on expert judgment and therefore calls for inter-rater validation and triangulation with independent indicators of reader difficulty. These constraints point to the need for replication on new material and for designs that separate structural rhetorical pressures from discipline specific habits and period effects. Our study responds to this need by applying the same annotation and inference procedures to a new author compiled corpus and by testing whether the previously observed localization of overload persists. We also reassess the relative burden of wordiness and redundancy under different rhetorical demands and re-estimate the distribution of IMPACT across functionally critical segments (Tikhonova et al., 2025).

The present study pursues three research questions. RQ1 asks how wordiness and redundancy are distributed across Moves and Steps in the new corpus and whether the earlier clusters recur in justifying significance, gap indication, and aim presentation. RQ2 asks how the overall frequency and the subcategory profile of wordiness and redundancy shift across rhetorical functions and whether the balance between them changes under different communicative pressures. RQ3 asks how IMPACT levels distribute across Moves and Steps and whether high impact deviations concentrate in the same segments as before. Our hypotheses are that stylistic overload remains structurally motivated by rhetorical function, that wordiness remains more frequent overall while redundancy accounts for a disproportionate share of high impact cases, and that the most vulnerable segments coincide with those identified previously. These hypotheses are directly anchored in the baseline study and in the wider literature on genre organization and concision (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2005; Williams & Bizup, 2017; Biber & Gray, 2010; Salager-Meyer, 1994).

Methodologically, we retain the core elements of the protocol. We segment Introductions by Move and Step, annotate stylistic deviations using the validated typologies for wordiness and redundancy, assign IMPACT levels to each marked fragment, and test associations with chi square. This preserves comparability with the baseline study and allows us to attribute any differences to corpus composition rather than to measurement change. The design supports actionable implications for editorial practice and instruction since the IMPACT profiles identify where targeted revision is most

likely to yield large rhetorical gains. In this sense, our contribution is both empirical and translational. We offer an evidence based map of risk in English language Introductions and a function sensitive framework for intervention that can be integrated into local training and review practices (Tikhonova et al., 2025; Raitskaya & Tikhonova, 2020).

METHOD

Design

This study is a corpus based replication and extension of the protocol introduced by Tikhonova et al. (2025) for diagnosing stylistic overload in research article Introductions. We adopt their function sensitive approach that aligns annotation with the CARS Move–Step model and distinguishes two superordinate classes of deviation, wordiness and redundancy, complemented by a three level communicative impact scale. This design preserves comparability with the baseline study while allowing discipline specific interpretation on the present dataset.

Corpus and Inclusion Criteria

The dataset consists of Introductions from forty research articles in linguistics published in 2024–2025. The corpus includes Q1 Scopus English-medium publications on a range of linguistics sub-fields, including applied linguistics, computational linguistics, typology, phonology, linguistics research methods. Table 1 summarises the journals included in the corpus. The selection of papers was performed using a continuous sampling method based on the four criteria: 1. The paper presents empirical research; 2. There is a separate Introduction section; 3. It is published in English; 4. The Introduction is publicly available.

The unit of analysis is the Introduction section. The working file is a single spreadsheet that records fragment level annotations with the following fields: ID, TEXT, CATEGORY, TAG, IMPACT, and MOVE_STEP. Article level identity is encoded in ID as the substring before the fragment counter. No article level bibliographic metadata are included in the file. The dataset contains 388 fragments. The number of annotated fragments per article ranges from 3 to 23 with a median of 8.

Fragments are distributed across the nine admissible Move–Step labels used in the baseline protocol. The inventory and the interpretation adopted here are as follows.

M1_S1 establishing territory.
M1_S2 justifying significance or centrality.
M1_S3 reviewing the field or delimiting a research direction.
M2_S1 indicating a gap.
M2_S2 problematizing or raising a question.
M2_S3 contrast in approaches or findings.
M3_S1 stating aim or research tasks.
M3_S2 brief orientation to method or data.
M3_S3 signposting contribution or expected results.

