

Explanatory Rhetorical Techniques in Malay Blog Writing

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ABSTRACT

Blogs have evolved from personal diaries into hybrid media that combine social and commercial roles. They function as spaces for writers' self-expression, marketing, and the construction of influence. Therefore, this study examines the use of rhetorical techniques in Malay blog writing, with a specific focus on explanatory rhetorical techniques. Although studies on rhetoric have been conducted, particularly in classical and political contexts, research on Malay-language blogs, especially from the perspective of explanatory rhetorical techniques, has received limited scholarly attention. Accordingly, this study aims to achieve two main objectives: (i) to identify the rhetorical techniques used in Malay blog writing, and (ii) to analyse the explanatory rhetorical techniques employed in Malay blog writing. This study adopts a qualitative approach and uses content analysis as the method for analysing the research data. The findings indicate that four explanatory rhetorical techniques are applied in the data, namely explanation through code-switching or code-mixing, causal explanation, explanation through clarification, and explanation through analogy. The findings also demonstrate that blogs function as complex and significant modern rhetorical spaces within the contemporary landscape of Malay-language communication.

Keyword: rhetoric, Malay blog

INTRODUCTION

Various forms of social media such as Blogs, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok have emerged as channels for sharing ideas, information, and experiences today. Blogs represent one of the best channels for writing about topics desired by the author (Normaliza, 2014). In their early days, blogs were used to aggregate a network of websites serving various roles and functions (Blood, 2002). Blogs began to gain traction in Malaysia in 1988, when bloggers were actively writing about politics and current issues (Abdullah et al., 2016). According to Christian (2024), blogs are influential online channels for sharing personal experiences and disseminating information. This is evidenced by a Website Rating (2024) report in January 2024, which showed nearly 600 million blogs hosted on platforms like WordPress, Wix, Weebly, and Google Blogger. WordPress powers over 43% of all websites on the internet, showcasing its dominance in the blogging world (Website Rating, 2024).

Recording 33.59 million internet users in January 2024, Malaysia has registered high internet penetration, representing 97.4% of the country's total population (DataReportal, 2024). These data show that online communication is increasingly focused on social media channels that offer instant communication and visual content. The function of blogs as a medium for writing and information sharing is declining, in line with shifting user interests that prioritize more concise and interactive content. Nevertheless, blogs still play a vital role within specific segments, particularly for those looking for niche topics such as food, services, travel destinations, and beauty products. Today, blogs have emerged as a dominant medium for voicing and sharing opinions. Christian (2024) states that blogs serve as information channels, functioning in digital identity formation, besides being channels for creative and interactive self-expression. Hamzah (2022) and Wina Saputra (2024) also emphasize that blogs demonstrate the use of rhetorical elements in a relaxed, creative manner suited to a modern lifestyle, thereby making it a unique discourse.

In the context of blog writing, the application of effective rhetorical techniques allows writers to convey their ideas and opinions more clearly and engagingly (Rashid & Mohamad, 2019). A deep understanding of rhetoric enables bloggers to organize their arguments systematically. This skill involves mastering grammar, various language styles, and organizing thought presentation, all of which contribute to a more effective and persuasive message delivery. Thus, writers can build credibility and authority in their respective fields, attracting more readers and followers and fostering a loyal community. Therefore, rhetoric and blog writing share a close relationship to ensure arguments or ideas are effectively transmitted from the blogger to the audience (Kovtunen & Shaklein, 2021). Bloggers require rhetorical techniques to encourage people to read what is written and subsequently take actions desired by the blogger (Zou & Hyland, 2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ranganath (2022) explores a new challenge in digital rhetoric, where rhetorical techniques (rhetorical questions) are difficult to distinguish from actual questions based on form alone. This underscores the need for a contextual approach to understanding rhetoric, which considers the users' communication background and the relationship between context and message. Both studies demonstrate significant developments in digital rhetoric by adapting classical concepts to new media contexts and digital interaction.

From the aspect of rhetoric and social media, Hagyar (2019) explains that social media (Facebook) provides an interactive space enabling users to share information and build political and social discourse through various rhetorical forms like symbols, images, text, and narratives. It highlights that rhetoric on social media like Facebook is not limited to language or text but also involves complex visual elements and social interactions. This scenario reflects the evolution of modern rhetoric, which increasingly encompasses multiple dimensions, combining linguistic, visual, and social aspects within a dynamic framework and serving as a space where rhetoric can function as a social and political tool. Indirectly, it shifts the traditional rhetoric paradigm by introducing a new, interactive, and visual dimension in discourse formation.

