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MONASH DEBATING R e v i e w

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to the 2005 edition of the Monash Debating Review!

Last year's tremendous renewal effort has been followed by a year of consolidation of the MDR. Based on reader feedback, some sections have been expanded and emphasis shifted in other areas. For example, this year's results section has considerably grown, mirroring the explosion of national and regional debating tournaments and the growing strength of debating communities around the world.

The MDR remains committed to showcasing the finest minds in contemporary debating. In this edition of the MDR, we are pleased to include a feature on British Parliamentary strategies. Former Worlds Grandfinalist Amit Bhatia and World Champion Erik Eastaugh both analyse the role and tactics that can be deployed from the Opening Government position. Former World's Best Speaker Wu Meng Tan offers sound tactical advice about the best way to utilise the potential of points of information.

Focussing on argumentation strategy, Australs Semifinalist Ivan Ah Sam analyses the most appropriate application of "slippery-slope" based arguments in cases involving the balance of rights. Former World Champion Jeremy Brier highlights frequent tactical errors made by teams and offers commentary on how best to harness feedback from adjudicators. To complete this section, Australs Grandfinalist Andrew Fitch details strategic ways to approach debates regarding the empowerment of women and feminism.

In response to an article which first appeared in the MDR's inaugural edition written by Omar Salahuddin entitled, "What's the Matter with Manner?", three exemplary debating minds have analysed adjudication trends arising from the balance of matter and manner. Chief Adjudicator of the 2007 World Championships, Kevin Massie, alongside former Worlds Grandfinalist, Sebastian Isaac separately argue that the emphasis should be on the more objective standard that is provided by argumentation and analysis. Former Easters Best Speaker Anthony Jones offers a persuasive account of the criterion that may be used to objectify analysis of manner.

The year has also been marked by the proliferation of discussion regarding the evolution of different debating styles and the best way to facilitate access to debating by particular communities. In this edition of the MDR, we are proud to include a debating policy section. Andrew Chapman and Ben Cohn-Urbach discuss proposals to remove points of information and replies in the AustralAsian style, while Austral-Asia Debating Guide author Ray D'Cruz, and three-time Australs Champion Tim Sonnreich argue against the proposed changes. WUDC Equity Officer, Masako Suzuki contributes to the controversial discussion about ESL/EFoRL reforms.

Finally, keeping with the theme of consolidation this year, the MDR website is soon to be relaunched. On the site, articles from previous editions be electronically accessed and both current and back issues of the MDR can be ordered online. A forum is being developed to promote discussion about issues arising from particular articles, with opportunities for the authors to respond to any concerns. We anticipate that the forum will also keep readers abreast of recent developments with the MDR.

I hope you enjoy the latest edition of the MDR.

Maryam Jabanshahi, Editor-in-Chief 2005

**BRITISH
PARLIAMENTARY
STRATEGY**

THE ODDITIES OF BEING OPENING GOVERNMENT

About the Author: Amit Bhatia has a Bachelor of Computer Engineering degree from Nanyang Technological University, and a Postgraduate Diploma in Financial Management from the Singapore Institute of Management. He is currently working as a Treasury Portfolio Analyst for Citibank, Singapore. Representing SIM, Amit was a Grandfinalist of the 2004 World Debating Championships, ranking equal 10th best speaker. He also represented SIM at the 2003 AustralAsian Debating Championships, where his team ranked first and where Amit was awarded 3rd best speaker of the tournament. In 2005, Amit was Chief Adjudicator of the inaugural Asian Universities Debating Championships.

If asked about tactics and strategies to win in the British Parliamentary style of debating, my usual response would be to simply respond to the dynamism of the debate. This curt statement would not be too useful to a team that is slated to perform the role of Opening Government, where its duties would be to set up the dynamics of the debate. This essay aims to conceptualise a few of the strategies employed by teams performing this role as Opening Government, highlight where and when these methods can be used, how they can be effectively deployed, and the potential pit-falls of employing these methods.

