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## Exploring meaning: an analysis of denotative diction and connotative diction in Indonesian language textbook stories for second grade elementary school

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### ABSTRACT

This study examines denotative and connotative diction in Indonesian textbooks for grade II primary schools under the Merdeka Curriculum. The main objective of this study is to assess how denotative and connotative word choice can affect the understanding of diction in primary school students' stories. Through the content analysis method, this study evaluated various stories in the textbook, focusing on word choice and its influence on teaching effectiveness. Denotative diction and connotative diction were chosen as the objects of analysis because of their critical role in helping students understand literal texts, which is the foundation for further learning at an early age. Increased consistency of diction use across all subject matter to support learning effectiveness at the primary level. It is hoped that these findings can be used as a reference for curriculum development and the preparation of better Indonesian language textbooks in the future, in accordance with the principles of Merdeka Curriculum which supports inclusive and comprehensive education. The conclusion of the study shows that the use of words with clear and unambiguous denotative meanings tends to make it easier for students to understand the concepts taught. Through connotative diction learners can develop analytical skills that are important in reading and understanding texts.



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## Introduction

Language teaching at the primary school level has a strategic role in forming the basis of children's literacy competencies. (Kharizmi, 2019). In this context, Indonesian textbooks function as important mediation tools that carry and deliver educational materials in accordance with the demands of the applicable curriculum. (Fatmawati, 2021). Literacy is the main focus in the development of Merdeka Curriculum, of course, in addition to numeracy skills. (Muin et al., 2022). Literacy emphasizes understanding and using language, while numeracy emphasizes understanding and using mathematical concepts in real life. (Daga, 2021). The use of language styles in children's literature is required to be packaged in a form that is different from adult literature so that it can be accepted and understood by children. (Hidayat et al., 2023). Inappropriate word choice or language style can have a negative impact. One of them is that the information and messages conveyed in the story are less well conveyed. (Siddiq et al., 2020). The use of appropriate words and language styles can develop children's imagination and language skills. (Pratiwi et al., 2023a). One of the critical aspects of

language learning is the use of diction, particularly denotative and connotative diction, which directly affects how texts are understood by students. (Andini et al., 2024).

Diction is the ability of a word to generate and convey the right message or idea from the sender of the message to the reader and listener. (Pranata et al., 2021). Diction is not only used to express words that express ideas or notions, but also includes issues of phraseology, style, and expression. (Fadhli et al., 2021). This language style aims to give the effect that will be created. (Pratiwi et al., 2023b). Therefore, writers must consider the style of language they use so that the message conveyed can be clearly understood and does not cause misunderstanding.. (Pangemanan et al., 2023). While it is known that denotative diction is used more often due to its ease of comprehension for children, there has not been much research that deeply explores how the limited use of connotative diction can affect the comprehension and language development of grade II children. There is a gap in research comparing the learning effectiveness between stories that use denotative diction and stories that integrate connotative diction with clear context. Further research is needed to determine whether this combination can improve children's language skills and comprehension. The novelty of this research is in the interdisciplinary aspect of integrating linguistic theory with educational psychology to understand how grade II children understand and respond to denotative and connotative diction.

Most of the students' narrative texts use diction with denotation meaning. However, there is a use of denotative diction that is not appropriate because there are similar word meanings. (Madu, 2015). Learners find it difficult to put their ideas into words/sentences. (Inggriyani & Anisa Pebrianti, 2021). Difficulty in determining diction has a connection between words or the harmony of words that are still inappropriate, and also the management of words that are still less interesting. (Rahmawati & Citrawati, 2023). Students have difficulty stringing words into sentences that are interrelated. (Umam & Firdausa, 2022). At the elementary school level, proper word choice is crucial as it helps students understand texts in a literal and direct way, which is the foundation for a deeper understanding of other more complex languages and nuances.. (Rachmawati, 2020). This research provides guidance to textbook writers and curriculum developers on the importance of the balance between denotative and connotative diction. This will help in composing more interesting and educative materials. Provides an empirical basis for the improvement of Indonesian textbooks, ensuring that the language used is appropriate for the comprehension ability of grade II elementary school children.

