

The Rhetorical Strategy of Antithesis in the Oral Language of the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum on the Rumah Pendidikan Platform

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Abstract

This study investigates the development, feasibility, and effectiveness of Android-based animation media for short story appreciation in Grade VIII junior high school Indonesian language learning. Conventional literary instruction frequently relies on monotonous lecture methods and text-heavy worksheets, resulting in passive student engagement and suboptimal comprehension. Employing a Research and Development (R&D) design adapted from the Borg and Gall model into three operational stages (preliminary needs analysis, prototype development, and expert validation with empirical testing), the trial was implemented using a one-group pretest-posttest design involving 60 Grade VIII students across MTs Negeri 1 Bojonegoro ($n=30$) and MTs Negeri 5 Bojonegoro ($n=30$). The media, developed using Plotagon Studio, Canva, iSpring Suite, and Web2APK Builder into an offline mobile application, achieved "very feasible" ratings from media experts (90.21%) and material experts (89.70%). Student appreciation scores increased from a pretest mean of 56.40 ($SD = 7.21$) to a posttest mean of 86.95 ($SD = 6.69$), yielding an average Normalized Gain (N-gain) of 0.7007 in the "moderate" category. A paired sample t-test confirmed that this improvement is statistically significant ($t(59) = 24.36, p < 0.001$). These findings prove that the media serves as an effective, accessible scaffolding tool that enriches literary appreciation.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is a fundamental element of the learning process because it serves as a means of conveying information, developing understanding, and constructing meaning between the sender and the receiver of a message. In digital learning, spoken language plays an important role because learning materials are delivered through utterances that audiences must understand without necessarily engaging in direct interaction. The effectiveness of material delivery depends not only on the accuracy of the information presented but also on how the information is organized and conveyed. Structured, clear, and contextually appropriate utterances can help audiences follow the flow of explanations, understand the relationships between ideas, and grasp the main messages conveyed by the speaker. Therefore, the study of spoken language in digital learning should consider not only the content of utterances but also the linguistic strategies employed to establish clarity and emphasize key messages. Studies of figurative language in online learning discourse have also demonstrated that language choices can be analyzed in terms of their forms and communicative functions (Syamsuddin & Nurhusna, 2023).

One linguistic aspect that can be examined in instructional discourse is figurative language. Keraf (2009) explains that style of language concerns the distinctive way of expressing thoughts through language to achieve particular effects. In instructional communication, figurative language does not merely serve an aesthetic or decorative function; it can also emphasize ideas, establish relationships between concepts, and direct the audience's attention to specific information. The selection of an appropriate linguistic style in accordance with communicative objectives enables speakers to deliver instructional materials in a more focused and communicative manner. Therefore, style of language can be understood as a rhetorical aspect of instructional delivery, particularly in terms of how messages are formulated so that the ideas

conveyed receive emphasis appropriate to the intended communicative objectives.

One form of figurative language that is relevant in this context is antithesis. In the study of figurative language based on sentence structure, antithesis involves the use of opposing or contrasting ideas within a linguistic construction (Keraf, 2009). This contrast allows two concepts to be presented side by side, making the differences between them more prominent. In spoken discourse, such contrasting patterns have the potential to help speakers organize explanations that explicitly illustrate differences, changes, or shifts in thinking. Antithesis, therefore, can be examined not only as a linguistic form but also in terms of its rhetorical function in specific contexts of use. Nevertheless, the function of antithesis in learning cannot be assumed to invariably lead to better understanding. Its function needs to be explained through an analysis of the form of the utterances, the contexts in which they occur, and the relationships between the contrasting ideas.

The relevance of antithesis becomes increasingly significant when examined in the context of delivering instructional materials on the Merdeka Curriculum, which is also the focus of studies on curriculum and learning platforms by Priantini et al. (2022). Changes in educational policies involve not only the introduction of new terms or procedures but also explanations of shifts in learning orientations, teachers' roles, and educational practices that require adaptation. In delivering such materials, speakers may employ conceptual contrasts to clarify the differences between one approach and another. Presenting two opposing ideas side by side can serve as a rhetorical strategy to highlight aspects of change, clarify conceptual boundaries, or direct the audience's attention to messages considered important. However, the presence of conceptual contrasts in instructional materials does not automatically establish the use of antithesis as a figure of speech. The identification of antithesis must be based on its linguistic characteristics, while the interpretation of its rhetorical function requires consideration of the utterance context as a whole.