Understanding the intricacies of the British Parliamentary style

In other positions in a British Parliamentary style debate, the two speakers have similar roles – respond and advance - in varying proportions. One of the intricate difficulties of the British Parliamentary style for structurally sound AustralAsian debaters is how the speaker roles undergo subtle changes in the various positions. Winning as an Opening Government in a good debate often relies more on team consistency and commitment to strategy than individual flair, and therefore the roles of the individual speakers become important. What I have found is that oddly enough, this role relies on surprisingly little communication between speakers, especially in an experienced team. This cocooning allows the two speakers to focus on their vastly different roles in the course of the debate.

The Prime Minister has the primary job of setting up the debate. The most important thing the Prime Minister must do is to “Articulate the Problem” which consists of not only a clear problem, but a problem that can be sufficiently tackled by the proposal to follow.

The secondary responsibility of the Prime Minister is articulating the proposal and the framework for the team. This articulation is better left concise and clear as the style tends to be more receptive to a solution that doesn’t involve advanced mathematics and will not induce rebuttals along the lines of “That was catered for by my sub clause 7(a) schedule (c)”.

The reason I recommend that this speaker have almost no contact with the Prime Minister during preparation time or during the debate (except when unavoidable such as having to debate on a narrow staircase landing in Oxford) is because the real role that the Deputy Prime Minister plays is not so much one of a substantive speaker but more akin to a whip speaker. Effectively, the Deputy Prime Minister must delicately provide substantive argumentation that fills the broader framework set up by the Prime Minister while also ensuring that the speech has a cadence to it, which effectively brings the debate to a conclusion at the end of the Deputy Prime Minister’s speech.

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A YEARLY PUBLICATION OF THE
MONASH ASSOCIATION OF DEBATORS

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A good Deputy Prime Minister speech should effectively extrapolate the larger case of the Opposition from the speech of the Opposition Leader, and present arguments in a summation like comparative analytical form, elaborating the solution in a way that can be seen as directly contrasting and clashing with the opposition case, as well as can be seen to be bringing the debate to a graceful, albeit premature conclusion.

Another intricacy that the Deputy Prime Minister then needs to manage is to make the opposition sound better than it is. It is a common folly of Opening Government teams to deride and weaken the Opening Opposition team rhetorically when they should instead be raising the level of the Opening Opposition team's arguments and then clashing with those arguments, since otherwise there is the imminent danger of the debate turning into a closing half debate.

British Parliamentary Opening Government Tactics

The Standard Matter Grab

This is probably the most common tactic used by Opening Government teams. It works best with conventional or oft-debated motions and issues, particularly of the social kind, where the primary arguments stay constant and there aren't too many new facts for closing teams to rely upon to construct an extension. Issues like abortion, death penalty, the ordination of female priests, tobacco advertising and bans, and most standard social issues are virtual sitters for this approach where between the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister, almost the entirety of positive matter for the bench is laid out and elaborated.

In a matter grab, there is a natural cost to the depth of the argumentation that can be achieved, but the purpose is to force the Closing Government to have to stretch themselves to hopefully extreme lengths to have to distinguish themselves in the debate.

This is also aided by the narrowest possible definition that the Opening Government can get away with – and if Opening Government teams could narrow it further, defining abortion as the usage of the “morning after pill” or the death penalty as “death due to natural causes in prison” and avoid a definitional challenge, they probably would. This narrow definition is often aided by a complicit Opening Opposition that seeing the opportunity would happily accept the definition, effectively making it an opening half debate.

The matter grab is not as effective as a tactic in a model/policy based debate or one where there is a constant clutter of facts such as most geopolitical or economics debates. Moreover the matter grab works best when the problem can be easily defined and understood, where there is almost no framework to construct, allowing both speakers the freedom to analyse all the relevant issues to a degree of depth.

This technique is often attempted too often by matter heavy teams in fact-oriented debates and is highly counter-productive in that setting. It allows the Closing Government to pick a key argument, analyse it in some depth and conclude the debate appearing to have brought the most sophisticated line of argumentation to it.