Table 1

Journals Demographics

	title	issn	SJR	SJR Quartile	H index	country	publisher
1	Transactions of the Association for Computational Linguistics	2307387X	1,824	Q1	67	United States	MIT Press Journal
2	Journal of Memory and Language	0749596X, 10960821	1,802	Q1	177	United States	Academic Press Inc.
3	Linguistic Typology	14300532, 1613415X	0,854	Q1	45	Germany	De Gruyter Mouton
4	Laboratory Phonology	18686346, 18686354	0,755	Q1	17	Germany	Open Library of Humanities
5	System	23693762	2,205	Q1	115	United Kingdom	JMIR Publications Inc.
6	Research Methods in Applied Linguistics	27727661	2,452	Q1	14	United Kingdom	Elsevier B.V.
7	Linguistics	00243949, 1613396X	0,732	Q1	60	Germany	De Gruyter Mouton
8	Journal of World Languages	21698252, 21698260	0,729	Q1	11	Germany	De Gruyter Mouton

Operational Definitions and Coding Scheme

We follow the deviation taxonomy used by Tikhonova et al. (2025) and apply it at the fragment level. Two superordinate classes are distinguished.

The first class is Wordiness low yield material that depresses informational density. Subcategories present in the dataset are:

(1) WORDINESS_GENERAL formulaic and low information phrasing
(2) WORDINESS_HEDGING excessive or stacked epistemic modification
(3) WORDINESS_COMPLEXITY syntactic overcomplexity and overload
(4) NOMINALIZATION preference for derived nouns where a finite verb would increase clarity
(5) FORMULAIC_PHRASE stock openings or transitions that add no propositional content
(6) EMPTY_REFERENCE vague labels or references that fail to advance the argument.

The second class is Redundancy avoidable repetition of information already present. Subcategories present in the dataset are

(1) REDUNDANCY_LEXICAL repetition of words or near synonyms within a local span
(3) REDUNDANCY_STRUCTURE re stating earlier rhetorical content or re cycling a step
(3) APPOSITIVE_PHRASE appositive expansions that restate the head without adding content.

Each marked fragment also receives an IMPACT label that captures expert judgment of potential interference with readers' uptake of the Introduction. Levels are ordered as LOW, MEDIUM, and HIGH. The scale is identical in purpose and granularity to the one used by Tikhonova et al. (2025).

Annotation Unit and Procedure

The annotation unit is a sentence level fragment. Each fragment is assigned exactly one Move–Step label and one deviation category. When a fragment exhibits more than one problem coders assign the category judged to have the strongest communicative impact following the decision rule reported in the baseline study. The present spreadsheet represents a single pass of primary annotation. Parallel double coding is not available in the file and inter-rater reliability cannot be computed from the supplied data.

Quality Control

Before analysis we verified that all MOVE_STEP values belong to the nine admissible labels, that categorical fields use a consistent case, and that each fragment contains a non-empty TEXT. Records with malformed identifiers or missing labels were flagged and corrected when the intended value was unambiguous from context. The final analytic dataset includes 388 fragments and 40 distinct article identifiers.

Primary outcomes are the counts of deviations by Move and by Step and the counts by superordinate class and subcategory. Secondary outcomes are the distributions of IMPACT across Moves and Steps and across deviation classes. The corpus level composition is reported descriptively to characterize the dataset that underpins inferential tests.

Statistical Analysis

Analyses mirror the baseline inferential strategy. We construct contingency tables for Move by deviation class, Step by deviation class, and Step by IMPACT. We use Pearson's chi square tests to assess associations with alpha set at 0.05 and report Cramér's V as effect size. Where expected cell counts are low, we merge rare subcategories within their superordinate class or compute Monte Carlo *p*-values. Descriptive results are reported as counts and proportions with 95 percent confidence intervals. All computations are performed in Python using pandas for data handling and SciPy for inferential statistics. This pipeline reproduces the logic of the baseline study and ensures that any cross study differences can be attributed to corpus composition rather than to changes in measurement or inference.

Ethical Considerations

All materials used are publicly available scholarly texts. The study does not involve human subjects or personal data and does not require ethics approval. Quotations from the corpus used illustratively in the Results follow fair use norms for research and teaching.

Data Availability

The annotated spreadsheet used in this study is part of the project archive and can be provided to reviewers and readers upon reasonable request, subject to the rights of original publishers of the underlying articles.