## Method

This research is a descriptive qualitative research in the field of language. Qualitative research is a research method used to research on natural conditions. (Sugiyono, 2023). Descriptive research is a method of examining the status of a group of people, objects, or events in the present, which aims to make a systematic description of the facts being investigated. (Masri, 2023). The data available is in the form of word choices that have denotation and connotation meanings. The content analysis method is used to determine the content of a document. (Sitasari, 2022). In this study, the document that is meant is the story in the Indonesian language textbook of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary school. The subject of this research is the story in the Indonesian language textbook of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary school while the object of research is the denotation diction and connotation diction contained in the story in the book.

The instrument in this research is the researcher himself. Researchers act as research actors who collect data, analyze, and interpret data which will later become the results of the study. (Wijaya, 2020). The data collection technique in this research involves two techniques, namely reading technique and note-taking technique. 1) The reading technique is used to examine the denotation diction and connotation diction of stories in Indonesian language textbooks of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary schools. 2) The note-taking technique is used to record the data obtained from the reading technique. These two techniques are expected to obtain data in accordance with the object of research.

The data analysis technique in this study uses data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing methods. (Algivari & Mustika, 2022). Data reduction is that researchers collect data on denotation diction and connotation diction of stories in Indonesian language textbooks of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary schools. The data obtained is then presented in narrative form with the aim of interpreting the data systematically. Furthermore, the researcher makes conclusions based on the data that has been collected and has gone through the reduction resistant.

The purpose of the study "Analysis of Denotative and Connotative Diction in Stories in Indonesian Language Textbooks of the Merdeka Curriculum for Grade II Elementary Schools" is to identify, evaluate, and understand the use of denotative and connotative diction in story material presented to grade II elementary school students.

## Results and Discussions

### Denotation Meaning

Denotation is the literal or referential meaning of a word, while connotation is the additional or implicit meaning associated with the use of the word. (Tudjuka, 2019). In a writing, this meaning is used to provide an objective explanation of the meaning of a word or expression. The purpose of understanding denotation meaning is to avoid misunderstandings and convey messages effectively. (Hanifah, 2023).

Based on the observation, the researcher found some denotation diction in the Indonesian textbook of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary school. This can be seen in the following table.

**Table 1.** Denotative diction and its meaning in the story in the Indonesian language textbook of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary school

Data	Meaning
Mereka pun berebut hingga boneka rusak	Mimi and her sister want to play with the dolls but no one wants to give in. The word "rusak" is a denotative meaning analysis that has a meaning that is no longer perfect (good, whole).
Kiki adalah kucing yang takut pada tikus	The word "takut" is a denotative meaning analysis that has the meaning of feeling trepidation (horror) facing something that is considered to bring disaster. The story excerpt explains that Kiki is a cat who feels afraid when facing or meeting a mouse.
Kata Dokter, Kadek harus memakai kacamata	Kadek had his eyes checked and then the doctor told Kadek to wear glasses. The word "memakai" is a denotative meaning analysis that has the meaning of wearing or using.
Alex hanya malu karena nokennya sudah usang.	Alex's noken is not broken or small, it's just worn out. The word "usang" is a denotative meaning analysis with the meaning of worn out (because of long use).
Lihatlah kaki kami yang ramping dan bersih.	The word "ramping" means "small and long (straight)" while the word "bersih" means "free from dirt".
Labih jajan secukupnya, lalu menabung sisa uangnya.	The whole sentence "Labih jajan secukupnya, lalu menabung sisa uangnya" contains denotative diction that refers to the literal or literal meaning of the words used.
Dida senang udara tidak lagi panas.	The whole sentence "Dida senang udara tidak lagi panas" contains denotative diction that refers to the literal or literal meaning of the words used. This means that the sentence implies a message that Dida is happy because the air no longer has a high temperature or is hot.
Joko Kendil tidak rupawan, tetapi baik hatinya.	The whole sentence "Joko Kendil tidak rupawan, tetapi baik hatinya." contains denotative diction that refers to the literal or literal meaning of the words used. That is, the sentence states that Joko Kendil has an unattractive physical appearance, but has a good nature or personality.

