

**Tone as a Paralinguistic Element in I am Malala: *The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai**

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**Abstract:** In an effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal aspects are important to convey the meaning as intended. While in spoken communication, there are many cues such as gestures, postures, facial expression, tone and the like to grasp the meaning. In written English, however, this is missing. It is one of the reasons why written English is not easily understood by many. The absence of paralinguistic in written English poses great challenge to learners. The article zeroes in on written English and the paralinguistic element tone. This article is written with reference to I am Malala: *The Story of the Girl Who Stood Up for Education and was Shot by the Taliban*, an autobiography by Malala Yousafzai, the girl who stood up for education for women and girl children. In her writing, Malala is very assertive to convey her message to the world. The tone she has used in her book ascertains the essentiality of education for girl children.

**Key words:** Paralinguistic elements, tone, change of meaning, girl education

**Introduction:** Of all the four skills in English language, written English is considered quite a challenging and interesting one. This skill in particular extracts a lot of efforts from learners irrespective of their educational status. Besides the reason that English is a unique language, written English involves many aspects such as vocabulary, grammar, sentence structure, context, register and the like.

Written English, unlike spoken English or conversational English, does not involve the paralinguistic elements such as gesture, posture, tone, proximity etc. In spoken English, messages are conveyed by means of non-verbal cues, proximity, tone and the like. Facial expressions, eye contact, tone are important paralinguistic elements in an effective communication. More than the verbal support, non-verbal signals play a major role in conveying the messages effectively. In an effective communication, 58% of messages are conveyed through non-verbal cues or body language. While 35% of messages are communicated by means of tone. Language takes only 7% in the effective communications process.

Bipin Dash in his book says that “in a speaking-listening process/situation, words as well as associated gestures and facial expressions both help us in interpreting the meanings correctly. Paralanguage is the way we vocalize or say the words we speak. Paralinguistic expressions can be included in non-verbal codes. These expressions give vitality, rhythm and make communication animated” (Dash).

Tone is the sound used in a particular way in place of gestures, postures and other paralinguistic elements. It is also related to the musical aspects of a person's voice. Tone is used to convey meanings such as pitch, stress, volume and emphasis, says Hamza Mustafa in her article on the use and importance of tone in communication. The use of tone in written English is an overlooked one. Tone is important for the reason that a careless use of it paves way for the change or misunderstanding in meaning. For example, “I can't come to class” is different from “I may not be able to come to class”. The messages conveyed in both the aforementioned sentences are quite different. In conversations that are accompanied by non-verbal cues, it is fairly easy to grasp the intended meaning. In written English, it is not the case all the time. Often meanings are considered rude in written English when the tone is not taken into account.

“Paralinguistic expressions, says Bipin, have three categories of vocalizations: Vocal characterizers (laughing, crying, yelling, whining and yawning etc.): vocal qualifiers (volume, pitch, rhythms, tone and rate): and vocal segregates (uh, hut, shh, ooh, mmh, huh, hmmm, ha). The fact of non-verbal sounds, which is often named Vocal Paralanguage, includes such vocal elements as intonation, tone, pitch, rhythm, volume, pace/rate etc. These elements form a powerful, subtle and vital part of communication” (Dash).

A writer can be assertive in the intended message he/she wants to convey to the readers. It is only a hairs breath difference between rude and assertive information or messages.

Malala Yousafzai, the Pakistan girl who risked her life for the cause of women/girl education, is assertive in her autobiography *I am Malala*. Her real and sincere fight for girls' education is revealed through her writing and the use of tone or the choice of words. It should be always kept in mind that the use of tone does not mean shouting or screaming.

Malala's lines "one child, one teacher, one pen, and one book can change the world" are quite popular among young people who are inspired by the emotion behind the quotation. The writer's conviction is apparent through this famous quote which is every motivational speaker's favourite line.

Another famous quote from the autobiography *I am Malala* is “If people were silent, nothing would change”. The courageous young Nobel Peace Prize winner has revealed another fact and she is awakening the common man to fight for his rights. The gun shoot survivor is straight in her warning that the consequences of not educating girl children would be detrimental and chaotic.

Malala's very strong words send a class mandate across the globe. Her "We want schools and education for every child's bright future. We will continue our journey to any destination of peace and education for everyone" makes people uneasy on not being educating their girl children. With the support of her family, the young girl stood against an outfit that seemed to

ban education for women. Malala's father Ziauddin Yousafzai, has been an ardent supporter of women's education in his nation. The young girl with her father became activists and took the issue to streets despite a group that stood against them.

The following quote from Malala's autobiography suggests that these are not just words but emotions filled with yearning, hope and the love for education: "IT WAS DURING one of those dark days that my father received a call from his friend Abdul Hai Kakar, a BBC radio correspondent based in Peshawar. He was looking for a female teacher or a schoolgirl to write a diary about life under the Taliban. He wanted to show the human side of the catastrophe in Swat. Initially Madam Maryam's younger sister Ayesha agreed, but her father found out and refused his permission saying it was too risky. When I overheard my father talking about this, I said, 'Why not me?' I wanted people to know what was happening. Education is our right, I said. Just as it is our right to sing. Islam has given us this right and says that every girl and boy should go to school. The Quran says we should seek knowledge, study hard and learn the mysteries of our world".

### **Conclusion:**

I am Malala is more persuasive, emotional and sentimental throughout the pages. The intention of the young girl is to make everyone understand that education is essential for everybody especially for girl children. The tone used by Malala reveals the suffering that those people have experienced throughout their life. Usually authors use words in different combination/collocation to give different meaning or to change the meaning. Malala has used words in such a way that all her yearning for education is clearly conveyed to the readers.

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