RESULTS

This section first describes the corpus and the distribution of fragments across CARS Moves and Steps. It then answers RQ1 by examining how the two deviation classes are distributed across Moves and Steps. It answers RQ2 by quantifying the overall balance between wordiness and redundancy. It answers RQ3 by analyzing communicative impact labels and showing where high impact fragments concentrate. Finally, it drills down to subcategories to identify which linguistic

patterns carry most of the risk and it integrates these patterns with the rhetorical map.

Corpus and Rhetorical Segmentation

The overall size profile of the corpus sets the baseline for interpreting all subsequent findings. As shown in Table 1, the majority of material is concentrated in Move 1, with a substantial closing block in Move 3, while Move 2 is comparatively smaller. This distribution reflects a rhetorical preference for elaborating background and signalling contribution, rather than devoting equal space to the gap-establishing middle section. Step-level patterns refine this picture. Within Move 1, the field-orienting step (M1_S3) accounts for the largest share of that move, highlighting authors' tendency to extend the review of previous work. In Move 2, the dominance of M2_S2 indicates that authors allocate proportionally more space to gap statements than to adjacent contrastive or counterclaim steps. In Move 3, the three steps are more balanced, though the slight expansion of M3_S3 points to the rhetorical weight placed on contribution signalling.

These differences mean that raw counts of stylistic deviations will inevitably be higher in larger steps, particularly in M1_S3 and M3_S3. To prevent misinterpretation, the following results are reported both in absolute numbers and in proportions relative to step totals.

Deviation Classes at Corpus Level and by Step

The third block of results examines the distribution of communicative impact labels across rhetorical steps. The analysis distinguishes three levels of impact: LOW, MEDIUM, and HIGH. Counts and proportions are presented in Table 3, with the "high rate" column indicating the share of high-impact fragments within each step.

At the corpus level, the majority of annotated fragments fall into the LOW and MEDIUM categories (179 and 147 respectively), while HIGH impact accounts for 61 fragments. The global test of association between step and impact does not reach significance, $\chi^2(16) = 11.737$, $p = 0.762$, $V = 0.123$. This result means that overall impact distribution does not differ systematically by step once the size of each step is taken into account. Nevertheless, step-level proportions highlight local concentrations of high impact that are masked in the global test. The highest rates occur in M3_S3 (11 of 47, 23.40%), M3_S1 (8 of 41, 19.50%), M2_S2 (8 of 42, 19.05%), and M1_S3 (13 of 69, 18.84%). By contrast, steps such as M2_S1 (0 of 26, 0.00%) and M2_S3 (1 of 24, 4.17%) exhibit little or no high impact. These figures indicate that risk is not evenly distributed across the rhetorical map: segments associated with announcing contribution, formulating aims, and elaborating research problems show markedly higher vulnerability to high-impact deviations.

Wilson confidence intervals further illustrate this pattern. For M3_S3 the 95% CI for the high rate is 13.60–37.22%, while for M1_S3 it is 11.35–29.61%. These intervals confirm that in both steps, high-impact fragments represent a non-trivial portion of the text, with values well above those observed in smaller steps such as M2_S1. This descriptive profile establishes the "risk landscape" of the corpus: while impact categories are formally present in every step, high impact is concentrated in the steps that carry the heaviest rhetori-

Table 2

Rhetorical segmentation of the corpus by CARS Move and Step

Move	Step	n	% of corpus	% within move
M1	M1_S1	53	13.7%	31.7%
M1	M1_S2	45	11.6%	26.9%
M1	M1_S3	69	17.8%	41.3%
M1	Total	167	43.0%	100.0%
M2	M2_S1	26	6.7%	28.3%
M2	M2_S2	42	10.8%	45.7%
M2	M2_S3	24	6.2%	26.1%
M2	Total	92	23.7%	100.0%
M3	M3_S1	41	10.6%	31.8%
M3	M3_S2	41	10.6%	31.8%
M3	M3_S3	47	12.1%	36.4%
M3	Total	129	33.2%	100.0%

cal load in terms of signalling aims and contribution. These findings provide the rationale for examining whether the observed high-impact deviations are tied to class membership, a question addressed in the following subsection.

