

## **PERSUASION STRATEGY IN MALCOLM LONDON'S SPEECH "HIGH SCHOOL TRAINING GROUND"**

**M. Ridho Kholid** ✉

English Education Department  
UIN Raden Intan Lampung

Indonesia

Article Information	Abstract
Received: October 18, 2024 Revised: November 20, 2024 Accepted: December 8, 2024	<p>This paper investigates the persuasive strategies utilized by Malcolm London in his speech "High School Training Ground," delivered on the TEDx Talk channel in May 2013. Drawing from Aristotle's modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos—this study examines how London effectively communicates his message regarding the state of high school education and its impact on students. Through a qualitative research methodology, the analysis reveals that London employs personal experience, emotional appeals, and logical arguments to build credibility, evoke empathy, and present a compelling critique of the educational system. This research aims to provide insights into the application of persuasive techniques in educational discourse, offering valuable guidance for educators seeking to enhance their communication skills and engagement with students.</p> <p><b>Keywords: Strategy; Persuasion; Speech</b></p>

### **Introduction**

Language is commonly recognized as a powerful tool for building connections among people and communities. Effective communication is crucial for individuals to express their thoughts, ideas, and emotions, and to cultivate meaningful interpersonal connections. Language plays a significant role in facilitating communication among individuals who come from different linguistic backgrounds (Ratna 2017). Effective communication is crucial for humans to express their ideas, desires, and knowledge to others using spoken or written means. In a workplace setting, effective communication allows a project manager to express their ideas and provide clear instructions to a team. For instance, the manager might use a spoken format during a meeting to outline the project goals and timelines, ensuring that everyone understands their

Corresponding author: [mridhokholid@radenintan.ac.id](mailto:mridhokholid@radenintan.ac.id)

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roles. Later, the manager may follow up with a written email summarizing the key points discussed, which serves as a reference for team members to revisit as needed.

Language is an essential aspect of people's lives worldwide. Language enables people to convey thoughts, desires, and feelings, fostering connections and relationships. From casual conversations to formal negotiations, language underpins how individuals interact and collaborate within their communities. Language is the method of communication that people use in a specific society (Wardaugh and Aitchison 1987). Effective communication and meeting our needs heavily rely on language. Language serves as a universally acknowledged means of communication, allowing individuals to express their unique cultural identities. Language functions involve various forms of communication, such as expressing oneself, engaging in play, sparking imagination, and conveying emotions.

According to Cupach (2004), persuasive language is a way to exert influence on others. The topic of persuasion has garnered significant interest from philosophers and researchers in various fields, including social sciences, humanities, and linguistics, as it is widely recognized as a crucial aspect of language usage. The exploration of persuasion, covering a wide range of topics and various research approaches, has been a central focus of sociolinguistics and discourse analysis.

Persuasion is a form of communication that possesses the ability to sway emotions, thoughts, and actions (Jabur 2019). Whether it is a political speech, a marketing campaign, or a heartfelt plea from a loved one, persuasion can be a compelling tool for influencing others to understand our point of view. Through the use of persuasive arguments, emotional appeals, and establishing trust with our audience, we have the power to influence opinions and motivate people to take action. In the end, the skill of convincing others relies on our capacity to form meaningful connections and inspire them to follow the intended path.

Metsamäki highlights the importance of considering the speaker's perspective, as well as the qualities and structure of the message, in the context of persuasion (Metsämäki 2012). This refers to the speaker's understanding of their audience, including their needs, preferences, values, and cultural context. A persuasive message is more impactful when it aligns with the audience's perspectives and resonates with their experiences. For example, a speaker addressing environmental concerns might focus on economic benefits when speaking to a business audience, while emphasizing ethical responsibilities for a more socially conscious group. Effective persuasion is accomplished when it results in a shift in attitudes, as demonstrated in a recent study by Jones and Simons (2017). A change in mindset can be seen as a sign that people truly believe and have confidence in what has been conveyed.