The ideal outcome of the matter grab is when closing teams, in search of a plausible extension, overreach causing contradictions (and possible knifing) such that the Opening Government team can instantly respond with an array of facial expressions depicting nausea, pain, anguish and with a dose of talent – reenactments of Shakespearean stabbing scenes.

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The Matter Dump

The matter grab has a subtle variation that can be employed in debates that rely heavily on facts and new argumentation. This is the matter dump where the team knows an enormous amount about a particular topic craftily contextualises a matter oriented debate in a way that allows them to bring this localised knowledge to the fore and thereby overwhelm the debate with at least 27 issues between them referencing materials as diverse as ancient Sanskrit texts to studies conducted in secret labs in the University of Keio.

This is a useful technique for motions that are broad enough for contextualisation. Therefore a debate on environmental terrorism could effectively be painted with relevant examples of oil pipelines and refineries in Azerbaijan or Internet commerce could be illustrated with examples of the scientifically proven ideal test-bed of Estonia.

Of course, the matter dump is a technique that is predicated on the fact that you have a lot of matter to dump. I do not wish to associate this with the expected failure statistics of hara kiri tactics like “rephrase and regurgitate” and “obfuscate and over-complicate”

The Model Based Hold Back

Model based debates and factual debates are tricky debates for Opening Government teams. This is because of the enormity of room available for rebuttal based on both issues to do with feasibility of the policy and also principle.

The Model Based Hold Back is essentially one in which the Prime Minister defines the problem and the solution but holds back in terms of how the solution solves the larger issues at hand, focusing on the smaller, less substantive matter. The Deputy Prime Minister then completes the model providing sophisticated analysis on how it all ties together.

An example would be in an environmental debate where the Prime Minister speaks of the magnitude of the problem, who it affects and how there are no other real alternatives available while the Deputy Prime Minister demonstrates the efficacy of the proposal in solving the problem, analyses historical analogies and does this all while simultaneously contrasting the approach with the stated opposition approach of using democratic and legitimate means to voice protest. The Deputy Prime Minister speech is an excellent place to flesh out how the stated democratic means were employed in the primary example and they failed. The most important thing the Deputy Prime Minister needs to do is to close out the arguments as a reply speaker would do in an AustralAsian style debate.

The purpose of the Model Based Hold Back is primarily to take away the sting of the Leader of Opposition speech and to provide a sense of closure that forces the closing teams to spark off on tangential lines or sound as if they are being repetitive – much like the Matter Grab technique.

This technique is the most effective when the motion and issue are specific enough to contextualise the debate to a case where the Opening Government has considerable edge in terms of matter. It's also more appropriate in newer motions and in motions that aren't conventional, and where a model or proposal need not be present or fleshed out in detail.

This technique also depends enormously on the cohesion between the speakers, their implicit chemistry, practice of the technique and the Deputy Prime Minister's depth of understanding of the subject matter (not to be confused with their need to bring out all that understanding within a single seven minute speech).

At the same time, this technique is likely to be unsuccessful in debate where the matter base is too large such as the Middle East or where the proposals suffer from strong feasibility counter-argumentation such as WTO related motions. It can be used by focusing regular motions to certain narrower contexts, for example by focusing a debate on EU expansion to deal with Turkey in specifics.

The Almost Tautology

The Almost Tautology technique is a much-used method of narrowing debates to exclude almost everyone else in the debate. If done perfectly, this could even result in the Deputy Prime Minister sounding repetitive while still escaping a definitional challenge.

This works particularly well when executed by experienced teams against other experienced teams with the full knowledge that the higher rooms rarely face definitional challenges and therefore the envelope can be pushed. Needless to say this technique is often used to convert matter heavy model-based debates into simple Matter Grab issues.

A very good example comes from the Singapore Worlds where a clever team defined child labor as being wage labor undertaken by minors of at least 14 years of age working in multinational corporations with full benefits and an added education thrown in.