Communicative Impact by Deviation Class

The next block of results evaluates how impact levels are distributed across the two superordinate classes of stylistic deviation. The purpose of this comparison is to establish whether the communicative consequences of deviations are class-specific or spread evenly across the corpus. The contingency Table is presented in Table 4.

The results demonstrate a marked imbalance. Out of 274 instances of wordiness, 60 are coded as high impact, representing 21.9% of that class. By contrast, redundancy yields only a single high-impact fragment out of 114 instances, which corresponds to 0.9%. The remaining redundancy cases cluster in the low- and medium-impact categories (69 and 43 respectively), showing that redundancy tends to carry minimal communicative risk even when frequent. Wordiness, on the other hand, is distributed across the full severity range: 104 low, 110 medium, and 60 high. A chi-square test confirms that impact is not independent of class, $\chi^2(2) = 29.979$, $p < 0.001$, Cramér's V = 0.278. The effect size indicates a medium association, meaning that class membership substantially influences the severity profile. Specifically, the high-impact category is overwhelmingly associated with wordiness, while redundancy is almost entirely confined to low- and medium-level effects.

This pattern clarifies the earlier step-level findings. Elevated high-impact rates in certain steps cannot be explained by an uneven balance of classes across the rhetorical map, because class distributions were shown to be stable. Rather, these elevated rates arise from the fact that wordiness, when it occurs, is more likely than redundancy to cause communicative overload. This conclusion sets the stage for the subcategory analysis, which pinpoints the precise forms of wordiness most responsible for high impact

Subcategory Profile and Carriers of High Impact

The final block of results turns from the superordinate classes to the finer subcategory level in order to identify which specific patterns of deviation are most strongly associated with communicative risk. The distribution of counts and high-impact rates across all nine annotated subcategories is presented in Table 5.

The corpus-wide frequency profile shows that several subcategories are well represented. Wordiness-related types are the most frequent, including syntactic complexity (63 fragments), hedging proliferation (59), and general low-

Table 3

Impact Distribution by Step and High-Impact Rates

Step	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	n total	High rate
M1_S1	26	20	7	53	0.132
M1_S2	22	18	5	45	0.111
M1_S3	33	23	13	69	0.188
M2_S1	14	12	0	26	0.000
M2_S2	18	16	8	42	0.190
M2_S3	14	9	1	24	0.042
M3_S1	16	17	8	41	0.195
M3_S2	19	16	6	41	0.146
M3_S3	17	19	11	47	0.234

Note. "High rate" equals n HIGH divided by n total per Step.

Table 4

Impact Distribution by Class

Class	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH	n total	High rate
Wordiness	104	110	60	274	0.219
Redundancy	75	37	1	114	0.009

Table 5

Subcategory Counts and High-Impact Rates

Subcategory	n	n HIGH	High rate
WORDINESS_COMPLEXITY	63	54	0.857
WORDINESS_HEDGING	59	0	0.000
WORDINESS_GENERAL	54	4	0.074
REDUNDANCY_STRUCTURE	49	0	0.000
REDUNDANCY_LEXICAL	47	1	0.021
NOMINALIZATION	42	2	0.048
FORMULAIC_PHRASE	41	0	0.000
APPOSITIVE_PHRASE	18	0	0.000
EMPTY_REFERENCE	15	0	0.000

yield phrasing (54). Among redundancy-related types, structural repetition (49) and lexical tautology (47) are the most common, while appositive duplication is less frequent (18). Smaller categories of wordiness include nominalization (42), formulaic phrases (41), and empty references (15).

The severity distribution highlights a sharp concentration of high impact in one subcategory. Out of 61 high-impact fragments in the corpus, 54 belong to WORDINESS_COMPLEXITY, giving this subcategory a high rate of 0.857. The remaining subcategories contribute little to the high-impact pool: WORDINESS_GENERAL produces four high-impact cases (rate 0.074), NOMINALIZATION two (0.048), REDUNDANCY_LEXICAL one (0.021), and all others none. This concentration means that syntactic overload is by far the most consequential deviation in terms of communicative clarity.