By demonstrating our appreciation for their viewpoints and our willingness to have transparent and sincere discussions, we can foster a connection and cultivate a feeling of confidence (Fernandez 2023). Trust is essential when it comes to influencing others to take action. People are more inclined to follow the advice of someone they believe genuinely cares about their well-being. Aside from establishing trust, it is crucial to connect with the emotions of our audience. Emotions have a significant impact on decision-making, allowing us to generate a sense of urgency and motivate action. By utilizing various techniques such as storytelling, humor, or heartfelt appeals, we can effectively engage our audience's emotions, making our arguments more compelling and persuasive.

Using persuasive techniques can enhance the impact of presenting arguments (Johnstone 2018). The author delves into the tactics that people can use to intentionally shape their communication, effectively persuading others to embrace fresh ideas or engage in particular actions. Speakers strive to convince the audience to embrace and support their arguments. Therefore, it is essential for speeches to utilize persuasive strategies in order to bolster the argument.

Aristotle is widely recognized as one of the most influential theorists. Persuasion has experienced remarkable growth and garnered considerable scholarly interest across different cultures, disciplines, languages, and genres over the course of history (Alkhawaldeh 2021). Aristotle categorizes persuasion into three main components: ethos, pathos, and logos. The speaker's credibility is determined by their overall character, while their ability to appeal to the

listener's emotions is known as pathos. On the other hand, logos refers to the speaker's ability to express statements that align with factual evidence.

Aristotle delved into various approaches to convince an audience to support your point of view, as discussed in a scholarly publication (Donohue 2017). This type of communication is widely recognized as persuasion. Understanding rhetoric involves identifying effective ways to persuade others about a specific topic. The purpose of every form of art is to inform and convince in its specific domain. As an example, medicine focuses on topics concerning health and illness. However, Rhetoric can uncover the methods of persuasion for any given subject. Therefore, it is widely believed that the principles of this art cannot be applied to any specific category of objects.

Aristotle, a well-known philosopher from ancient Greece, outlined three essential modes of persuasion that he considered crucial for building compelling arguments. The speaker's credibility and trustworthiness are crucial in establishing ethos (Sulistyarini and Zainal 2020). People are more likely to be persuaded by someone they see as knowledgeable, trustworthy, and morally upright. Aristotle argued that the credibility of a speaker is shaped by their skill, ethical conduct, and goodwill.

Aristotle's book "Rhetoric" delves into three different approaches to persuasion. According to Cockroft et al. (2014), there are three main ways to persuade others: through your personality and position (ethos), by appealing to their emotions (pathos), and by using logical arguments (logos).

The use of emotional appeals in presentations can effectively influence the audience's perspective, as demonstrated by Livingston's research in 2015. A skilled speaker can use emotions to create a strong bond with the audience, eliciting feelings of fear, anger, pity, or joy to make their argument more relatable and impactful.

Logos utilizes reason, logic, and empirical evidence to effectively convince the audience (Cockroft et al. 2014). The process involves presenting accurate information, statistical evidence, data, and logical reasoning to strengthen the argument. Logos captivates the audience's intellectual faculties and encourages them to think critically.

By effectively incorporating these three techniques of persuasion, speakers can craft powerful and convincing arguments that resonate with their audience. The significance assigned to each mode will differ depending on the specific circumstances, the intended audience, and the speaker's goals.

Given the significance of persuasion strategies, the researcher is intrigued by exploring their application in language activities. Communication is a fundamental aspect of human language that allows us to share information with others. Speeches can be delivered at a wide range of events, whether they are open to the public or limited to a particular audience. A speech is typically a formal discourse delivered to a large audience during a significant event (Massaro 2001).

This study focuses on a speech delivered by Malcolm London titled "High School Training Ground." The speech was uploaded in May 2013 on YouTube in the TEDx Talk channel. In his speech, London explores the significance of high school education in molding young minds and equipping them for the future. The author highlights the importance of implementing innovative and captivating teaching techniques in order to maintain students' motivation and enthusiasm. London also discusses the differences in education quality among various communities and emphasizes the importance of providing equal opportunities for all students to thrive.

