



## Rhetorical & Persuasive Language: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Malala Yousafzai's Nobel Lecture

Saleh Altam<sup>1</sup> and Dr. Mehrunnisa Pathan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1,2</sup>Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad, India.

Corresponding Author: Saleh Altam, E-mail: altamsaleh@gmail.com

Received: 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2020 Accepted: 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021 Published: 10<sup>th</sup> April 2021

### ABSTRACT

This paper makes an effort to present a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of Malala Yousafzai's Nobel peace prize lecture which was delivered on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December 2014 at the Oslo City Hall, Norway. More explicitly, the present research paper attempts to search concealed messages and ideologies that have been encrypted in Malala Yousafzai Nobel peace prize acceptance speech and how did she deliver her speech figuratively and persuasively. The techniques of collecting data were done by searching the transcript of Malala's speech on the internet, interpreting it, retyping all the sentences which contained figurative and persuasive language, and coding data. The method makes use of Fairclough's theory of critical discourse analysis that explicates ideology based on the text analysis, discourse practice, and sociocultural practice *at the micro-level* only. The speaker attains interaction and engagement with the addressees by means of using verbal expressions and figurative language in her speech. The paper discloses that Malala delivered her speech as a movement to defend girls' education and women's rights by using figurative and persuasive language. The finding displays that the ideology of Malala Yousafzai's speech is women empowerment, girls' education and giving quality education for all hegemonized and marginalized children of the oriental world.

### KEYWORDS

Critical Discourse Analysis, Malala Yousafzai, Nobel peace prize, Fairclough's theory, girls' education.

**Cite as:** Altam, S., & Pathan, M. (2021). Rhetorical & persuasive language: A critical discourse analysis of Malala Yousafzai's nobel lecture. *South Asian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 2(2), 27-37.

## INTRODUCTION

The world now shares a global identity because of the English language. The phenomena of using the English language in almost all aspects of life resulted in globalization and internationalization in almost all walks of life. “A language is a tool that we use to communicate with each other; it may be our mother tongue, a second, or a foreign language that we learn” (Altam, 2020a, 2020b). Malala Yousafzai succeeded in using the English language sophisticatedly to deliver her message of quality education for all children of the world effectively.

On 12 July 1997, Malala Yousafzai was born, and she often mentioned and referred to as Malala. She is from Pakistan and she is a powerful and influential figure for female education and the empowerment of women, and she is also the youngest Nobel Prize laureate. The correspondent of Deutsch Wells’ Kyle McKinnon once said that Malala is “most famous teenager in the world.” (McKinnon, 2013) She is well-known for human rights support, principally the education of women in general and children in particular in her native place Swat Valley in the northwest of Pakistan, where the local Pakistani extremists once tried to proscribe girls from joining school. When she was 14, she was against the Taliban because they threatened her right to education. She becomes famous and starts to give interviews in newspapers and on television also, she was also designated for the international children’s Peace Prize by South African cleric and activist Desmond Tutu.

On October ninth 2012, while she was coming home after finishing a school day in a car in the Swat Region, Malala and two of her friends were shot by a Pakistani Taliban assassin in an elimination attempt in revenge for her activism; the sniper escaped. Yousafzai was shot in the head with a bullet and stayed lifeless and in serious conditions in a hospital; however, her condition later improved. The attempt to kill her generated a worldwide flood of support for Malala.

After her rescue, Malala came to be a noticeable activist for the right to education, especially for young women. She established the Malala Fund, a non-profit association. *I Am Malala*, is an international bestseller novel wrote by Malala in 2013. In 2014, she received the Noble Peace Prize, she shared the Noble Peace Prize with Kailash Satyarthi from India. She is considered the youngest-ever Nobel Prize laureate. The American weekly news magazine *Time* introduced her as one of the most leading people globally. Malala joined Edgbaston High School in England. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy, Politics and Economics from Oxford. During her Nobel peace prize speech, Malala attacks international powers that can create wars but when it comes to empowering worldwide education, they are careless and helpless. Through the influential speech at the Nobel peace prize ritual in Oslo, she said: “Why is it that countries which we call strong are so powerful in creating wars but are so weak in bringing peace? Why is it that giving guns is so easy, but giving books is so hard?”