Interestingly, Shivers-McNair and Gupta (2024) highlight prompt writing for ChatGPT on social media platforms using various rhetorical strategies to shape critical AI literacy. The study found that prompt writing aims to obtain feedback from AI and represents a new form of literacy that helps users understand and control their interactions with AI. This finding reflects a significant shift in current communication processes, which now encompass human interaction with smart technology and demand a more critical and complex rhetorical approach suited to the contemporary digital context.

Johns and Cheong (2019) expand the overview of political rhetoric by introducing the concept of “networked affect,” which refers to collective emotional influences manipulated in digital politics. This indicates that rhetoric is utilized through verbal messages as well as by directing users' emotional and psychological trajectories on social media. Rhetoric becomes an effective tool for social and political control by fostering a sense of solidarity, which ultimately guides attitudes and actions in Malaysia's digital political landscape.

Meanwhile, Zamanov (2022) emphasizes the role of rhetorical techniques, specifically rhetorical questions in political discourse as tools that not only strengthen a speaker's credibility but also evoke emotion and stimulate critical thinking among listeners. This study shows significant results, finding that rhetorical questions do not just act as regular inquiries but as a communication style that creates interaction and builds implicit messages that facilitate audience acceptance. This makes rhetorical questions an effective communication strategy, allowing speakers to convey political ideologies and narratives without having to state arguments directly.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach based on content analysis of blog entries as the primary data source. The selection of a qualitative design is based on its suitability for examining language and rhetorical phenomena in natural settings without manipulating variables. According to Pascual (2020), a qualitative approach allows researchers to interpret implicit meanings and understand the social and emotional dimensions underlying text. This study is also suitable for a qualitative approach given that data were collected directly from blog posts without any modifications. Such data enable researchers to examine the views presented by the authors,

subsequently analyzing explicit and implicit meanings deeply (Adlini et al., 2022). This method allows for a more detailed explanation, as the study's objective is to identify rhetorical techniques, analyze their functions, and elucidate the relationship between the two.

A qualitative approach is the most suitable for this study because the collected blog data consists of long-form writing. Long blog content requires researchers to analyze both explicit and implicit meanings within the text. This aligns with the view of Adlini et al. (2022), who state that qualitative design is highly suitable when researchers wish to explore processes, experiences, and perceptions in natural contexts without variable control. This study uses the content analysis method to examine and interpret the types and functions of rhetorical techniques used in Malay-language personal blog writing. This method emphasizes accuracy, objectivity, and systematic identification and categorization of rhetorical elements without changing the original content (Bass & Semetko, 2021). In the context of blogs, the analyzed content reflects the author's style, emotional expression, and the diversity of communication strategies used (Bengtsson, 2016; Bengtsson, 2019). Therefore, content analysis allows for a comprehensive understanding of rhetorical technique usage in this personal digital discourse.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The exposition technique in this study refers to a type of rhetorical technique where the arguer explains and clarifies the spoken matter so that it is better understood by the readers. Based on the analysis results of this study, it was found that this exposition technique is among the most frequently used rhetorical techniques in Malay-language blog writing, appearing 656 times. Indeed, this type of rhetorical technique can be divided into five sub-categories: analogy, code-mixing or code-switching, explanation, general statement, and cause-and-effect. These five sub-categories of rhetorical techniques are differentiated based on specific rhetorical markers.

Exposition Technique via Analogy

Based on the analysis, the exposition technique via analogy was found to use idioms/proverbs, comparisons, or metaphors to compare something with another entity so that it is simpler, more familiar, or closer to the reader's experience. An analogy is a rhetorical technique used to explain something through comparison with something more easily understood, typically related to experiences or descriptions close to the daily life of the audience. It was identified 17 times in the study data. The data evidence using analogy is as follows:

No.	Data	Source Code
1	Aku ngan Zahra di rumah macam anjing ngan kucing .	BA (PA:J15:P7:B1)
2	Ikan 'menari nari' depan kucing. Kucing dah tutup mata sedaya upaya. Istighfar... solat... tapi kalau sekali dua, boleh dilawan.. jika terlalu kerap.. camana lak? Boleh lingkup iman woi ! Melainkan jika si kucing tu menjauhi ikan-ikan tu	BA(PA:M23:P1:B2-3)

Data 1 and 2 above exhibit the rhetorical exposition technique through analogy to convey meaning figuratively, form clearer mental imagery, and add emotional impact to message delivery. Through Data 1, it showcases a form of rhetoric that links unverified information with the characteristics of the wind, something that cannot be seen, lacks stability, and is temporary or ambiguous. It depicts the news as rumors without a solid or clear foundation. According to Montana (2024), analogies are widely used in writing because they make it easier for readers to understand the level of validity of information without explicitly stating whether it is true or false, leaving room for critical interpretation.