The researcher aims to uncover the strategies he uses to captivate his audience, drawing inspiration from Aristotle's three modes of persuasion. Furthermore, the researcher is interested in understanding the techniques he employs to engage his listeners and leave a memorable impact with his presentation. This analysis offers a chance to develop a deeper understanding of London's communication skills, providing valuable insights for those looking to become effective speakers. The speech was chosen for its significant connection to education and its delivery in English.

Various researchers have previously conducted studies on persuasion strategies (Oktiani and Putri 2022) (Jabur 2019) (Shalihan 2019). All of the previous studies examined the persuasion strategies by using Aristotle's three modes of persuasion. However, none of the publications cantered around the discussion of education.

Conducting studies on persuasion strategies is of utmost importance as it enables researchers to delve into the realm of effective communication and the power to sway others. Understanding the psychology behind decision-making processes and effectively communicating ideas are key skills that can be enhanced through the use of persuasion strategies. By exploring persuasion tactics, people can gain the knowledge and abilities needed to build trust, tailor their communication to their audience, and address any concerns or uncertainties. These strategies are crucial in various fields, such as sales, marketing, leadership, and public speaking, where the ability to persuade others can greatly impact one's success.

This research will offer valuable insights for educators, particularly in the realm of English instruction and acquisition. Teachers need to actively involve students to grab their attention and help them comprehend the material being taught. With a deep understanding of the persuasion strategy and how to apply it, teachers can utilize this approach to create engaging and effective lessons that truly capture their students' attention. As a result, students will experience enhanced retention and comprehension of the material. By incorporating these strategies into their teaching, educators can create a learning environment that fosters active participation and academic success.

## Methods

This study employs a qualitative research methodology. The qualitative research approach involves collecting data through observation, conducting interviews, and analyzing documents. The findings are primarily summarized using narrative or verbal methods (Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtli in 2006). The researcher will utilize a qualitative methodology for this study, as they will collect data by analyzing a specific document, specifically a video recording of a speech. The writer can use a qualitative research model to collect data that addresses the problem mentioned earlier. This model allows for the examination of the persuasion strategies used in London's speech, including ethos, logos, and pathos.

In addition, this study will utilize a descriptive research design. Descriptive qualitative research involves the analysis of data obtained from various sources such as documents, field notes, interviews, and recordings. This type of research allows for a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter (Ary et al. 2009). The study presents the findings. Therefore, the researcher will collect data extracted from a document to be presented as the research findings.

This study will utilize documentation as the methodology for data collection. The purpose of documentation is to collect primary data from research sources, such as relevant books, studying, reporting on activities, and pertinent research data (Moleong, 2009).

The researcher utilized the Miles and Huberman data analysis procedure in their data analysis. As per Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis consists of three interconnected processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

## Findings and Discussion

This study analyzed Aristotle's three modes of persuasion found in an education-themed speech by Malcolm London entitled "High School Training Ground." The researcher analyzed the persuasion strategy based on the speech and divide the findings into three sections below.

### ***Ethos in the Speech by Malcolm London***

Aristotle's persuasion strategy of ethos focuses on the credibility and ethical appeal of the speaker. Analyzing the provided text based on ethos involves looking at how the speaker establishes their authority, character, and trustworthiness to persuade the audience. Here are key elements from the text that reflect the use of ethos:

1. Personal Experience and Authenticity

The speaker begins with vivid descriptions of their high school experience, presenting themselves as someone with firsthand knowledge of the environment: "I open the doors to a building dedicated to building yet only breaks me down."

They provide specific details about their daily life, showing an intimate understanding of the school's dynamics: "Lockers left open like teenage boys' mouths when teenage girls wear clothes that covers their insecurities but exposes everything else."