This context can be found in the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum available on the Rumah Pendidikan platform. As a source of digital-based training materials, the speakers' utterances play an important role in conveying knowledge to teachers. Previous studies have also examined independent training through the Merdeka Mengajar platform and the evaluation of curriculum implementation training (Rohimat, 2022; Widiastuti et al., 2023). Unlike face-to-face instructional communication, video-based materials rely primarily on recorded speech to deliver explanations. In this setting, word choice, sentence structure, emphasis on ideas, and the use of figurative language are aspects worth examining to understand how educational content is communicated. Therefore, video-based independent training can be studied not only in terms of its content and use of technology but also in terms of the characteristics of the spoken language employed to deliver the material.

Several previous studies have examined the use of language in digital learning communication and rhetorical discourse. Syamsuddin and Nurhusna (2023) investigated teachers' use of metaphors in online Indonesian language classroom discourse on YouTube. Their study identified the types of metaphors and their functions, including informational, expressive, and directive functions. The study demonstrates that figurative language in digital learning can be examined in terms of its forms and communicative functions. Nevertheless, metaphors have linguistic characteristics that differ from those of antithesis. Therefore, findings concerning metaphors do not directly explain how contrasting ideas in antithesis are employed to emphasize messages and clarify conceptual differences in instructional discourse.

Meanwhile, Rosmita (2024) examined the language style of speeches based on tone and sentence structure, including the use of antithesis, in Ustazah Mamah Dedeh's sermons on the ANTV program *Hati ke Hati Bersama Mamah Dedeh*. This study is relevant because it demonstrates that antithesis has been examined as part of the analysis of figurative language in

spoken discourse. In addition, research on rhetorical strategies in regional election debate videos has identified antithesis as one form of figurative language based on sentence structure that contributes to strengthening arguments. Damayanti et al. (2024), in their study of language styles in YouTube discourse concerning political issues, also demonstrated the relevance of figurative language analysis in audiovisual discourse. These studies indicate that antithesis can be found in various contexts of oral and rhetorical communication. However, sermons and political debates have communicative purposes and audience characteristics that differ from those of teacher training on educational policies. This contextual distinction provides an opportunity to investigate how antithesis is employed in educational discourse intended to convey concepts and explain shifts in educational paradigms.

Based on a review of these studies, research on language styles in digital learning has addressed the use of metaphors and persuasive strategies, while antithesis has been examined in the contexts of sermons and debate discourse. Nevertheless, among the comparative studies discussed here, the use of antithesis as a rhetorical strategy in the utterances delivered in the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum on the Rumah Pendidikan platform does not appear to have been a primary focus. This gap does not imply that research on antithesis in digital contexts has never been conducted. Rather, it concerns differences in research objects, communicative contexts, and analytical focus, particularly the use of antithesis in video-based teacher training materials addressing shifts in educational paradigms. This research gap provides the basis for conducting a study that specifically identifies forms of antithesis and examines their rhetorical functions in relation to the contexts in which the utterances occur.

Based on this research gap, this article aims to describe the forms of antithesis found in the utterances delivered in the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum on the Rumah Pendidikan platform and to analyze their

rhetorical functions in the delivery of training materials. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on antithesis within the context of digital teacher-training discourse aimed at communicating changes in educational policy. Unlike previous studies that examine metaphors, persuasive strategies in general, or figurative language in sermons and debates, this study focuses specifically on antithesis to understand how contrasting ideas are constructed and employed in training discourse. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of stylistic and rhetorical studies, particularly the application of antithesis analysis to digital educational discourse. Practically, the findings are expected to provide a basis for reflection for training material developers and speakers in considering their choice of linguistic style when conveying educational concepts through video-based media.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive-analytical method, which involves systematically describing the phenomenon under investigation and subsequently analyzing it (Arikunto, 2002). A qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to describe and interpret linguistic phenomena contextually, particularly the use of antithesis in spoken instructional discourse. The descriptive-analytical method is used to identify forms of antithesis, explain the relationships between contrasting ideas that constitute them, and interpret their rhetorical functions in the delivery of training materials. The analysis examines utterances as they occur within the context of training communication, taking into account both their linguistic structures and the surrounding discourse.

