

REPRESENTATION OF ARISTOTLE'S RHETORICAL CONCEPTS IN GRETA THUNBERG'S SPEECH AS A GLOBAL CLIMATE ACTIVIST

Ula Nisa El Fauziah^{1*}, Gartika Pandu Bhuana², Ida Lisdawati³

^{1,2,3}IKIP Siliwangi, Indonesia

Email: ulanisa@ikipsiliwangi.ac.id¹, gartika@ikipsiliwangi.ac.id², ida_lisdawati@ikipsiliwangi.ac.id³

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ABSTRACT

Global advocacy is becoming increasingly crucial in the face of the escalating climate change catastrophe. Greta Thunberg's speech at the United Nations in 2019 captured the world's attention because of its message and presentation, which blended the power of Aristotelian rhetoric. Thunberg's speech included essential components of classical rhetoric, such as ethos (credibility), pathos (passion), and logos (logic), to make a compelling case for the urgency of climate change and the need for rapid action. This article examines how Thunberg's speech used these three aspects and how they might impact a worldwide audience and drive legislative change. This study demonstrates that the excellent use of rhetorical components made the address a watershed point in the history of the climate change movement, with a broad impact on global understanding of climate change.

Keywords: *Aristotle, climate activism, rhetorical concept, speech representation.*

INTRODUCTION

The climate change crisis is one of humanity's most important concerns. According to Hansen et al. (2013), growing greenhouse gas concentrations result from human activities such as fossil fuel consumption, deforestation, and unsustainable agriculture. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report states that if greenhouse gas emissions are not reduced immediately, the effects of climate change will worsen, including an unstoppable rise in global temperatures, more frequent natural disasters, and threats to ecosystems and human survival.

Greta's address at the UN on September 23, 2019, indicated that the world is at a critical point in the climate crisis. Large emitters like the United States, China, and India consistently fail to execute effective policies to address this issue, causing considerable distrust in their governments.

Greta Thunberg, an activist, established the Global Climate Activism Movement, also known as Fridays for Future, in August 2018 by demonstrating in front of the Swedish Parliament, pressing the government to take more decisive action against climate change. His modest gesture quickly spread throughout the world, and he has since become a symbol of a global movement comprised of millions of young people who fear world leaders' inaction on climate change is stealing their future.

Climate Change Crisis: An Urgent Global Issue

Excess greenhouse gas emissions have raised the earth's temperature, generating a domino effect on ecosystems and humans. Natural disasters, heat waves, and biodiversity loss are all becoming increasingly common (Hansen et al., 2013).

According to Giddens (2009), climate change is a global issue that requires policy changes and a paradigm shift in how humans think about and act toward nature. Furthermore, Nixon (2011) established the concept of "slow violence," which causes environmental damage gradually but consistently, with long-term implications for future generations, as Greta explained in her presentation. Individuals and society play essential roles in the climate social movement.

Greta Thunberg's Personal Background

Greta Thunberg was born on January 3, 2003, in Stockholm, Sweden, under the name Greta Tintin Eleonora Ernman. Thunberg has earned international attention for her opinions on climate change. Because of her views on climate change, Greta has become a "genius" among young people who use social media sites such as Instagram and TikTok. That is why Greta is recognized as a global environmental activist (Rosalina, 2023). He has a significant interest in environmental issues from a young age. Greta was diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome when she was 11 years old, giving her an extremely analytical and rigorous perspective on the world. Greta has remarked in multiple interviews that her autism enables her to see the world objectively, free of cultural expectations or political agendas. This could explain why he is focused on one goal and refuses to accept any delay or failure in combating climate change.

Greta initially got concerned about climate change when she was 15 years old. According to Rosalina (2023), Greta founded Fridays for the Future (Climate School Strikes) in 2018. Greta did not stop there; she continued to look for ways to have a more significant impact. Greta even encouraged MPs to help combat climate change. Greta Thunberg led the Friday for Future movement for over three weeks before the Swedish elections in September 2018. Greta Thunberg founded the Friday for Future movement by skipping school on Fridays and carrying a banner reading "Skolstrejk för Klimatet" (School Strike for Climate) to demand immediate action from the government to tackle climate change. Climate change illustrates how Greta Thunberg's actions could inspire students in other countries.