## 2. Moral Authority and Ethical Appeal

The speaker criticizes the education system and societal structures, positioning themselves as a moral observer who sees the flaws and injustices: "Masculinity mimicked by men who grew up with no fathers camouflage worn by bullies who are dangerously armed but need hugs." They highlight the inequities faced by students and teachers, appealing to the audience's sense of justice and fairness: "Teachers paid less than what it costs them to be here."

## 3. Social Critique and Advocacy

The speaker demonstrates a deep awareness of social issues, such as segregation and economic disparity, which lends credibility to their critique: "My high school is Chicago diverse and segregated on purpose. Social lines are barbed wire."

They express solidarity with marginalized groups and advocate for change, which can enhance their ethical appeal: "This is a training ground to sort out the Regulars from the Honors a reoccurring cycle built to recycle the trash of this system."

## 4. Relatability and Empathy

By sharing personal struggles and the challenges faced by their peers, the speaker creates a connection with the audience, making their message more relatable: "Homework is stressful but when you go home every day and your home is work you don't want to pick up any assignments."

The speaker's use of metaphors and vivid imagery evokes empathy, helping the audience understand their perspective: "Oceans of adolescents come here to receive lessons but never learn to swim part like the Red Sea when the bell rings."

### ***Pathos in the Speech by Malcolm London***

Pathos is focused on appealing to the audience's emotions. Here's how London employs pathos effectively:

#### 1. Evocative Imagery

The text uses vivid and often painful imagery to evoke strong emotional reactions. For example, phrases like "building dedicated to building yet only breaks me down" and "lockers left open like teenage boys' mouths when teenage girls wear clothes that cover their insecurities but expose everything else" create a sense of vulnerability and despair.

#### 2. Empathy through Personal Experience

By describing personal and relatable experiences, such as the janitors being unnoticed or the stress of homework for students in difficult home situations, the author evokes empathy from the reader. This builds a connection and engages the audience on a deeper emotional level.

#### 3. Emotional Descriptions of Injustice

The text highlights various forms of social and systemic injustices, such as the disparity between "Regulars" and "Honors" students and the struggles of teachers who are underpaid. These descriptions are meant to provoke feelings of anger, sadness, and a desire for change.

#### 4. Contrast and Irony

The use of contrast, such as "Chicago diverse and segregated on purpose" and "trained at a young age to capitalize letters taught now that capitalism raises you," underscores the contradictions and ironies within the educational and social systems. This can generate feelings of frustration and disillusionment in the reader.

#### 5. Emotional Language

Words and phrases like "oceans of adolescents," "barbed wire," "frozen," and "the need for degrees has left so many people frozen" are charged with emotional weight, amplifying the overall impact of the text.

6. Collective Experience

The text speaks to a collective experience, particularly among marginalized communities, by using inclusive language like "my people" and "so many of us." This fosters a sense of solidarity and shared struggle, further deepening the emotional resonance.

***Logos in the Speech by Malcolm London***

To analyze how London utilizes Aristotle's persuasion strategy focusing on logos, the researcher needs to identify how the London uses logical arguments, evidence, and reasoning to support their message.

1. Clear Premises and Conclusions

The text begins by depicting the high school environment metaphorically, highlighting the struggles and disillusionment faced by students. The author presents the high school as a "training ground," arguing that it is designed to sort students into different social categories ("Regulars" and "Honors") and to perpetuate a system of inequality. The conclusion is that the education system is not failing but succeeding at its intended purpose: to train individuals to fit into predetermined societal roles.

2. Use of Evidence

The text uses anecdotal evidence and vivid descriptions to illustrate the daily experiences of students and the systemic issues within the school.

Examples include the janitors who clean up after students without recognition, the students' struggles with masculinity, the economic struggles of teachers, and the segregation within the school system. The metaphor of students as soldiers and the comparison of social lines to barbed wire provide strong imagery to support the argument of a segregated and harsh training ground.

3. Cause and Effect

The text establishes a clear cause-and-effect relationship between the design of the education system and the outcomes for students.