The data source for this study consists of spoken utterances in videos from the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum on the Rumah Pendidikan platform. The data were drawn from training modules containing conceptual explanations of learning paradigms and the implementation of the Merdeka

Curriculum. The selection of data sources was based on their relevance to the research focus, namely the use of figurative language in delivering educational content through video-based media. To clarify the scope of the study, the modules and videos analyzed were selected based on their relevance to the research topic and the presence of utterances suitable for examining antithesis. Based on the coding system used in data recording, the utterances were taken from Module 1, Videos 1–4, and Module 2, Videos 1–5.

The research data consist of linguistic units in the form of sentences or utterances that meet the criteria for antithesis. Data were collected using the listening and note-taking techniques. The researcher carefully listened to the training videos, transcribed the speakers' utterances, and then identified utterance units that demonstrated contrasting ideas. The identified utterances were subsequently examined against the operational criteria for antithesis to determine their suitability for the research focus. The contexts preceding and following each data unit were also considered to ensure that categorization was not based solely on the presence of opposing words.

The operational criteria for antithesis in this study are based on the concept of antithesis as a figure of speech that juxtaposes opposing ideas within a single sentence structure or a unified utterance (Keraf, 2009). An utterance was categorized as antithesis if it met the following criteria. First, it contained two linguistic elements or ideas with opposing meanings, such as old–new, active–passive, or teacher-centered–student-centered, depending on the context of use. Second, the opposing elements were juxtaposed within a single sentence structure or a sequence of utterances forming a unified meaning. Third, the contrast served to emphasize differences between ideas rather than merely stating differences without a clear oppositional relationship. Fourth, the contrast could be explained based on the meanings of the linguistic elements and the context of the utterance, rather than solely on the researcher's assumptions.

These criteria were used to distinguish antithesis from other linguistic forms. The

presence of two words with opposing meanings does not automatically qualify an utterance as antithesis if they are not juxtaposed within a construction that expresses contrasting ideas. Comparisons that merely indicate similarities or differences without establishing a contrast between ideas are not categorized as antithesis. Similarly, contrasts appearing in two separate statements are not immediately classified as antithesis unless they form a unified rhetorical construction. Thus, data classification takes into account semantic relationships, utterance structure, and the function of contrast within the communicative context.

Data analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher transcribed the speakers' utterances from the training videos and verified the transcripts by reviewing the videos to ensure data accuracy. Second, the researcher identified utterances containing indications of semantic or conceptual contrast. Third, the identified utterances were screened using the operational criteria for antithesis to distinguish data that met the criteria from utterances that merely indicated differences, comparisons, or ordinary contrasts. Fourth, the data that met the criteria were classified according to the elements being contrasted, the structure of their juxtaposition, and the contexts in which they occurred. Fifth, the researcher interpreted the rhetorical functions of antithesis by examining the relationships between opposing elements, the subject matter, and the objectives of the instructional material. Sixth, the findings were presented descriptively, accompanied by relevant excerpts of utterances and explanations of the basis for classification and the interpretation of their rhetorical functions.

To maintain classification consistency, each data unit was examined using the same operational criteria. The researcher reviewed the utterance context and the basis for determining the oppositional relationship before classifying a unit as antithesis. Data that did not meet the criteria were excluded from the antithesis category. This procedure was intended to clarify the basis for analytical decisions and reduce the likelihood of categorization based solely on

intuition. Through this procedure, the analysis was expected to produce a systematic and traceable description of antithesis usage grounded in linguistic evidence.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Antithesis in Independent Training Discourse

The findings revealed 16 instances of antithesis distributed across Modules 1 and 2 of the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum. Antithesis appeared consistently when the speakers explained shifts in learning paradigms and curriculum policies. Antithesis is a figure of speech that employs contrasting meanings between two ideas within a sentence to emphasize a contrast or difference in perspectives (Keraf, 2009, p. 128).

