Knowledge is Power

Education is the single most important thing a person can posses. With education, a person holds the strongest weapon; take this weapon away and a person is a mere image. Shot in the head by the Taliban simply for going to school, [Malala Yousafzai](http://www.malala-yousafzai.com/) has not only recovered from dreadful injuries, but has gone on to become a champion for the rights of children everywhere to be educated. Malala Yousafzai put her life in danger to protect this weapon for all Muslim women, for the Taliban refuses any women the right to education. On September 9, she gave a speech that opened the worlds eyes to just how important education really is. She achieved this by telling, first hand, her experiences, showing deep emotion towards the cause.

Yousafzai’s use of rhetoric in her speech is amazing for her age; she always stays composed, speaking clearly and forcefully. She is able to get people to pay attention to her from the beginning. The first challenge any speaker faces is to establish their ethos, their credibility to speak. For this speech Malala wished to establish herself not as a victim of violence, but as a champion against it. “...it is an honor for me that today I am wearing a shawl of the late Benazir Bhutto.” Sometimes one speaks of somebody “putting on the mantle” of a hero, but this is the first time somebody is literally wearing the mantle. The mantle of a [female Pakistani leader](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benazir_Bhutto), a champion of education, assassinated by terrorists. Furthermore, the mantle of a woman who had spoken at the UN, and would have been known by many of those in the audience. Although Malala is a symbol of a strong hero, one must not forget her reoccurring phrase, “brothers and sisters” which appears in almost every paragraph, reminding the audience of whom Malala ultimately represents: the young. She declares that knowledge can defeat terrorism and implores us not to forget that “only one book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.”

Logos is the logic of a speech; it’s argument. Malala’s argument is contained within paragraph eight. “Dear sisters and brothers, we realize the importance of light when we see darkness. We realize the importance of our voice when we are silenced. In the same way, when we were in Swat, the north of Pakistan, we realized the importance of pens and books when we saw the guns.” Light and darkness. Voice and silence. These paired opposites are examples of [contrasts](http://rhetoric.byu.edu/figures/A/antithesis.htm). They have a clean, double logic that is enhanced by disparity. Malala then uses this foundation to create an analogy: “we realized the importance of pens and books when we saw the guns.” Using the statistic that 57 million children are not getting education, the audience is more trusting. This is because giving a numerical value causes a person to face the facts, whether they’d like to or not. “They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them. This is why they killed 14 innocent students in the recent attack in Quetta. And that is why they kill female teachers. That is why they are blasting schools every day, because they are afraid of change and the equality that we will bring to our society.” Having earlier set the argument that extremists are afraid of education, Malala then builds that argument to demonstrate the link between women’s education and society, until she concludes her argument with a story:

“And I remember that there was a boy in our school who was asked by a journalist: ‘Why are the Taliban against education?’ He answered very simply by pointing to his book, he said: ‘A Talib doesn’t know what it written inside this book.’ The story provides a dramatic punch line to the logos, but also hints that the illiterate are more likely to become Taliban. Malala uses a great technique here, having a more subtle meaning hidden just beneath the surface of a comment: If Talibs can’t read, then the ultimate ‘sword’ with which to win the war against the future Talib, is to teach the children to read.

Throughout her speech, she is very persuasive about the idea that knowledge is power. She speaks with great confidence on the subject, and her near death experience speaks loud to the audience about just how true the threat of terrorism is in the Middle Eastern countries. The idea that the Taliban would try to silence children for being activists for their own education helps Yousafzai gain sympathy for those children and women around the world who still are not being educated, an example of an appeal of pathos. Yousafzai’s greatest strength in her speech was the usage of pathos. Heartfelt and touching, her story reaches out to all. “I am just one of them. So here I stand, one girl amongst many.” Being only a small child, her experiences she had is extraordinary. When one listens/reads the speech, they think of their children being in that position, or even them themselves going through Malala’s journey. By making this connection, the audience has a deeper meaning towards what Yousafzai is getting at.

Referring to how the Taliban sought to silence and intimidate her, Malala uses antithesis to deliver the words: “….weakness, fear, and hopelessness died. Strength, power and courage was born.” Strength, power and courage in the face of adversity are the key messages of Malala’s speech. It is a speech filled with passion, with emotion, with skill, incredible belief, and daring hope. It is a speech all should hear, and delivered by a woman whom all should hope to hear a lot more of. This speech deserves to be heard. This speech deserves to be read. This speech deserves to learn. Both for its incredible message, and for the incredible public-speaking skills of this 16 year old girl.

References

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