Greta recognizes the climate crisis as an emergency that requires immediate attention and action rather than something that can be delayed or debated. His harsh comments, such as "How dare you?" in his UN speech, demonstrate his powerlessness in the face of the world's refusal to act more quickly on this disaster.

Aristotle's Rhetoric in Political Communication

Aristotle's rhetoric provides an excellent foundation for examining political speeches, particularly those intended to persuade the audience to act or think in a certain way. Aristotle (2007) defined three major aspects of rhetoric: ethos, pathos, and logos. Each of these increases the speaker's credibility, elicits the audience's emotions, and persuades with logical reasoning.

Ethos, the first factor, is essential for ensuring that the speaker is respected and perceived as authoritative. Ethos is linked to credibility which can be achieved through honesty, integrity, and consistency. As a young activist representing future generations, Greta's speech carries considerable moral significance. According to Laub (2019), speaker credibility is significant in establishing influence with the audience in speeches about key global challenges.

Then, in terms of pathos, Perloff (2017) showed that using emotion in political speeches is crucial for conveying a sense of connection and urgency. Greta's speech aroused the audience's emotions with bold, uplifting words like "How dare you?" that challenged international leaders to accept responsibility. This is congruent with Goffman's (1959)

viewpoint, which emphasizes the importance of communication that inspires empathy and anger to create social change.

Meanwhile, implementing logos, Aristotle (2007) shows that logical arguments based on scientific data are more persuasive to a reasonable audience. Greta strongly believes that the existing science is clear and irrefutable, consistent with Hansen et al. (2013), who declare that the scientific evidence for climate change is clear and calls for immediate action.

The Importance of Rhetoric in Delivering Speeches

Greta Thunberg's 2019 address to the United Nations is essential because political communication and social activity now rely significantly on how the message is delivered as much as the content. Mouffe (2005) states, "The public space is a place where different forces struggle to impose their vision of the world and the success of a political movement depends as much on its ability to communicate its message as on the content of that message." He emphasized that a movement's success in politics is mainly determined by its ability to communicate a message rather than the substance of the presented ideas. This is relevant to Greta Thunberg's climate change message, which has captured worldwide attention and influenced policy.

In his work *Rhetoric* (384-322 BC), Aristotle emphasized the significance of message delivery, it was consistent with his beliefs. Aristotle defines rhetoric as the talent of selecting the most effective technique for delivering a message and influencing an audience or "the ability to perceive the available means of persuasion in any given situation. In addition to the content, the delivery method is crucial for influencing others and achieving goals. Aristotle studied and mastered rhetoric since Ancient Greece, and it has the incredible power to alter public opinion, motivate collective action, and influence legislation.

Greta uses rhetoric to influence listeners' attitudes and sentiments within the UN and worldwide, using Aristotle's three essential elements: ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos relates to the speaker's credibility and charisma, pathos elicits emotions, and logos persuades an audience using reason and facts.

The Importance of Greta's Speech at the UN and Its Global Impact

Greta's 2019 UN speech occurred at a pivotal juncture in the global climate change debate. At the time, the world remained skeptical of big countries' commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and take more substantial real-world steps to address the climate crisis. In this context, Greta's speech is a compelling moral argument. He employs pathos to generate a response from the audience and lead them to a deeper and more urgent understanding of the issue.

Greta's speech prompted the Fridays for Future campaign, which has rallied millions of young people worldwide to take to the streets and demand urgent action on climate change. This riveting speech moved many adults, political leaders, and activists to listen and act. Greta's speech also triggered widespread criticism of the world's failure to address climate change, raising global awareness of the need for more significant structural changes to climate policy.