Data 1: Saya juga jadi terdorong harus melek teknologi dan belajar untuk mengimbangi dan membantu mereka. (M1V1).

Data 1 illustrates a contrast between the teacher's need to become technologically literate and the teacher's role in supporting students. The utterance emphasizes that teachers need to continue learning and adapting to technological developments to support the learning process effectively.

Data 2: Ternyata, murid hidup pada zaman dan keadaan yang sudah berbeda. Cara berkomunikasi, cara belajar, dan cara memandang diri dan lingkungannya berbeda dengan keadaan yang kita alami pada jaman kita. (M1V1).

Data 2 illustrates antithesis through the contrast between the past and the present. The utterance emphasizes changes in students' characteristics in terms of communication, learning, and perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. These changes highlight the need for teachers to adapt their instructional approaches to meet the demands of the current era.

Data 3: Wah ternyata sudah lama ya masa masa kita menjadi murid. Kini, murid kita tidak hanya memiliki buku perpustakaan sebagai bahan referensi, berbagai materi bacaan dapat mereka jangkau melalui internet. (M1V2).

Data 3 illustrates antithesis through the contrast between the past, when learning resources were limited to library books, and the present, when information is accessible through the internet. This contrast emphasizes the transformation of learning resources resulting from technological developments and highlights the importance of adapting to changing times.

Data 4: Maka demi menuntun kodrat murid-murid kita, pembelajaran, termasuk kurikulum yang kita selenggarakan juga harus terus menyesuaikan dengan kebutuhan mereka. (M1V2).

Data 4 highlights the contrast between students' inherent nature and potential and the curriculum, which must continuously adapt to their needs. This utterance emphasizes that learning should be flexible and student-centered, taking into account students' individual needs and potential.

Data 5: Bisa jadi, hal tersebut membuat siswa kurang dapat menghubungkan apa yang dipelajari dengan kehidupan mereka. (M1V3).

Data 5 illustrates a conceptual contrast between the material students learn and their everyday lives. This contrast emphasizes the importance of connecting theoretical knowledge with real-life experiences to make learning more contextual and meaningful.

Data 6: Sekolah mempunyai kewenangan untuk mengembangkan kurikulum yang telah ditentukan oleh pemerintah sesuai dengan konteks sekolah. (M1V4).

Data 6 illustrates the contrast between curriculum requirements established by the government and schools' authority to develop the curriculum according to their local contexts. This contrast emphasizes the balance between national education policies and school-level flexibility in meeting learning needs.

Data 7: Sumber belajar bukan hanya berasal dari buku teks. Namun, kita juga dapat menggunakan media yang lain. (M1V4).

Data 7 illustrates the contrast between textbooks and other instructional media as learning resources. This utterance emphasizes that learning is not limited to textbooks but can

incorporate various media to enrich students' learning experiences.

Data 8: Kadang-kadang sebagai guru kita terdoda untuk menyelesaikan semua materi dalam satu semester, tapi mengabaikan proses kemajuan belajar peserta didik kita. (M2V1).

Data 8 illustrates the contrast between completing all learning materials within a semester and focusing on students' learning progress. This contrast emphasizes the importance of balancing curriculum targets with the learning process and students' individual development.

Data 9: Prinsipnya bukan pada bentuk fisik dokumen, RPP, atau modul ajar. Melainkan pada rancangan pembelajaran yang fokus pada pengembangan karakter dan muatan esensial. (M2V1).

Data 9 illustrates the contrast between the physical form of instructional documents and the substance of lesson planning. This contrast emphasizes that the essence of instructional planning lies in character development and essential learning content, rather than merely fulfilling administrative requirements.

Data 10: Pembelajaran pun menjadi tidak seragam, karena berfokus pada pengembangan kompetensi bukan penuntasan materi. (M2V2).