The training of students to "capitalize letters" is linked to the broader societal structure of capitalism, suggesting that the education system prepares students to participate in a competitive, hierarchical society. The stress of homework and tests is contrasted with the more pressing stresses of students' home lives, illustrating how the system's demands are out of touch with students' realities.

4. Consistency and Coherence

The argument is consistent throughout, maintaining the central theme that the education system is a training ground for societal roles. Each paragraph builds upon the previous one, creating a coherent narrative that logically progresses from describing the environment to explaining the system's impact on students.

5. Analogies and Metaphors

The use of metaphors, such as the school as a "training ground" and social lines as "barbed wire," helps to clarify and emphasize the author's points. These analogies make the abstract concept of systemic inequality more tangible and relatable for the reader.

6. Rhetorical Questions

The text employs rhetorical questions to provoke thought and engage the reader in the logical process. Questions like "No wonder so many of my people spit bars because the truth is hard to swallow" challenge the reader to consider the broader implications of the education system's design.

The speaker effectively uses ethos by grounding their arguments in personal experience, demonstrating a deep understanding of social issues, advocating for ethical principles, and creating a relatable and empathetic narrative. This approach builds their credibility and persuades the audience to consider their perspective on the education system and its impact on students. By sharing personal anecdotes and insights gained from their own experiences, the

speaker establishes a sense of trust and authenticity with the audience. Their passionate advocacy for ethical principles further solidifies their credibility and positions them as a trustworthy source of information on the topic. Overall, the speaker's use of ethos not only enhances their argument but also makes a compelling case for reevaluating and improving the current education system to better serve students.

By tapping into a wide range of emotions—sadness, empathy, anger, frustration, and hope—the speaker effectively uses pathos to persuade the audience to reflect on and potentially take action against the described topic. Furthermore, the speaker's appeal to pathos helps to create a strong emotional connection with the audience, prompting them to consider the implications of the current state of education on a personal level. By evoking emotions such as sadness and frustration, the speaker compels listeners to empathize with the struggles faced by students and educators alike. This emotional resonance serves to galvanize the audience into action, inspiring them to advocate for positive change within the education system. In combination with ethos, the speaker's use of pathos results in a compelling and persuasive argument that calls for reform and improvement in education.

London's use of logos in the text is effective in constructing a logical argument that the education system is intentionally designed to perpetuate societal inequality. Through vivid descriptions, metaphors, and logical reasoning, the author presents a compelling case that the system is functioning as intended, rather than failing as commonly perceived.

By intertwining ethos, pathos, and logos, London effectively captures the attention of the audience and motivates them to take action. The powerful combination of emotional appeal, credibility, and logical reasoning leaves a lasting impact on the listeners, prompting them to question the status quo and push for meaningful change. London's skillful use of rhetoric not only sheds light on the flaws within the education system but also empowers individuals to become agents of change in creating a more equitable and inclusive educational environment.

## Conclusion

Malcolm London's speech "High School Training Ground" effectively demonstrates the use of Aristotle's three modes of persuasion—ethos, pathos, and logos. Through his personal experiences and deep understanding of social issues, London establishes his credibility (ethos) and builds a strong connection with the audience. His vivid imagery and emotional language evoke empathy and inspire a sense of urgency (pathos), while his logical reasoning and structured arguments highlight systemic issues within the education system (logos).

London's ability to intertwine these persuasive strategies not only captures the audience's attention but also motivates them to reflect on the current state of the education system and consider the need for reform. By addressing both the emotional and rational aspects of persuasion, London creates a compelling narrative that calls for meaningful change. His speech serves as a powerful example of how effective communication can inspire action and contribute to the ongoing conversation about educational equity and social justice.

This analysis of London's speech provides valuable insights into the art of persuasion, offering lessons for educators, speakers, and advocates seeking to engage and influence their audiences effectively. By understanding and applying these strategies, individuals can enhance their communication skills and drive positive change in their respective fields.

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