The Norwegian royal family attended the ceremony along with other dignitaries from many parts of the world. Malala was also combined by young female activists she had invited from diverse

parts of the world. *“I tell my story, not because it is unique, but because it is not. It is the story of many girls,”* she said, aiming to her friends in the crowd. Raising her voice in the silent room, where she was given thrilling standing applause at the beginning and end of her speech, she said: *“We are living in the modern age and we believe that nothing is impossible. We have reached the moon 45 years ago and maybe we will soon land on Mars. Then, in this 21st century, we must be able to give every child a quality education.”*. By declaring landing on Mars, she prophetically expected humans to be able to land on Mars and indeed on Feb 18<sup>th</sup> 2021, NASA declared that the vehicle *Perseverance Rover* could land on the red planet and sent amazing videos and pictures from Mars.

The importance of this paper lies in its attempt to offer a figurative analysis and to show how the language can be employed to defend girls' education and women empowerment in a convincing and extraordinary method of discourse.

This study tries to answer three research questions: first, what are the different CDA strategies used in Malala's speech to defend her ideas about girls' education and women empowerment? Second, what are the ideological meanings Malala attempts to communicate through her speech? Third, how did Malala deliver her speech using figurative language and powerful examples? The answer to these research questions embodies the purposes of this paper: to throw light on the different strategies used by Malala to defend her ideas, by using convincing examples; to shed light on the figurative language used by Malala in her speech; to spotlight on the ideological meaning Malala tries to deliver in her speech.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is considered as an interdisciplinary process of the analysis of discourse, or we can see that it puts essentially talk and text as a system of social practice. Specialists who study in the field of CDA usually dispute that (non-linguistic) social practice and linguistic practice found each other and center on examining how societal force relations are created and strengthened across language use (Fairclough, 1995). On this point, it varies from discourse analysis in that it underscores matters of power irregularities, misapplication, utilization, and mechanical biases in areas such as learning, media, and politics (Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000).

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was established from 'critical linguistics' advanced at the University of East Anglia by Roger Fowler and colleague academics in the 1970s, and the jargons are currently frequently exchangeable (Fowler, Bob, Gunther, & Tony, 1979). Study in the field of sociolinguistics was not fully concentrating on social hierarchy and power. (Wodak & Meyer, 2001)

CDA was first founded and established by the Lancaster school of linguists of which Norman Fairclough was the most distinguished dignitary. Ruth Wodak was also a prominent figure in this discipline. Besides linguistic theory, the method gains from social theory—and influences from the following most prominent scholars in social theory: Karl Marx, Antonio Gramsci, Louis Althusser, Jürgen Habermas, Michel Foucault and Pierre Bourdieu—for the purpose of examining ideologies and power relations concerned in discourse. Language is attached with the society via being the core sphere of ideology, and via being together a place of, and a chance in, fights for power (Fairclough, 1995). CDA is used to scrutinize political speech acts, to call attention to the oratory beyond these, and any formulae of speech that may be used to influence the sense specified to the audience (Roffee, 2016) .

Van Dijk (1993) proposes that:

“If powerful speakers or groups enact or otherwise exhibit their power in discourse, we need to know exactly how this is done. And if they thus are able to persuade or otherwise influence their audiences, we also want to know which discursive structures and strategies are involved in that process.” (p. 259)

Norman Fairclough debated the word CDA in one of his books that is *Language and Power*. Fairclough presented the notions that are nowadays regarded as crucial in CDA such as "discourse, power, ideology, social practice and common sense." (Guo & Liu, 2016). Fairclough claims that language needs to be examined as a social practice via the medium of discourse in both communication and text.

Fairclough established a three-dimensional outline for reading discourse, where the purpose is to chart three distinct formulas of investigation on to one another: an exploration of (spoken or written) language texts, examination of discourse practice (procedures of text production, distribution and consumption) and analysis of discursive events as examples of socio-cultural practice (Fairclough, 2001). Principally, Fairclough links micro, meso and macro-level interpretation. At the micro-level, *which is used in this study*, the analyst studies a number of features of textual/linguistic analysis, for example syntactic analysis, use of metaphor and rhetorical devices (Barry, Carroll, & Hansen, 2006).

## METHODOLOGY

The data used in the analysis of this paper consists of Malala Yousafzai Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech which she delivered in 2014 in Norway. The speech consists of 2225 words and is downloaded from [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-lecture\\_en.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-lecture_en.html).

The rationale for making up the selection of this speech is because of the following reason: First, Malala’s Nobel Peace Prize acceptance speech is one of the most famous and effective speeches in the world. Second, the speech is full of rhetorical devices. Third, the selected speech reflects a type of discourse that is so influential in support of girls' education and women empowerment.