Data 10 illustrates the contrast between competency development and the completion of learning materials. This contrast emphasizes a shift in learning orientation from covering all subject matter to developing students' abilities in a deeper and more meaningful way.

Data 11: Jadi, saat Ibu Bapak membaca kompetensi dalam Capaian Pembelajaran, ingat! Bahwa kompetensi di sini memakai pendekatan Understanding by Design bukan Taksonomi Bloom. (M2V2).

Data 11 illustrates a contrast between the Understanding by Design approach and Bloom's Taxonomy. This contrast serves to emphasize the approaches used to understand competencies within the Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran). However, the two are not entirely oppositional, as they serve different functions in instructional design.

Data 12: Meski urutannya berbeda, namun tujuan akhirnya tetap sama, yakni sampai pada Capaian Pembelajaran. (M2V3).

Data 12 illustrates antithesis through the contrast between different learning sequences and an unchanged final objective. This contrast emphasizes the flexibility of the learning process under the Merdeka Curriculum while maintaining alignment with the established Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran).

Data 13: Guru tidak perlu memaksakan peserta didik tersebut untuk langsung mengikuti pembelajaran sesuai Capaian Pembelajaran di fase C. (M2V3).

Data 13 highlights the contrast between forcing students to meet curriculum targets and adapting instruction to their readiness levels. This contrast emphasizes the importance of teachers' flexibility in implementing the Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran) while taking students' needs and abilities into account.

Data 14: Kompetensi dan karakter tersebut tentu saja tidak bisa tercipta dalam semalam. (M2V4).

Data 14 illustrates the contrast between the process of developing competencies and character, which requires time, and instant results, expressed through the phrase "overnight." This contrast emphasizes that the development of students' competencies and character requires a continuous process, consistency, and patience.

Data 15: Kurikulum Merdeka bukan hanya tentang perubahan struktur kurikulum. Yang lebih penting lagi, ini adalah soal transformasi budaya belajar dan mengajar. (M2V5).

Data 15 illustrates the contrast between technical changes to the curriculum structure and the more fundamental transformation of teaching and learning culture. This contrast emphasizes that the Merdeka Curriculum requires not only administrative changes but also shifts in mindset and instructional practices that prioritize students' needs.

Data 16: Hal ini akan membantu peserta didik meraih sukses di masa depan baik di bidang akademik maupun di luar akademik. (M2V5).

Data 16 illustrates the contrast between academic and non-academic domains as two aspects of student success. This contrast emphasizes that education should support students' holistic development, encompassing academic achievement as well as the skills and character needed for life beyond school.

Antithesis as an Emphasis on Shifts in Educational Paradigm

The use of antithesis in the utterances delivered in the Merdeka Curriculum independent training program serves to emphasize shifts in educational paradigms, particularly in learning orientation, the use of learning resources, and the understanding of students' needs. This is evident in Data 8 and Data 10, which present contrasts between "completing all learning materials" and focusing on "students' learning progress," as well as between "competency development" and "completion of learning materials." These contrasts emphasize a shift in learning orientation from merely covering subject matter to developing students' competencies in a more meaningful way.

The paradigm shift is also reflected in Data 9 and Data 15. The contrast between the "physical form of instructional documents" and the substance of "lesson planning," as well as between "changes in curriculum structure" and the "transformation of teaching and learning culture," clarifies that the Merdeka Curriculum involves not only administrative aspects but also changes in mindsets and instructional practices. Meanwhile, Data 7 illustrates the expansion of learning resources from textbooks to various other media. Data 11 also distinguishes between Understanding by Design and Bloom's Taxonomy in the context of understanding competencies within the Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran). However, these two frameworks cannot be regarded as entirely opposing concepts because they serve different functions in instructional design.

Flexibility and a student-centered approach are evident in Data 12 and Data 13. The contrast between "different sequences" and "the

same final objective” indicates that learning processes may vary while remaining aligned with the Learning Outcomes (Capaian Pembelajaran). Similarly, the statement that teachers do not need to force students to immediately follow instruction according to a particular phase emphasizes the importance of considering students’ readiness and learning needs. Data 14 and Data 16 further extend this interpretation by emphasizing that competency and character development require time and that student success encompasses both academic and non-academic domains. Thus, antithesis helps clarify messages concerning shifts in educational paradigms through contrasts that direct teachers’ attention toward flexible, meaningful, and student-centered learning.