The devious trick in this technique is to use subtlety and hold-back to make it appear to the opposition that the definition does have enough room for a fair debate for just enough time before it's too late for the opposition to ever hope for a fair challenge. This debate, when done badly, can make the Opening Government look very silly, leaving the closing teams with an implicit edge. (This will be further elaborated under the section in this article entitled "If it sounds too good to be true – it might be tautological".)

The Single Case Study – A.k.a the case from Timbuktoo

There is nothing quite so much fun as building an entire case out of an example of which only you, as the Opening Government team, have ever heard. That way, you can truly be dynamic in the course of the debate, fluidly offering facts that suit and cater for any possible rebuttal from the opposition.

An excellent example is to argue for changes in anachronistic rape legislation using the single case study of the man on trial for rape who in his dementia truly believed that the act was consensual and was acquitted by a British court chaired undoubtedly by drunk ex-debaters.

This method is often mistaken for another popular but usually unsuccessful ploy – The Single Celebrity Case Study - where the entire case is based on one ill-fitting celebrity example such as the O.J. Simpson trial. The problem with that approach (apart from the fact that most of the models presented seem designed by Opening Governments to retrospectively tackle only those celebrity cases and nothing else) is that popular trials tend to be widely read and interpreted leaving little room for the Opening Government to build a plausible water tight-case by monopolising the facts.

The Straight Down the Line Squirrel

The final tip and technique I offer is the straight down the line squirrel – a simple semantical ploy that reduces the spirit of the motion to ghostly proportions allowing Opening Governments to respond to shocked faces from the opposition and the audience with a simple "What, we didn't squirrel". In a debate on the motion, "This house would scrap the space shuttle", it is immensely satisfying to agree and recommend replacing the space shuttle with the space capsule, the older tech-

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nology of disposable space ships. This subtle word play allows the government to spend the entire debate arguing the relative technical merits of the two technologies forcing the opposition team to take a stand of arguing against space travel altogether effectively placing them at other side of the motion.

Common Opening Government Pitfalls

Under-defining

The reader can be forgiven for mistaking that under-defining is primarily a folly conducted by inexperienced teams. Under-defining is a folly that extends even to the best of debaters, and is most often seen in more novel motions. The 2000 World University Debating Championships Grand Finals debate suffered from under-definition on the motion, “This house believes that Karl Marx would have supported the Internet”. While the Opening Government did provide an idea of what Karl Marx believed in and how the Internet supported it, they under-defined by not providing a platform of agreement based on which a clashing debate would ensure.

The worst case of under-defining that I’ve heard of is a debate on the open motion, “This house would rather go faster than slower”. It was left completely undefined by the Opening Government creating a debate of 8 speeches in which everyone gave examples of how some situations warrant for expediency while others require patience.

Under-defining most popularly manifests itself in three ways:

- A failure to identify a problem that adjudicators can implicitly identify (so that it doesn’t become a slanging match of “Studies show that crime rates have gone up 50 per cent in Minnesota” and “No, counter-studies show crime rates have gone down 25 per cent in neighbouring townships”).
- A failure to identify a problem that can be understood to be solved by the model at hand. While global warming and the melting of polar ice caps is a real phenomenon, it may not necessarily be convincingly solved by carbon trading provisions in Kyoto alone.
- A failure to create a platform for agreement in the debate which is often caused when the basic parameters of the debate are contested. For example, in a debate about the United Nations Security Council reform, if the Opening Government team contends that representation is good without identifying the role of representation in the functioning of the Security Council, which causes the debate to devolve into a messy opening half debate. This type of debate is often characterised by inadequate agreement on the role and need for representation in the UNSC, with opening teams delving directly into the mechanisms to secure representation. Arguably this lack of clash also comes about due to failures of the Opening Opposition but its something that can be pre-empted and effectively dealt with by an aware Opening Government.