In Data 2, the phrase “macam anjing ngan kucing” clearly illustrates a disharmonious relationship, frequently fighting and being hostile. The author chose this simile analogy because the comparison between dogs and cats is already a cliché in Malay culture to describe constant bickering, misunderstandings, or overt personality differences. According to Kao (2021), simile-type analogy techniques like this are highly effective because they evoke strong visual images that are immediately understood by the audience, increasing rhetorical appeal.

Therefore, the use of analogy in blog writing allows authors to restructure information into a form that is easier to understand and internalize. The use of analogies that suit the reader's cultural background, social experience, and emotional sensitivity shows that the author possesses high rhetorical awareness. This is important because message effectiveness relies not only on content but also on how its delivery is tailored to the recipient. The use of analogy in the rhetorical exposition technique is found to be a functional, aesthetic, and strategic approach. In today's digital communication context, particularly in blogging, analogy becomes an essential tool to sustain attention, stimulate thought, and convey deep messages in a subtle and effective manner. This conforms with Rudneva's (2024) view that analogy is an effective rhetorical technique in blog writing as it can create relaxed and effective communication, while stimulating reader interest and attention.

Exposition Technique via Explanation

The analysis of this study shows that the exposition technique via explanation is used to describe conditions or events to enhance readers' understanding of the message the author wishes to convey. The markers found to indicate this technique are the words '*bererti*' (means), '*ialah*' (is), '*adalah*' (is), and '*merupakan*' (constitutes/is). The use of this technique in the study data is not very prominent, appearing only 23 times. Examples of this technique's usage in the research data are as follows:

No.	Data	Source Code
3	AKBID bererti Akademi Perbidanan.	BA(PJ:F24:P1:B1)
4	Tujuan utama muzium ini dibina ialah bagi mewujudkan sebuah muzium yang unggul untuk mempamerkan bahan-bahan berkaitan padi yang melibatkan budaya,penyelidikan dan pembangunan serta perkembangan teknologi padi.	BA (PJ:JL613:P8:B2-6)

Based on Data 3, the marker "*bererti*" introduces an explanation for a term or acronym. In the context of Data 3, "*bererti*" appears between the subject, which is the term or acronym to be explained (AKBID), and the predicate, which provides the definition or intended meaning (Akademi Perbidanan). The use of "*bererti*" reflects the author's intention to explain to readers and ensure they understand the meaning of specific terms that might not be commonly known, thereby adding transparency to the conveyed message. This aligns with the definition of the word '*bererti*' in Kamus Dewan (2016), which means 'to mean, signify, imply'. It is commonly used in declarative sentence structures to connect an element to be clarified with its actual meaning or definition. This style prevents reader confusion and reinforces directly the understanding of the textual content.

In Data 4, the word "*ialah*" acts as a specific marker used to explain the identity, purpose, location, or nature of a subject. This technique reflects an informative and transparent delivery style, suitable for blog writing that aims to present information clearly so readers can easily comprehend it. This is consistent with Nik Safiah et al. (2024) explanation that the word "*ialah*" is categorized as a copula (*kata pemer*i), which clarifies or names something. Thus, the word "*ialah*" in this data serves as a marker for explaining facts or information by introducing descriptions of the matter highlighted. It provides clarity to arguments and strengthens information, aligning with the nature of blogs that aim to deliver information to a general audience.

Hence, all presented data show that the marker "*adalah*" is used as a tool to explain, elaborate, and name an introduced element. It forms an exposition technique via explanation by linking the subject to information or elaboration. Although there is a minor violation of standard Malay grammatical norms, within the context of a personal blog, this usage is considered acceptable in conveying understandable information. This demonstrates the author's flexibility in adapting language structures for communication suitability in digital media.