### Connotation Meaning

Connotative meaning is an additional or implicit meaning attached to a word or expression, which carries certain emotional values and associations beyond its literal meaning (denotative). (Hanifah, 2023). The function of connotation diction is to enrich communication by providing additional meanings that are deeper and more complex than denotative meanings alone. Connotative diction helps create emotion and atmosphere, convey attitudes and opinions, build richer images, influence perception and understanding, and communicate values and culture. (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017).

Based on the observation, the researcher found several connotations in the Indonesian textbooks of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary school. This can be seen in the following table 2.

**Table 2.** Connotative diction and its meaning in the story in the Indonesian language textbook of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary school

Data	Meaning
Bagaimana jika tidak bisa bergerak bebas ?	The phrase " tidak bisa bergerak bebas" carries connotations of inability, limitation or restriction. It can evoke feelings of worry, sympathy, or concern about the condition of someone who is unable to move freely. This connotation creates an image of someone who may be hindered by physical, health, or situational barriers that limit their freedom.
Alex ingin punya tas punggung seperti milik Tito	The phrase " tas punggung seperti milik Tito" implies that Titio's backpack has a certain quality or value that Alex wants. This could carry connotations of admiration or envy towards the item owned by Titio. The backpack may be perceived as cool, stylish, or having desirable features.
Hore, akhirnya hujan turun	While it denotatively means water falling from the sky, in this context, the connotations can vary depending on the situation. For example, if the area is experiencing a drought, "hujan turun" would carry connotations of blessings, refreshment and restoration. However, in other contexts, such as in the middle of an outdoor event, the connotation can be more negative. In this sentence, with the "hore," it is clear that the rain is welcomed very positively.

The diction used in the stories in the Indonesian language textbooks of the independent curriculum for grade II elementary schools mostly uses denotative diction. The message and meaning to be conveyed can be received and understood clearly by the reader by using denotative diction. (Al-Ma'ruf & Nugrahani, 2017). Children's stories often have educational purposes, such as teaching moral values or simple facts about the world. Denotative diction is more effective for this purpose because it conveys information in a straightforward and direct way. Children, especially in grade II, may not have the ability to understand the implied or figurative meanings often found in connotative diction. The use of direct and clear meaning helps avoid confusion and misunderstanding. This can help in the early stages of language development. Thus, children's stories tend to use more denotative diction to ensure that the message and meaning conveyed can be clearly understood by children.

Using connotation diction in a limited way can help children begin to understand that words can have deeper or different meanings depending on the context. The connotations used in the stories in the Indonesian language textbooks of the grade II independent curriculum have a clear context so that children can understand the meaning easily. The use of connotation diction can also be an effective tool to enrich the reading experience and help children develop their language skills. The characteristics of the stories in the Indonesian textbooks of the class II independent curriculum have clear and simple language. The words used are words that are familiar to children at the age of grade II elementary school. In addition to the selection of diction which uses a lot of denotation diction, these characteristics can help children to better understand the content of the story.

## Conclusions

This study reveals that the use of denotative diction in Indonesian textbooks for grade II in the Merdeka Curriculum era has a certain tendency. Denotative diction is chosen to convey meaning directly without additional connotations, which is important for students' understanding at a basic level. The analysis shows that the selection of words with clear denotative meanings tends to facilitate the understanding of the concepts taught to students. The consistent and appropriate use of denotative diction can increase the effectiveness of learning in grade II elementary school. Although children's stories tend to use denotative diction to ensure clear understanding, the use of simple and precise connotations can also enrich children's learning and reading experience. The findings of this study have important implications for Indonesian language teaching and curriculum development at the primary level. Recommendations can be made to improve the consistency and quality of the use of denotative diction in textbooks, as well as providing additional training to teachers on the importance of choosing appropriate words. Overall, this study highlights the important role of denotative diction in primary education and offers valuable insights for educational practitioners, textbook writers and policy makers in an effort to improve the quality of Indonesian language learning in primary schools.

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