Over-reaching

In diametric symmetry to under-defining lies the second most common Opening Government folly, over-reaching. There are several common ways in which Opening Government teams over-reach:

The Model Over-reach: As much as models need to be comprehensive enough to protect from sitting duck rebuttals, every extra complexity in a model opens up the floor for a feasibility debate, the death knell for Opening Government. The British Parliamentary style provides limited air-time to bring out real working models, therefore models must be simple and based on larger principles without the Prime Minister needing to devote 4 minutes out of her speech to articulate the various corroborations a living will would need in a euthanasia debate.

The Actionable Item Over-reach: While it always sounds brave and exciting to go into a debate as Prime Minister and say “We are for legalising all drugs, soft and hard”, the Opening Government needs to limit the debate to be effectively remembered at the end of it. Bravado must be curbed in all but the most extenuating circumstances. If the Actionable Item can be limited, limit it. If you can take advantage of the knowledge that your opposition team is unlikely to challenge your definition, limit it further.

The beauty of the Actionable Item provision is that it is binding on the closing team, therefore articulate the Actionable Item as clearly as possible. Thereafter any attempt by the Closing Government to broaden the scope or to change the Actionable Item can be effectively countered by grunts, sighs and theatrics from the other three teams in the room.

This form of over-reach, while seeming intuitive, has its pitfalls. When attempting to curb an Actionable Item over-reach and its corresponding harms in defining a case, one can often open up the debate in a different direction. Take for instance the earlier example of Child Labor being defined as labor done by a 14 year old for multinational companies in safe and humane environments alongside awareness and vocational training. While this definition does an excellent job of removing the conventional sting of an opposition taking higher moral ground in the debate, a smart opposition could effectively argue that the proposal would lure away not-so-poor children who may have otherwise chosen schooling. This argument would pit the issue of education compared to vocational training in providing long term sustainability. If there is any issue that a government team proposing the need to allow child labor should avoid, it should be the education compared to vocational training issue for obvious reasons.

Argumentative over-reach – this is the form of over-reach where an Opening Government team, in an attempt to matter dump or matter grab, ends up grabbing an argument that shouldn’t have been touched. This invariably leads to slippery ground or worse, contradictions that delimit the convincing capability of the Opening Government team. For example, in a debate about chemical castration for child sex offenders, Opening Government teams are often quick to illustrate the deterrence effects of harsh punishments but would be guilty of over-reaching if they had earlier justified their proposal by analysing the incurable mental sickness of child sex offenders. This would seem like an easy to avoid contradiction but is committed often enough by experienced teams in the British Parliamentary style with inadequate preparation time to deal with novel motions.

Contextual irrelevance

Contextual irrelevance refers to a misunderstanding of how motions and issues are read differently in different parts of the world. One of the first things that became apparent to me when I started debating in international tournaments is how different perspectives and premises are when debated in Asia, compared to Australia compared to Britain. As a team performing the Opening Government role in a debate, one must be careful as to how one defines the issues and the models sensitive to the perspectives of the adjudicators and the other teams in the room.

We have often been victims of this issue, at one instance defining “pay for education” as people having to pay for the entirety of college tuition via interest free loans. We found this a very reasonable and fairly benign set up although the British teams we were against and our very own Closing Government found this an altogether scandalous set up. We later realised that the primary debate would have at most extended to top-up fees rather given that tertiary education is already nearly fully paid for by the government.

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Similarly, there are various debates and issues that have vastly different contexts in different regions and nations. Social issues, when argued in Asian contexts, are more likely to be fraught with issues of feasibility than when debated in Australia or Britain where they are more likely to be legal debates on rights.

There are some cases however that are probably irrelevant in most places and in most times. However, that does not stop teams from presenting these cases in tournament after tournament hoping that some poor opposition team would simply die of surprise. This is especially endemic in open motion tournaments like the Cambridge IV where teams present a range of exciting cases ranging from proposing a Rotational Gender Policy for American Presidency and Vice Presidency (If the President is male, the constitution should mandate a female Vice President and vice versa) to debates about banning fluoride in drinking water.

Horizontal Slicing – The Dangers of a Two Part Motion

A dangerous type of motion to be an Opening Government on is a two part motion where there is a dual burden of proof and the government is expected to prove both parts while the opposition may contest one or both parts.