Based on the view above, this research has decided to find how Greta Thunberg's use of Aristotelian rhetorical elements (ethos, pathos, and logos) influences the effectiveness of her climate change advocacy in mobilizing global action and her rhetorical strategies in shaping public discourse on climate change and influencing political leaders' commitments to climate action.

METHOD

This study takes a qualitative analytical approach, focusing on the language of Greta Thunberg's 2019 UN speech. This analysis will use content analysis tools to identify the use of ethos, pathos, and logos in the speech.

Instruments

The researchers used an instrument that focuses on the analysis of Aristotle's rhetorical elements, namely ethos, pathos, and logos in Greta Thunberg's speech, and how these elements influence climate change advocacy and their role in shaping public discourse and the commitments of political leaders, including:

Ethos analysis (speaker credibility)

This analysis aims to assess Greta Thunberg's credibility as a speaker to strengthen the effectiveness of her advocacy. According to Aristotle in his book *Rhetoric* (2004), the credibility of the speaker or ethos is one of the main elements in persuasion: "A speaker's ethos is developed through their perceived character, including their moral virtue, competence, and goodwill towards the audience" (Aristotle: 2004). This opinion is supported by Burke (1950) in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, stating that the credibility of the speaker is closely related to how the audience perceives the character and motivation of the speaker, which will build identification and facilitate persuasion.

The aspect observed in this section is analyzing how Greta Thunberg builds her credibility through her experience in the climate movement and her closeness to scientific data, and what she says about herself as the voice of the younger generation and her connection to scientific facts and moral actions to save the future of the Earth.

Pathos analysis (emotion)

This analysis assesses how the use of emotion (pathos) can motivate the audience to take action against climate change. Aristotle explains in *Rhetoric* that pathos is one of the elements used to manipulate the audience's feelings, which can influence their decisions to act or respond to the message (Aristotle, 2004). According to Kennedy (2009) in *The Art of Persuasion in the Ancient World*, pathos can be played through the use of language that stimulates strong emotions such as fear, sympathy, or hope. This allows the speaker to deepen the emotional connection with the audience and encourage them towards collective action.

The aspect observed in this section is Greta's use of language to evoke fear about the impacts of climate change and a sense of urgency for the necessary actions, and the creation of awareness through emotional statements.

Analysis of logos (logic and evidence)

This analysis aims to assess the use of data and rational arguments that support Greta's claims about climate change and how effective they are in influencing the audience. Aristotle in *Rhetoric* states that logos is the use of rational arguments and evidence to influence the audience. "The main purpose of logos is to present logical evidence to the audience to convince them of the truth of the speaker's position." (Aristoteles, 2004). Meanwhile, according to Bitzer (1968) in *The Rhetorical Situation*, an argument will be more persuasive if accompanied by relevant evidence, thereby strengthening the speaker's position in situations that require change or action.

The aspect observed in this section is how Greta uses scientific data or research to strengthen claims about climate change, such as references to scientific reports or statistical data showing high carbon emissions and the effects of global warming, and the evaluation of

the extent to which these logical arguments help convince the audience of the urgent need to act.

Analysis of rhetorical strategies in influencing public discourse

This analysis aims to assess how Greta shapes or influences public discourse on climate change through her rhetorical strategies. According to McGee (1980) in *The Ideograph: A Link Between Rhetoric and Ideology*, public discourse is shaped through the use of “ideographs,” or terms that express certain values or ideologies. Greta's speech can influence the discourse on climate change by incorporating key phrases such as “climate crisis” and “intergenerational justice”, which shape the way the audience perceives this issue. Meanwhile, Mouffe (2005) in *The Democratic Paradox* argues that public discourse is often shaped by political or social actors who carry narratives that mobilize the audience to view issues in a different way. Greta, in this case, carries the narrative of climate change as an issue that affects human rights and the future, which effectively shapes the public discourse.