The formula implemented here needs the procedure of downloading the selected speech, reading the entire text comprehensively, and then underlining the crucial expressions that are applicable to the current study in order to be ready for analysis.

## **ANALYSIS**

### **THEMES LECTURED IN THE SPEECH**

Outlining the discourse of Malala's speech, one can say that it emphasizes children's right, deprived children of the right to go to school, the unequal opportunity of education for children in the world and the struggle of children in places like Pakistan, India, Syria, Iraq, Gaza ..etc. to gain education and go to school. Thematically, the speech can be divided into parts. In the first part, Malala provides her audience with her background and how did she suffer severely to gain her right for education. Second, she shed light on the harsh circumstance of children in general and girls in particular in third world countries like child labor, early marriage of girls and deprivation from the right to education. Third, she hopes for better and quality education for deprived children and marginalized and homogenized girls.

### **RHETORICAL ELEMENTS**

“Political activists and politicians have used the art of rhetoric to persuade their audiences for decades. Political activism has helped to change societies, as some people put remarkable effort into fighting for someone else's rights, someone who is not always seen or heard in the public or in the media. 18-year-old Malala Yousafzai is one among many who has made an appeal, and she has been heard.” (Grenager, 2016).

It can be argued that Aristotle might be considered as the principal one who debated the ability of persuading when he labeled and distinct rhetoric between 384-322 BC (Cockcroft & Cockcroft, 1992). The Roman orator Quintilian defined rhetoric “as the science of speaking well” ( Condor, Tileagă, & Billig, 2013). According to Perloff, persuasion can be defined as a: “symbolic process in which communicators try to convince other people to change their attitudes or behaviour regarding an issue through the transmission of a message, in an atmosphere of free choice.” (Perloff, 2003)

### **RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE LINKED TO IDEOLOGY**

Yousafzai starts her speech with references to God “*Bismillah hir rahman ir rahim. In the name of God, the most merciful, the most beneficent.*”. This implies that she delivers her speech on the basis of her religion and principle. Furthermore, she refers to her religion Islam “*Thank you to my mother for inspiring me to be patient and to always speak the truth—which we strongly believe is the true message of Islam*”. The use of this reference to Islam suggests that she is attached to her faith, ideology, and the virtuous ethics and beliefs she is related to. Yousafzai speaks of her faith many times, and uses expression from the Quran “*in the Holy Quran Allah says: if you kill one person it is as if you kill all of humanity? And do you not know that the very*

*first word of the Holy Quran is the word Iqra, which means read? ". This clearly indicates that she is connected to her ideology. Additionally, she quotes Hadith of prophet Muhammad "Do you not know that Mohammad, peace be upon him, the prophet of mercy, he says, do not harm yourself or others. " .*

Throughout her speech, Yousafzai continues to address her addressees as brothers and sisters. This can be interpreted as the following: Yousafzai wants to be linked with her audience effectively and establishing a strong connection between her as a speaker and her addressees as one family who listens to her daughter. This is a religious method of addressing people because Islam says other people are your brothers and sisters in humanity whether they are Muslims or Non-Muslims.

## QUESTIONS

Questions can be used as a rhetorical device and they are commonly used. Questions have a strong persuasive effect in speeches. Sometimes the speaker is not seeking an answer from his or her audience; the speaker only wants his audience to be focused or to consider a case or a situation being discussed in his speech. When reading the speech selected for the study, some questions can be found, and Yousafzai does not seek answers to her question. These questions are rhetorical, and answers are obviously implicated. Here are some questions found in the speech selected for the study:

*"Sometimes people like to ask me why girls should go to school, why is it important for them. But I think the more important question is why shouldn't they? Why shouldn't they have this right to go to school?"*

*"Why do leaders accept that for children in developing countries, only basic literacy is sufficient, when their own children do homework in Algebra, Mathematics, Science and Physics?"*

*"Why is it that countries which we call strong are so powerful in creating wars but are so weak in bringing peace? Why is it that giving guns is so easy but giving books is so hard? Why is it that making tanks is so easy, but building schools is so hard?"*

## HUMOUR

The French writer Victor Hugo once assumed that, "Laughter is the sun that drives winter from the human face." Yousafzai uses humour in her speech to engage and create a bond with the audience. She uses humorous comments that are related to her personal life. She depicts her life as young and immature to enhance her ideas about children's rights to play and live a happy life. Here are examples of humorous language Yousafzai uses in her Noble lecture:

*"I am pretty certain that I am also the first recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize **who still fights with her younger brothers**. I want there to be peace everywhere, but my brothers and I are still working on that."*

*“I have found that people describe me in many different ways. Some people call me the girl who was shot by the Taliban. And some, the girl who fought for her rights. Some people call me a Nobel Laureate now. **However, my brothers still call me that annoying bossy sister.**”*

## **METAPHOR**

“A metaphor is a figure of speech in which a word or phrase is applied to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable” ( Oxford language online dictionary, 2021). When reading Yousafzai speeches especially the Noble lecture, one can find many metaphors and figurative language. Yousafzai implies metaphors in her speech in order to deliver her message effectively and make it more relatable to the reader. Following are examples of metaphors in the Nobel prize acceptance lecture:

*“Thank you to my father **for not clipping my wings and for letting me fly..**”*

*“**We had a thirst for education**, because our future was right there in that classroom.”*

*“I am not a lone voice, I am many.*

*I am Malala. But I am also Shazia.*

*I am Kainat.*

*I am Kainat Soomro.*

*I am Mezon.*

*I am Amina. **I am those 66 million girls** who are deprived of education. And today I am not raising my voice, **it is the voice of those 66 million girls.**”*

## **PERSONIFICATION**

“Personification is the act of giving a human quality or characteristic to something which is not human”. ( Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2021) This method also assists the speaker to make his audience more able to understand concepts that may be puzzling to comprehend. Yousafzai connects her audience with the objects that are personified in order to make her audience sympathize with her ideas. Here are some of the example of personification used in the speech selected for the study:

*“**But it is time the world thinks bigger**”.*

*“**the world can no longer accept that basic education is enough**”.*

*“**your kind and encouraging words strengthen and inspire me**”.*

*“I know, I am just a committed and even stubborn person who wants to see every child getting quality education, who wants to see women having equal rights and who wants **peace in every corner of the world.**”*

*“The terrorists tried to stop us and attacked me and my friends who are here today, on our school bus in 2012, **but neither their ideas nor their bullets could win.**”*

## **ANALOGY AND SIMILE**

“An analogy is a comparison between things that have similar features, often used to help explain a principle or idea, on the other hand, a simile is an expression comparing one thing with

another, always including the words as or like”. (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2021). Here is one example from the speech selected for the study:

*“In my **paradise** home, Swat, I always loved learning and discovering new things.”*

When referring to her hometown, Yousafzai always uses the word “paradise” in all her speeches. By describing her native place as a paradise, she wants to show her audience how beautiful her native place is. She also refers implicitly to the paradise that is mentioned in Quran.

## REPETITION

Repetition is a literary method that includes deliberately using a word or phrase for effect, two or more times in a speech or written work. It can convey clarity to an idea and make it unforgettable for the reader. Yousafzai implies repetition in her speech to make her readers remember important points in her speech and to make her ideas more emphasized. When reading the speech selected for the study, we can find some repetitions for example:

*“**It is for those** forgotten children who want education.*

***It is for those** frightened children who want peace.*

***It is for those** voiceless children who want change.”*

*“**Let us** become the first generation that decides to be the last that sees empty classrooms, lost childhoods and wasted potentials.*

***Let this be the last time that a girl** or a boy spends their childhood in a factory.*

***Let this be the last time that a girl** is forced into early child marriage.*

***Let this be the last time** that a child loses life in war.*

***Let this be the last time** that we see a child out of school.*

***Let this** end with us.*

***Let’s** begin this ending . . . together . . . today . . . right here, right now. Let’s begin this ending now.”* ([www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/))

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The researchers selected Malala Yousafzai’s Noble lecture. The researchers used Fairclough’s theory of critical discourse analysis to analyze the speech selected for the study at the micro-level. The findings reveal that Yousafzai employs figurative and persuasive language in order to show her present and future commitment for children’s education and women’s empowerment and she also uses persuasive language in order to make her audience part of her personal campaign and to include her audience in her appeals. Yousafzai employs figurative and rhetorical language in her speech like questions, humour, metaphor, personification, analogy, simile and repetition in order to underline the importance of education for children in third world countries where children are marginalized and girls are hegemonized. The findings also reveal that this figurative and rhetorical language used by Yousafzai in her speech lead to a connection between her and addressees which in turn lead to continuous applause by her audience. On the other hand, Yousafzai used religious references to show her ideology and how she is strongly connected to her religion which is misused and misrepresented by extremists.