Cause-and-Effect Exposition Technique

Based on the analysis results, the cause-and-effect exposition technique is used to explain the logical connection between an event, action, or condition and the underlying cause or reason. It is emphasized that this technique is among the most frequently used in the data, totaling 279 times. In this technique, the author presents a cause (reason, factor, or background) and directly connects it to the effect (consequence or outcome arising from that cause). Based on the analysis, this technique is frequently supported by the use of causal conjunctions such as “*sebab*” (because), “*kerana*” (because), “*dek kerana*” (due to), and “*akibat*” (as a result of/consequence).

No.	Data	Source Code
5	"Aku malas nak keluar sebab nak kurangkan risiko jangkitan."	(BA:PSM:J14:P6:B7)
6	Kena bekalkan banyak khasiat untuk elakkan masalah seperti reput tulang akibat kurang kalsium dan kekurangan protein.	BA (PSM:JL24:P9:B4-6)

Through Data 5, the word “*sebab*” is used as a marker for the cause-and-effect exposition technique, a discourse strategy that explains the rationale, justification, or reason behind a statement or action. This statement conforms with Nik Safiah et al.'s (2024) description that the word ‘*sebab*’ belongs to causal conjunctions that connect the main clause to a clause providing reasons. For instance, in the data “*Aku malas nak keluar sebab nak kurangkan risiko jangkitan,*” the clause “*nak kurangkan risiko jangkitan*” is the reason for the action “*malas nak keluar.*” Based on the analysis, the use of the rhetorical marker “*sebab*” at the beginning of sentences in Data 5 indicates an informal language style typical of personal blog writing.

Data 6 shows that the word “*akibat*” introduces a cause-and-effect relationship explicitly in a causal statement. This is in line with the meaning of the word “*akibat*” in Kamus Dewan (2016), which means ‘causing something to happen’. In this data, “*akibat*” introduces the causal element to an identified effect, forming a sentence structure that emphasizes logical aspects in the blog narrative. This can be seen through the phrase “*akibat kurang kalsium dan kekurangan protein,*” which explains the cause of “*masalah seperti reput tulang.*” The style of using “*akibat*” in both excerpts also displays the blogger's ability to present causal information in an organized manner. This finding aligns with Grašič's (2022), who found that cause-and-effect-based writing allows information to be organized logically, thereby making it easier for readers to understand the relationship between facts and explanations.

Exposition Technique via Code-Mixing

Based on the findings, this rhetorical technique is used to deliver information involving the alternating use of Malay and English, either in full sentences or phrases. This technique is marked by the insertion of English elements into sentences. The results show that this technique is the most frequently used in the data, appearing 332 times.

No.	Data	Source Code
7	Ahaaa... ada water park sebelah siang yang mana sekarang promosi .Sebelah malam , ada i-City Theme Park yang pastinya anak anak akan suka sangat la.. Kiranya berbaloi la kalau nak buat percutian singkat sekeluarga.	BA(PCK:F29:P2:B1-3)
8	Tak lama lagi, banyak review Ramadan Buffet.. dan kita pandai pandai la yer..	BA(PCK:J2:P5:B1)

Based on Data 7 and 8 above, the exposition technique via code-mixing or code-switching involves mixing Malay (BM) and English (BI) within a single discourse unit. In these data, the technique is marked by inserting English elements into Malay sentences, involving popular terms or mass culture such as “water park”, “i-City Theme Park”, and “review Ramadan Buffet”. This reflects what Mewengkang, Weda & Maca (2023) highlighted, showing that authors use code-mixing because certain terms are more popular in another language. This is reinforced by Sinulingga (2023) and Ulfiana (2021), who state that the use of code-mixing reflects intellectual level, group identity, and highlights popular or field-specific terms.

In conclusion, rhetorical exposition techniques in Malay blog writing demonstrate the authors' ability to convey information clearly and comprehensibly. Findings indicate that authors present information using analogy, explanation, cause-and-effect, and code-mixing. Analogies help authors transform abstract information into more concrete representations when the comparisons used are close to the readers' social and cultural experiences. The cause-and-effect technique, which recorded high usage, proves that authors tend to structure arguments logically to justify the actions, opinions, or experiences presented. Meanwhile, code-mixing, the most frequently used technique, reflects the influence of modern digital communication, which is hybrid, informal, and closely aligned with popular reader culture. Overall, rhetorical exposition techniques in Malay blogs prove that blog writing possesses its own unique rhetorical value, particularly in building a relationship between the author and the reader through a relaxed yet persuasive language style.

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