The aspect observed in this section is identifying how Greta's speech incorporates phrases or narratives that shape public understanding of climate change as an urgent issue, as well as the influence of this speech in raising global awareness about the impacts of climate change and the importance of immediate action.

Analysis of rhetorical strategies in influencing political leaders' commitment.

The analysis aims to assess how Greta's rhetorical strategies influence political leaders' commitment to climate change. Rowland (2013) in *The Role of Rhetoric in Political Change* argues that the rhetorical strategies used by public figures can influence policies and the commitments of politicians, especially if the rhetoric focuses on aspects of social justice and moral urgency. Meanwhile, according to Laclau and Mouffe (1985) in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, a strong political discourse, such as that created by Greta, can challenge the existing political hegemony and prompt leaders to make changes in their policies, especially in the context of a global crisis.

The observed aspect is how Greta's speech challenges political leaders by awakening their moral responsibility to act on climate change, and the influence of this speech on international policies or declarations made by countries or political organizations after the speech.

Procedures

Data collection

Watching and taking the text of Greta Thunberg's speech delivered on September 23, 2019, at the UN on the PBS NewsHour YouTube channel and various relevant political responses or public comments. Researchers used video recordings and official transcripts for a more in-depth analysis.

Analysis of rhetorical elements (ethos, pathos, logos)

The researcher conducted an analysis of rhetorical elements based on Aristotle's theory and the studies mentioned above. Then the researcher identifies how these elements are used to reinforce the message about climate change.

Discourse analysis and political response

Researchers examine how Greta's speech shapes public discourse and its impact on political policy by looking at news articles, responses from political leaders, and reactions from civil society.

Impact and commitment evaluation

Researchers observe the commitments or actions taken by countries or international organizations after the speech, such as policy change declarations or commitments in international meetings.

Preparation of research report

The researcher wrote a research report that combines the results of rhetorical analysis, the influence on public discourse, and its impact on political commitment to climate change.

Data Analysis

To get the result, this research adopted Berg (2009), which mentions that content analysis is a highly effective technique for delving into specific themes in oral or written communication, such as Thunberg's rhetorical features. It includes (1) examine Thunberg's speech for using ethos, pathos, and logos. Each element will be mapped based on the sections of the speech where it appears, (2) social and Political Context: The analysis will examine the speech's social and political context to examine how rhetoric affects global audiences, including political leaders and society, (3) analysing audience and media reactions is critical for determining rhetoric's effectiveness. According to Berg (2009), an investigation of speech text must be supplemented by evaluating the communication's influence on the audience, (4) Evaluation of rhetorical success: Thunberg's speech will be assessed based on the public's reaction to her call to action and her ability to influence political policies and actions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Greta Thunberg's Use of Aristotelian Rhetorical Elements (Ethos, Pathos, and Logos) Influences the Effectiveness of Her Climate Change Advocacy in Mobilizing Global Action

Analysis of Greta Thunberg's Speech at the UN (23 September 2019)

On September 23, 2019, Greta Thunberg, a 16-year-old Swedish activist, gave an incredible speech that gained global attention. In a brief but emotional speech, Greta urged world leaders to take more meaningful action to address the climate crisis. This speech is a moral appeal to the younger generation and a rational critique of global leaders' failure to solve climate change. This analysis will look more closely at how Aristotle's rhetoric is used in this speech, which contains three primary elements: ethos, pathos, and logos.

Ethos: The speaker's credibility and character

Ethos is a rhetorical term that describes the speaker's character and credibility in front of the audience. Greta Thunberg built a strong ethos in this speech, convincing the audience that she was a reputable and competent speaker on climate change.

Pathos: Evoking audience emotions

Pathos in Aristotle's rhetoric refers to using emotion to persuade the listener. Greta Thunberg expertly used passion in her speech to capture the hearts of the audience, both those present at the UN and those following it worldwide.

Logos: Logical and rational argument

Logos refers to using reason, logic, and proof to convey arguments. Greta effectively mixes passion in this speech while offering factual and logical backing for every claim she makes.