The message of Yousafzai's speech is education. Yousafzai suggests that world leaders and influential people in the world should start working for what she thinks is the magical solution namely education **“One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world!”** To conclude, Yousafzai's speech is full of rhetorical devices which arouse passions and leave an impression on the audience and as a result of using this rhetorical language she gains fame and political influence throughout the world. She is sometimes compared to Martin Luther King (Charteris-Black, 2011). Finally, the researchers suggest further research that might investigate and include all the linguistics elements in the speech so that overt and covert message of the speech can be revealed plainly.

## REFERENCES

- Altam, S. (2020a). Influence of social media on EFL Yemeni learners in Indian Universities during COVID-19 Pandemic. *Linguistics and Culture Review*, 4(1), 35-47. <https://doi.org/10.37028/lingcure.v4n1.19>
- Altam, S. (2020b). Second language acquisition (SLA) from Krashenian point of view. *Langlit An International Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal, Two Day Multidisciplinary International Webinar On "Role Of Language In Human Development: A Holistic Approach" Organized by Department of English, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar Marathwada University, Aurangabad & S.M. Dnyandeo Mohekar Mahavidyalaya, Kalamb, Maharashtra, India* (Special Issue), 132-140.
- Barry, D., Carroll, B., & Hansen, H (4 May 2006). "Narrative and Discursive Organizational Studies To Text or Context? Endotextual, Exotextual, and Multi-textual Approaches to Narrative and Discursive Organizational Studies". *Organization Studies*. 27 (8): 1091. doi:10.1177/0170840606064568. S2CID 144525452
- Blommaert, J., & Bulcaen, C (2000). "Critical Discourse Analysis". *Annual Review of Anthropology*. 29 (1): 447–466. doi:10.1146/annurev.anthro.29.1.447.
- Charteris-Black, J. (2011). *Politicians and Rhetoric: The Persuasive Power of Metaphor*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus. (2021). Retrieved 14 February 2021, from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- Condor, S., Tileagă, C., & Billig, M. (2013). "Political Rhetoric". *Oxford Handbooks Online*. Oxford University Press. Pp. 1-28.
- Cockcroft, R. & Cockcroft, S. M. (1992). *Persuading People: An Introduction to Rhetoric*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Fairclough, N. (2001). *Language and Power*. Longman. ISBN 978-0-582-41483-9
- Fairclough, N. (1995). *Critical Discourse Analysis: The Critical Study of Language*. Longman. ISBN 978-0582219847.
- Fowler, R ; Bob, H., Gunther, K., Tony, T, (1979). *Language and Control*. Routledge. ISBN 978-0-7100-0288-4.
- Grenager S., A. (2016). 'One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world!' *A study of personal pronouns, modality and rhetorical devices in a selection of Malala Yousafzai's speeches*. (M.A). The University of Oslo.
- Guo, F., Liu, K. (17 May 2016). "[A Review on Critical Discourse Analysis](#)". *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*. 6 (5): 1076–1084. doi:10.17507/tpls.0605.23. ISSN 1799-2591

- McKinnon, K. (2013, January). Will Malala's influence stretch to Europe? *Deutsche Welle*. Retrieved from: <http://www.dw.com/en/will-malalas-influence-stretch-to147-Europe/a-16532149>
- Nobel Lecture by Malala Yousafzai (2014). [http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel\\_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-lecture\\_en.html](http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2014/yousafzai-lecture_en.html). Accessed: November 2015.
- Oxford Learner's Dictionaries | Find definitions, translations, and grammar explanations at Oxford Learner's Dictionaries. (2021). Retrieved 14 February 2021, from <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/>
- Perloff, R. M. (2003). *The Dynamics of Persuasion: Communication and Attitudes in the 21st Century (2nd Ed.)*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associate
- Roffee, J. A. (2016). "Rhetoric, Aboriginal Australians and the Northern Territory intervention: A socio-legal investigation into pre-legislative argumentation". *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy*. 5 (1): 131–147. doi:10.5204/ijcsd.v5i1.285
- Van Dijk, T. A. (1993). Principles of critical discourse analysis. *Discourse & Society*, 4 (2), 249-283. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002006>
- Wodak, R. (2001) "What CDA is about" In: Wodak, Ruth & Meyer, Michael (eds.) (2001) *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis*. London: Sage. p. 5.