The joint consideration of frequency and severity provides further clarification of the class-level results. Wordiness not only exceeds redundancy in overall prevalence but also encompasses the specific subcategory of syntactic complexity, which accounts for the vast majority of high-impact deviations. By contrast, the remaining subcategories, although regularly represented in the corpus, are predominantly confined to the low and medium levels of communicative severity.

DISCUSSION

The present study applied a taxonomy of stylistic deviations, previously validated in education-related corpora (Tikhonova & Mezentseva, 2024), to a new disciplinary (linguistics) and language (English). The findings not only replicate earlier observations about the predominance of wordiness but also refine the understanding of how communicative risk is distributed across rhetorical functions.

The CARS model has long been used to explain variation in Introductions (Swales, 2004; Samraj, 2002). In the present corpus, it provided a stable baseline against which deviations could be measured. Although the Step by Class analysis showed no significant association indicating that wordiness and redundancy are evenly spread across Moves, the Step by Impact results revealed localized risk zones. Specifically, high-impact deviations occurred in M3_S3, M3_S1, M2_S2, and M1_S3. These are steps with high rhetorical load, where authors articulate aims, contribution, problematization, or field orientation. The observation that severity rises in these zones aligns with previous studies showing that genre-imposed pressures intensify in precisely these rhetorical locations (Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Peacock, 2011; Öztürk, 2007; Pho, 2008; Shehzad, 2008; Lim, 2012). Thus, while class membership itself is not predicted by rhetorical function, severity is conditioned by the communicative demands of specific steps.

The cross-study contrast employed here is heuristic rather than strictly causal. The baseline corpus differs from the present dataset in both discipline and language, which precludes attributing observed divergences to either factor alone. Within these constraints, the present findings nonetheless show that high-impact deviations in linguistics Introductions align with sentence-level packaging at points of maximal rhetorical demand (Halliday & Martin, 2003; Banks, 2008). The results align with and extend the observations of Tikhonova et al. (2025). In their education corpus, redundancy showed clearer clustering in certain rhetorical steps, while in the present linguistics corpus wordiness proved to be a stable majority across the board. This contrast should be interpreted cautiously, because the corpora vary simultaneously by discipline and language. Even so, the present evidence indicates that linguistics Introductions concentrate stylistic load in densely packaged sentence structures, whereas the education corpus reported more visible cluster-

ing of redundancy in justificatory segments (Nwogu, 1997; Lim, 2012).

A balanced 2 × 2 design crossing discipline (linguistics vs. education) and language (English vs. Russian), with harmonized sampling windows and identical annotation, would allow the separate contributions of discipline and language to be estimated and would test whether the concentration of high-impact wordiness in linguistics generalizes beyond the present corpus.

The strong link between high impact and wordiness, and especially syntactic complexity, parallels findings from corpus-based studies of academic prose that document the increasing density of clause embedding and nominal constructions in research writing (Biber & Gray, 2010; Hyland, 2005). Psycholinguistic evidence indicates that heavy embedding and long-distance dependencies increase processing cost, which is consistent with the elevated impact observed here (Gibson, 1998; Levy, 2008). The present results are therefore in line with broader accounts of syntactic compression as a disciplinary stylistic norm that also introduces risks of reduced clarity.

Research Questions in Focus

The cross-reading of Tables 2, 3, and 5 underscores that severity is not an artefact of uneven class distribution. Wordiness is consistently dominant in every step, yet only one subcategory, syntactic complexity, accounts for nearly all high-impact cases (54 of 61). This concentration confirms that communicative overload is not diffused across stylistic features but localized in a single recurrent pattern. The implication is that stylistic guidance aimed at reducing syntactic complexity, particularly in Steps where rhetorical pressure is greatest, would yield the largest gains in interpretability (Öztürk, 2007; Pho, 2008; Shehzad, 2008). This insight complements earlier pedagogical recommendations that foreground clarity and explicitness in academic writing instruction (Williams & Bizup, 2017).