Greta's rhetorical strategies in shaping public discourse on climate change and influencing political leaders' commitments to climate action.

Ethos

Greta Thunberg created a strong ethos in this speech, demonstrating to the audience that she was a competent and knowledgeable speaker on climate change. Several components of Greta's speech contribute to its ethos, including:

Moral character and courage

Greta began her speech by emphatically proclaiming, "You have stolen my dreams and childhood with your empty words." This remark conveys both remorse and genuine fury, given that world leaders' current practices endanger the younger generation's future. Greta speaks with significant moral authority since she symbolizes a generation of young people directly touched by the climate crisis (Thunberg, 2019). According to Aristotle's theory, an orator must be strong in character and trustworthy, and Greta effectively communicated both. His seriousness wins the audience's trust in the message he conveys (Aristotle, 2007).

Greta also displayed tenacity by uncompromisingly presenting her case. With words like "How dare you!" he showed that he would not tolerate inactivity on climate change. This fearlessness and assertiveness define Greta's perspective as a young leader deeply committed to the planet's future. According to Aristotle, a speaker with a decent and genuine character is more likely to be accepted by his audience.

Taking advantage of the position as a representative of the younger generation

Greta is one of the few teenagers whose speeches are credible. He speaks for himself and a generation of young people whose futures are in jeopardy. Greta's statement, "I should be back in school on the other side of the ocean," emphasizes that she is addressing this international audience not for personal reasons but because she has a moral commitment to fight for the future. He outlines how world leaders use meaningless rhetoric to ignore scientific reality and jeopardize the destiny of young people (Boyle, 2019).

In this scenario, Greta speaks not only as an individual but also as the collective voice of an entire generation of young people affected by world leaders' political and economic decisions. This mindset is reinforced by his description of himself as "one of the lucky ones," which in this context means he has the opportunity to speak before world leaders. In contrast, many others, particularly young people, are forced to confront the direct consequences of climate change without having their voices heard (Laub, 2019).

Relation to the problems faced

Greta views climate change not simply as a distant issue but as one that affects her daily life and the well-being of future generations. In his speech, he used incredibly sensitive language, such as "You have stolen my dreams and childhood." This suggests that he speaks with a strong emotional and personal connection to the subject. This boosts his credibility since he speaks as someone directly affected by the issue rather than an academic or politician discussing it theoretically (Boyle, 2019).

Pathos

Greta Thunberg masterfully used regret in her speech to reach the hearts of the audience, both those at the UN and those watching it worldwide. Some examples of the use of pathos in this speech are:

Arouse feelings of concern and anger

Greta began her speech by expressing her deep dissatisfaction with world leaders: "You are failing us." However, the next generation is beginning to see through your lie." This sentence is quite emotional since it directly criticizes world leaders, arguing that they have failed the younger generation. This phrase infuriated and disappointed the UN audience and everyone who had heard the speech (Perloff, 2017). Greta's declaration that world leaders are failing highlights their ineffective measures and a betrayal of the younger generation.

Using words that trigger empathy

Greta emphasized the implications of climate change and reminded her audience about the difficulties and suffering that many people worldwide are experiencing. In phrases like "People are suffering." People are dying. "Entire ecosystems are collapsing," Greta stressed the harsh truth brought on by climate change. These lines evoke empathy and deep concern for climate change victims, who typically receive insufficient attention (Marshall, 2014).

Greta's use of terms like "suffering" and "dying" raises climate change from a scientific discussion to a genuine humanitarian concern. It provokes a strong emotional response from the audience. It calls for collective responsibility for those most affected, particularly vulnerable populations such as small island nations threatened by rising sea levels (Nixon, 2011).

Using the concept of intergenerational justice

Greta uses sorrow to evoke the audience's feeling of justice, particularly in light of the disproportionate distribution of the effects of climate change among generations. "The eyes of all future generations are upon you," Greta said, emphasizing that world leaders must accept responsibility for the future and cannot continue to violate future generations' rights. This inspires feelings of duty and moral obligation to act (Klein, 2014).

