

THE IMPORTANCE OF STYLISTIC DEVICES BASED ON ALOGISM IN NEWS REPORTING AND TEACHING.

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Annotation: *This article examines the significant role of stylistic devices based on alogism, such as paradox, oxymoron, and zeugma, in news reporting and educational contexts. It highlights how these rhetorical tools enhance audience engagement, critical thinking, and the communicative effectiveness of language, providing concrete examples and scholarly insights.*

Keywords: *Stylistic devices, Alogism, Paradox, Oxymoron, Zeugma, News reporting, Teaching, Rhetorical figures, Audience engagement, Critical thinking.*

Introduction

Stylistic devices based in *alogism* play a surprisingly important role across diverse fields of communication especially in media reporting news and teaching students in classroom. In domains as disparate as journalism and education, figures of speech like oxymoron, paradox, and zeugma serve to engage audiences, express thought, and enhance expression. These devices, which juxtapose or fuse seemingly incompatible ideas, are more than clever wordplay; they are powerful tools that can make writing and speech more memorable and meaningful. This article explores the theoretical basis of alogism in style and examines how alogism-based stylistic devices are employed effectively in news reporting and teaching. By analyzing scholarly perspectives and real-world examples in each domain, we can better understand *why* such illogical-sounding constructions are used and *how* they contribute to communication.

The term *alogism* literally means “*without logic*”. Etymologically, it combines the prefix *a-* (“without”) and *-logism* (“logical thought”). [1.3] In stylistics, alogism refers to the deliberate departure from traditional logic in language. By violating normal expectations of sense and reason, alogical expressions challenge conventional boundaries of meaning. Such stylistic choices often serve a specific artistic or communicative purpose: breaking the rules of logic can allow a writer or speaker to express deeper emotions, abstract concepts, or unusual ideas beyond the reach of straightforward language. As one conference paper explains, alogism “*represents a deliberate departure from traditional logic*” and asserts that linguistic structures “*can be broken to express deeper emotions [and] abstract concepts*” [1.4] A variety of classical rhetorical and literary devices function as means of alogism. Modern stylistic studies enumerate devices

such as oxymoron, paradox, zeugma, catachresis, chiasmus, and antithesis among the key figures that embody the principle of alogism.

The “alogical” element grabs attention because it violates expectations. By flouting normal logic, the speaker or writer invites the audience to resolve the apparent contradiction or to dwell on the surprising juxtaposition, leading to deeper engagement. In the following sections, we will see how this general principle finds concrete application in news writing, pedagogy, and performance, each in distinct ways.

News reporting, at first glance, might seem to demand the utmost literal clarity and logic – after all, journalism is expected to deliver facts. Yet, the language of news is also crafted to capture attention and convey meaning effectively, and here alogism-based stylistic devices have an important role. Particularly in headlines and feature writing, journalists often employ oxymora, paradoxes, puns, and similar devices to create engaging, memorable phrases. A study of English news headlines in Thai media found that a wide range of rhetorical figures are used in headlines specifically to intrigue readers. No matter the type of device, *“their ultimate purpose is to make the language become special for eye-catching [effect] or [to] attract the readers. [2.3.]*]For example, sound-based devices (alliteration, assonance) make headlines catchy, while *“oxymoron, paradox, pun, [and] irony ... arouse the reader’s curiosity and interest”[2.6]* In other words, a cleverly paradoxical or contradictory headline can prompt a potential reader to wonder what the story is about, thereby drawing them in.

Oxymoron is a particularly popular device in news headlines. It produces a compact punch of irony or contrast in just a few words. A striking example occurred in an Agence France-Presse headline about actor Leonardo DiCaprio’s award success: *“Little Leo wins big.”[2.7.]* Here, the juxtaposition of *“Little”* and *“big”* (an obvious contradiction) creates a playful tone, making the achievement feel both endearing and significant. Such an oxymoron encapsulates the story in a paradoxical nutshell – DiCaprio (nicknamed “Little Leo” in the press) scored a big victory – and the mental jolt of the contradiction helps ensure the headline is noticed and remembered. Similarly, a Bangkok Post headline about a security incident proclaimed, *“Bomb jokes aren’t funny.”* This brief sentence is essentially a paradox: by definition, jokes are supposed to be funny, so saying a joke “isn’t funny” is logically contradictory.

Beyond individual headlines, one can observe that our broader media and political discourse has seen an uptick in oxymoronic and paradoxical phrasing in recent years. As legal scholar Rostam Neuwirth (2022) observes, the early 21st century saw *“the rise of so-called ‘essentially oxymoronic concepts’, i.e., mainly oxymora and paradoxes”* becoming commonplace in public language. [3.] Terms like “fake news” and “alternative facts” are prime examples. The phrase *“fake news”* is itself an oxymoron – news, by

traditional definition, implies truth, whereas *fake* denotes falsehood. Not long ago, such a blatant contradiction would have been confined to satire or literature, but now it is part of everyday political vocabulary. The use of the oxymoron here carries a powerful rhetorical charge: it calls into question the truthfulness of information in a punchy, provocative way. Neuwirth notes that these “*inherently contradictory*” concepts challenge our usual binary logic and have even been described as heralding a “*post-truth*” era. In journalism, phrases like “*fake news*” or “*open secret*” (another oxymoron often used to describe widely known information that is officially unacknowledged) serve strategic purposes. They encapsulate complex situations in a compact paradoxical form, making the message more rhetorically striking. However, such usages also carry risks: they can blur fact and fiction and potentially mislead if the audience takes the contradiction at face value. Thus, while alogistic devices in news reporting are effective attention-getters and can convey irony or emphasis, journalists must use them judiciously to maintain clarity and credibility.