The Rhetorical and Pedagogical Functions of Antithesis

Rhetorically, antithesis is used to highlight differences between ideas, making the message more emphatic and easier to understand. In Data 9, for example, the expression “not in the physical form of the document,” followed by an emphasis on lesson planning that focuses on character development and essential content, directs the audience’s attention away from administrative aspects toward the substance of learning. A similar pattern appears in Data 15, which distinguishes changes in curriculum structure from the transformation of teaching and learning culture. Presenting ideas through contrast helps speakers emphasize the aspects that should receive the greatest attention from teachers.

Pedagogically, contrasts in training discourse can serve as a stimulus for reflection on instructional practices. Data 8, for instance, highlights the tension between efforts to complete learning materials and attention to students’ learning progress. Data 12 illustrates the relationship between variations in learning processes and the consistency of learning objectives, while Data 14 emphasizes that competencies and character are not developed instantly. These contrasts can encourage teachers to reconsider their priorities, strategies, and instructional processes. Thus, antithesis has the

potential to support critical reasoning by inviting audiences to examine differences between ideas and understand their implications for educational practices.

Furthermore, antithesis conveys value-oriented emphasis in educational communication. Utterances that distinguish between completing learning materials and developing competencies, administrative documents and the substance of learning, as well as academic and non-academic achievement, direct the audience’s attention toward a more comprehensive understanding of education. Nevertheless, the effects of antithesis on memory, critical reasoning, and changes in teachers’ practices cannot be established solely from the form of the utterances. In this study, these functions are interpreted based on linguistic structure and the context in which the materials are delivered, rather than on direct measurements of audience responses or learning outcomes.

Implications for Learning

The findings of this study have implications for the development of digital training content, particularly materials addressing educational concepts and policy changes. First, antithetical contrasts can be used to clarify the differences between ideas that are central to the material. Data 9 and Data 15, for example, illustrate how the contrast between administrative and substantive aspects can emphasize that curriculum changes need to be accompanied by changes in teaching practices. However, examples of antithesis must be selected carefully to ensure that the relationship between ideas genuinely reflects opposition rather than mere difference or complementarity.

Second, antithesis can serve as a pedagogical communication strategy for connecting abstract concepts with practical issues faced by teachers. Data 8 and Data 12 demonstrate that differences in learning orientations and processes can be conveyed through concise, contrasting expressions. This approach has the potential to help teachers identify the key messages of the training and reflect on their relevance to classroom situations.

Third, antithesis can be used to emphasize educational values, such as attention to competency development, flexibility in learning processes, students' readiness to learn, and a balance between academic and non-academic achievements.

Therefore, digital training content developers need to consider the purposeful use of antithesis, particularly when explaining paradigm shifts, distinguishing concepts, or emphasizing learning principles. The use of this figure of speech should be accompanied by appropriate contexts and examples to avoid oversimplifying concepts that are actually complementary. This study demonstrates the potential of antithesis as a rhetorical strategy in the discourse of the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum. However, its effectiveness in improving understanding or changing teaching practices still needs to be investigated through further research involving training participants' responses or observations of learning implementation.

CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of antithesis in the Independent Training Program on the Merdeka Curriculum on the Rumah Pendidikan platform, it can be concluded that antithesis serves as a rhetorical strategy to emphasize differences between ideas and clarify messages concerning shifts in educational paradigms. The use of antithesis is evident in the contrasts between the completion of learning materials and competency development, administrative and substantive aspects of lesson planning, and variations in learning processes and consistency in learning objectives. These contrasts reinforce the speakers' emphasis on the principles of the Merdeka Curriculum, such as learning flexibility, competency development, and a student-centered approach. Thus, antithesis functions not merely as a stylistic device but also as a rhetorical means of presenting complex educational concepts through more focused and recognizable contrasts, making them easier to identify in the delivery of video-based training materials.

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