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Creating the Perfect Debater

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<div align="center">Creating the Perfect Debater</div>

This past week, my classmates engaged each other in the aggressive art of debate. Several rhetorical devices and strategies were implemented in order to sway the audience. Some were successful, while others failed. However, some aspects of delivery truly stood out to me. Those who wore an air of competency, by speaking self-assuredly and maintaining good physical appearance through posture and hand gestures, were as a whole more convincing. In addition, those who appealed to logic and emotion had generally more believable arguments. Thus, in order to create the perfect debater, I would unify the skills of the speakers who were most confident and competent in their delivery, both vocally and physically, and who effectively utilized pathos and logos.

First of all, the speakers' confidence was evident in their physical poise and motions. Nobody will want to support a speaker who appears meek or nervous. Shifting your weight or remaining completely static both signal to the audience that you are unconfident or unprepared. In contrast, Jacob Brown stood with his feet planted firmly throughout his debate. He kept his body loose yet stable. This gave the overall impression to the audience that although he was relaxed, he was sure of himself and his arguments. Seeing that Jacob was confident in his own arguments made the audience more likely to believe them as well (Brown). Eveline Liu also had excellent body language. As she introduced her points, arguing that school uniforms would "scrap social inequalities, reduce crime, encourage discipline, and create a sense of community,"

she held up her hand and counted the points on her fingers (Liu). Later in her speech when she came to important points, such as when she said that uniforms caused "suspensions [to] drop ninety percent," she held up her hand with her pointer finger extended (Liu). Her hand gestures helped to create an overall sense of organization throughout her speech, and helped to emphasize her most important points. But on the other hand, how a speaker sounds is as important as how they look.

A speaker who uses appropriate volume and tone of voice can make their arguments sound much more convincing. People are more likely to listen to a speaker who varies their volume and tone than one who speaks quietly or in monotone the whole time, which sends the message that they are uncertain of their speech. An audience will hesitate to believe an argument if they perceive that even the speaker doesn't believe it. Students who spoke with passion and confidence sounded the most convincing to the audience. Emily Mu is a perfect example. During her speech, her voice held so much zeal that the audience could not doubt her words. She raised her volume and pitch at precisely the right moments. When arguing that her opponent's policy was financially imprudent, she ardently told how it would cost, "…five billion more dollars" (Mu). Her arguments by themselves were not as important as the conviction she held, up until the end of her speech, when she decisively said, "I rest my case" (Mu). That being said, nonverbal aspects alone do not make an ideal debater.

The content of the speech itself is vital to the speaker's overall performance; specifically, pathos appeals are very effective in persuading the audience. Grace Duan skillfully played off of our emotions as she attempted to persuade us that IMSA should accept day students. She gave scenarios in which kids could not attend, "because of diabetes…physical disabilities," or other reasons beyond their control (Duan). She manipulated the audience's emotions, deepening their

sense of sympathy towards those students. This was significant because it helped connect the audience emotionally to the issue. While people were still sensitive towards the issue, she stated that her solution would have allowed the students to "still receive the rich education IMSA provides" (Duan). As a result, the audience was much more accepting of her solution.

Likewise, people are prone to side with a debater who utilizes logos appeals successfully. Often audience members look past the speaker's pull on their emotions and consider only the facts involving a situation. For this reason, the most certain way to win them over is by appealing to their sense of logic. Aniruddha Shekara did so perfectly when arguing that the United States should not implement a Fat Tax. He brought up past data, which showed that taxing sugary-laden food showed "no significant changes in consumption" (Shekara). This was extremely persuasive because it presented solid evidence that the opposing side's proposition would have no effect. Because the tax did not work in the past, the audience would have reasoned that the tax won't work now. Aniruddha then went on to say how the tax "would be highly inconsistent… [because] there is no universal method or measurement to classify foods to be healthy or unhealthy" (Shekara). He gave evidence that the tax would flawed. All in all, this strengthens his argument while undermining his opponent's.

Throughout the debates, certain people presented skills that truly won over the audience. Some people had nearly perfect vocal level and pitch that made their speech more engaging. Some commanded attention with their posture and hand gestures. Others persuaded the audience through pathos or logos appeals. A perfect debater would unify all these skills. He or she would not only have control over the audience's emotions and sense of logic, but would command their attention through body language and tone of voice. By perfectly utilizing these skills, a person could win any debate.

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