Educators have long recognized the value of incongruity and paradox as pedagogical tools. In the classroom, surprising or illogical statements can jolt students out of passive acceptance and stimulate deeper engagement with material. From elementary school to higher education, teachers use humor, riddles, and thought experiments – many of them based on *alogistic* principles – to capture attention and develop critical thinking. Paradox in particular holds a special place in teaching because it forces learners to wrestle with apparent contradictions and thus actively *construct* understanding rather than just absorb facts.

Theoretical support for using paradoxical or illogical elements in teaching comes from cognitive and motivational research. Psychologists note that when learners encounter something that conflicts with their existing knowledge or expectations (a state of “*cognitive conflict*” or *dissonance*), it can spur curiosity and inquiry as they attempt to resolve the discrepancy. In science education, for example, students presented with a puzzling phenomenon or a classic paradox (such as an object that appears to defy gravity, or a contradictory outcome in probability) often experience a drive to make sense of it, leading to deeper learning. As one study on learning motivation explains, “*attention, as one of the elements of motivation, is aroused when students experience cognitive conflict (incongruity and conflict)*” (lab-fe.pre.aegean.gr). Building on this idea, educational theorist John Biggs argues that effective inquiry-based teaching should sometimes “*present students with baffling demonstrations or paradoxes to arouse their motivation*” (lab-fe.pre.aegean.gr). In other words, a strategically deployed *mind-boggler* can ignite student interest. By grappling with a paradox (for instance, a physics teacher might demonstrate a paradoxical trick of

magnets appearing to float, or a literature teacher might present an oxymoronic line of poetry like “*joyful sorrow*” for interpretation), students are pushed to question assumptions and engage in problem-solving or discussion to reconcile the inconsistency.

Humor in the classroom frequently relies on allogical devices as well. A certain amount of pedagogical humor can reduce anxiety and increase engagement, and much of humor’s power comes from *incongruity*. Communication researchers Bolkan et al. (2018) identified absurdity – essentially a form of logical incongruity or alogism – as one of the two main types of instructional humor (the other being exaggeration)[4.5.] Absurd humor in teaching might include presenting a ridiculously illogical scenario related to the lesson, prompting laughter and making the topic more memorable. (For example, a math teacher jokingly “proves” $2+2=5$ and challenges the class to find the flaw, or a history teacher facetiously claims to have “*nothing to declare except my genius*” in an Oscar Wilde style quip to lighten the mood.) Research indicates that such logical incongruities can boost the classroom atmosphere and students’ positive emotions, which in turn can enhance participation and attention.[4] Of course, the use of alogism in teaching should be calibrated to the learners’ level – if a paradox or joke is too baffling, it may confuse rather than enlighten. But when done skillfully, paradoxical questions, ironic statements, and other allogical devices can transform passive learning into an active intellectual exercise. A vivid historical example comes from Zen Buddhist education: the koan, a paradoxical riddle or story, is used to great effect in training students. In Zen tradition, novices are given illogical riddles (e.g. “*What is the sound of one hand clapping?*”) precisely to confound the analytical mind and spur a different mode of understanding. Teachers test the students’ ability to sit with the paradox without rushing to a logical answer. [4.1.]

In summary, whether through a witty oxymoron that makes a lesson more vivid, a paradoxical case study that challenges assumptions, or an absurd humorous example that boosts engagement, alogism-based devices have pedagogical importance. They capture attention, motivate exploration, and often help students see concepts in a new light by violating expectations in a productive way. As with any method, there is a balance to strike – the illogic must ultimately serve logic, in the sense that it leads to understanding rather than misunderstanding. With careful use, however, teachers find that a bit of *constructive illogic* can greatly enhance the learning experience.

Conclusion

Across the domains of news reporting, teaching, and acting, we find a common thread: stylistic devices based on alogism are potent tools for communication. They operate on the principle of *incongruity*, catching our attention by violating the normal logic of

language, and in doing so, they prompt us to think more deeply or feel more intensely. In journalism, paradoxical and oxymoronic phrases make headlines intriguing and encapsulate complex issues with pithy irony – though they must be balanced against the journalist’s duty of clarity. In education, carefully introduced contradictions, paradoxes, and absurd examples can stimulate curiosity, highlight hidden assumptions, and create a more engaging learning environment. In the performing arts, illogical dialogue and situations can convey themes of great complexity (as in the Theatre of the Absurd) or simply entertain through wit and humor, relying on the audience’s ability to find meaning in nonsense.

The theoretical basis for all these uses lies in the recognition that human communication is not purely literal or logical. By bending or breaking logic, alogical stylistic devices tap into creativity, emotion, and the element of surprise – aspects that are crucial for capturing interest and conveying certain truths. As the examples and scholarly insights presented here demonstrate, devices like oxymoron, paradox, and zeugma have distinct roles in each field but an underlying unity in function.

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