Deviation Classes at Corpus Level and by Step

The analysis permits a structured response to the three research questions. With respect to RQ1, which asked whether deviation classes exhibit a patterned distribution across rhetorical Moves and Steps, the results indicate that no such patterning is present. Wordiness consistently predominates in every step, and chi-square testing revealed no significant association between class and rhetorical function. This stability contrasts with findings from education corpora, where redundancy was reported to cluster in specific justificatory passages (Tikhonova et al., 2025). In the present linguistics corpus, the imbalance in favour of wordiness is a general stylistic tendency rather than a consequence of rhetorical positioning.

Turning to RQ2, which addressed the overall balance between wordiness and redundancy and the internal composition of their subcategories, the results confirm the dominance of wordiness, accounting for 70.6% of all annotated fragments, while redundancy contributed 29.4%. Within wordiness, the most frequent subcategories were syntactic complexity, hedging, and general low-yield phrasing. This profile again diverges from earlier studies, where redundancy-related categories such as structural repetition played a more central role. In linguistics writing, the stylistic burden is thus carried predominantly by expansions and overloaded constructions rather than by repeated formulations.

Finally, RQ3 concerned the localization of high-impact deviations and their association with class membership. High-impact cases were concentrated in four steps: M3_S3, M3_S1, M2_S2, and M1_S3, which are responsible for signalling contribution, stating aims, establishing the gap, and reviewing prior work. Importantly, severity was strongly tied to class, with high-impact deviations almost exclusively associated with wordiness and, within that class, overwhelmingly with syntactic complexity. This outcome reinforces the view that the most consequential risks in linguistics Introductions occur when rhetorical density coincides with syntactic overload. By comparison, redundancy, although present, rarely escalated to high severity and therefore poses less communicative risk in this disciplinary setting.

Taken together, the responses to RQ1–RQ3 reveal a disciplinary contrast. Whereas in education writing redundancy can be tolerated and even rhetorically functional in justificatory passages, linguistics writing carries its stylistic burden in densely packed sentences, making syntactic complexity the critical source of communicative risk. This comparison underscores the value of applying a unified taxonomy across domains, since only through cross-disciplinary analysis can field-specific vulnerabilities be identified and pedagogically addressed.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to examine stylistic deviations in linguistics Introductions using a Move–Step framework combined with a taxonomy of wordiness and redundancy. The analysis produced three consistent findings. First, wordiness predominates across all rhetorical segments, with class balance stable across Moves and Steps. Second, the most frequent subcategories are syntactic complexity, hedging, and low-yield phrasing, while redundancy plays only a minor role. Third, communicative severity is functionally localized: high-impact deviations cluster in steps devoted to reviewing prior work, establishing the research gap, stating aims, and announcing contribution, and are overwhelmingly associated with syntactic complexity.

These results contribute to a clearer understanding of how stylistic risk is distributed in linguistics Introductions. They show that communicative burden arises not from repetition but from sentence structures that compress excessive syntactic material, especially in rhetorically dense segments of the text. The findings also carry practical implications, suggesting that efforts to improve clarity should prioritize strategies for reducing syntactic overload in high-pressure rhetorical contexts. More broadly, the study demonstrates the analytic and pedagogical value of combining rhetorical segmentation with a fine-grained taxonomy of stylistic deviations.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The dataset was limited to 40 Introductions in linguistics, which constrains the generalizability of the findings. The reliance on categorical coding necessarily abstracts from contextual nuances, and the analysis did not consider author background or journal policies, both of which may influence stylistic choices. Addressing these limitations in future research will require larger, multi-disciplinary corpora, as well as discourse-functional and computational approaches capable of capturing gradient forms of stylistic overload. Such extensions would clarify whether the concentration of risk in syntactic complexity is specific to linguistics or characteristic of humanities writing more broadly, and would refine pedagogical recommendations for discipline-sensitive academic writing instruction.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

None declared.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

Tatiana Golechkova: conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; funding acquisition; methodology; project administration; visualization; writing – original draft; writing – review & editing.

Nadezhda Arupova: formal analysis; investigation; methodology; resources; software; supervision; writing – original draft.

Elena Golubovskaya: conceptualization; data curation; formal analysis; funding acquisition; methodology; project administration; visualization; writing – original draft; writing – review & editing.

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