Logos

Greta engages intelligently through emotion while offering scientific and logical evidence for her arguments. Here is an example of employing logos in speech:

Use of science and facts

Greta began her speech by stating, "For more than 30 years, the science has been crystal clear." This sentence is significant since it refers to a widely known scientific fact. It gives rational weight to the message it conveys. Greta reminded the audience that the facts are clear, and there is no longer any excuse for inaction, citing 30 years of scientific research confirming the certainty of climate change (Hansen et al., 2013).

This is a very persuasive rational argument since it shows that the issue of climate change is no longer a scientific debate. Science has clearly shown that the climate calamity has already begun, and fast action is essential.

Criticize inadequate solutions

Greta stated plainly, "You say you are doing enough, but the politics and solutions required are still not in sight." In this phrase, he uses logos to criticize the failure of global climate change policies. He contends that, despite their assertions, international leaders have not done enough to address this issue (Trenholm, 2008). Greta underlines that "solutions needed are still nowhere in sight," suggesting that the required remedies are too late and insufficient to address current challenges.

Delivering necessary solutions: The need for action

Greta not only criticized the failure, but she also emphasized the importance of quick and effective responses. Although he spent most of his speech denouncing the lack of action, there was an implied call on world leaders to act based on known scientific evidence. The most fundamental impediment to successful solutions is misunderstanding science and

existing facts. In this situation, logos inspire the audience to think sensibly and act on proven and unmistakable evidence.

Greta underlined the importance of cutting carbon emissions, shifting to renewable energy, and promoting sustainability. Although he did not explicitly state these answers in his brief lecture, his logos and arguments clearly indicate that the world needs significant structural reorganization to address these concerns meaningfully rather than just lip service. Numerous experts agree that significant reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are essential, as is investment in renewable energy and sustainable infrastructure (Marshall, 2014).

Greta's statement at the UN on September 23, 2019, marked a watershed moment in the global climate change debate. In his book *This Changes Everything*, Klein (2014) argues that the climate crisis is more than just a technical or scientific issue; it also involves moral and social battles. Greta's speech is very effective in this situation. He organized more people to speak out and act by using pathos to appeal to his audience's emotions and logos to back up his claims.

Marshall (2014) assumes that street activism alone is insufficient for the climate movement. He underlined the importance of clear and concise communication in conveying the urgency of climate challenges. Greta's speech took advantage of this by adopting simple, science-based language and spoke for future generations. O'Neill and Nicholson-Cole (2009) state that emotional and vivid climate representations are essential for overcoming public apathy toward complex and long-term environmental concerns.

Greta Thunberg has clearly inspired many foreign leaders to pay more attention to climate change. More stringent legislative reforms to cut carbon emissions in some countries, such as Sweden and the United Kingdom, may be viewed as a direct outcome of public opinion mobilization sparked by these speeches. Boyle (2019) also notes that remarks like Greta's can shape the global narrative on climate change by addressing moral and emotional concerns, allowing for more ambitious solutions.

CONCLUSION

Greta applies all aspects of Aristotle's rhetoric in his speech, including establishing credibility as a young speaker representing the voice of the younger generation (ethos), arousing the audience's emotions by expressing disappointment and anger at the world's failure to act (pathos), and supporting his argument with scientific evidence that cannot be refuted. By combining these three elements, his speech piqued the public's emotional interest and provided a reasonable foundation for people to accept actual change.

Greta's reputation as a young speaker representing future generations is enhanced by ethos. With pathos, he stirs the audience's emotions, making them experience the genuine implications of climate change. Meanwhile, he uses logos to support his point with scientific data, claiming that current remedies are insufficient and that real action must be taken soon.

Overall, Greta's speech to the UN is an excellent example of how language may promote awareness and impact social change. Despite her young age, Greta has shown that speaking with genuine resolution based on facts and science may influence the world and raise calls for action on the global crisis.

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