In most such motions, the primary burden of proof is almost always implicitly conceded by the opposition, lending a degree of predictability to the government with which to argue the case. An instance of this would include the motion, “This house supports the donation of organs for profit”, where teams don’t generally oppose organ donation in itself. Similarly, in a debate on the motion, “This house supports giving same-sex couples the right to adopt” isn’t usually contested on the grounds of the recognition of same-sex couples.

This predictability doesn’t lend itself to all motions. An example of such a debate is, “This house would allow surrogacy for profit” debated at the Quarterfinals of the 2002 Worlds Championships. In this debate, it is likely that the bone of contention would be the idea of profit but most government teams would want to guard against attacks on the concept of surrogacy as well. The Opening Government team in this debate however decided to split the case horizontally with the first speaker defending surrogacy and the second speaker defending the profit motive. Such a case is a disaster waiting to happen since the Opening Opposition speaker has little more to do than to concede surrogacy focusing the debate on the profit motive and thereby invalidate the entirety of the Prime Minister’s speech.

If it sounds too good to be true – it might be tautological

Too often, Opening Government teams present cases that can easily be dismissed without challenge by Opening Oppositions for the simple reason that they are either entirely tautological or based on tautological premises. Such debates don’t always degenerate into definitional challenges and a skilled Opening Opposition can easily package the challenge in a deft point of rebuttal and proceed to set the terms of the case in a way that the Opening Government relents to using it.

In a semifinal at the Cambridge IV, the Opening Government defined an open motion by proposing that Japan should repeal Article 9 of its Constitution that prevents it from forming an standing armed forces. They based almost the entirety of their case on the idea that Japan “had the right” to self-defence.

The two opposition teams had to do little more than agree with the idea that Japan had the right to defend itself thereby invalidating the entirety of the Prime Minister’s speech. They then focused the

debate on the analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of such defense capabilities for the Japanese people.

This folly often precipitates in cases where recent developments have invalidated what were previously debatable issues. This therefore presents an opportunity for ill-informed Opening Government teams to walk into self-made traps and embarrass themselves with a red-faced opposition offering points of information and interjections that remind everyone, “That’s already status quo”.

The this-is-so-bizarre-it-might-just-work fallacy

There are some cases that perhaps sound a lot better during preparation time than they do during the debate itself. Sadly British Parliamentary debating is littered with the debris of such failed cases. Therefore I propose the Occam’s razor modified theory of Opening Government cases – “When faced with the option to present a more reasonable and a less reasonable case, choose the more reasonable one even if the more reasonable case lacks the novelty and surprise factor”. Perhaps the most bizarre cases I’ve heard is one proposing banning caffeinated beverages at chess tournaments in a debate about drugs in sports.

Points of information

Points of information are a valuable tool for any team in a British Parliamentary debate and an article by Wu Meng Tan in this issue of the MDR does an excellent job of educating debaters to the subtleties of this tool. They are particularly useful though for an Opening Government team that has otherwise limited opportunities to participate in the dynamics of the debate.

I recommend that both speakers offer plenty of POIs normally. However, when there is a fear of being over-shadowed by a strong Closing Government team, there is an oft employed technique of letting them go first. Especially if they seem to have a key POI up their sleeve, let them have it since it might give you an inkling of the basis of their case extension. As an Opening Government, you can then perform a matter grab incorporating their argument into the thrust of your own case.

A commonly used technique by Opening Government teams to engage with the closing half of a debate is to use POIs that try and bring the debate back to the issues introduced by the opening half. This usually has limited success unless presented with a malleable opposition that yields to the issues raised in a POI. In debates where the issues change substantially by the closing half, or where there are important points being raised by Closing Opposition, a POI which rebuts the closing half’s line of argumentation serves a better purpose. A POI that can challenge the premise of the Closing Opposition extension is better still and clever signposting to tie the POI back to a clearly stated Opening Government argument would further bolster the Opening Government chances.

Receiving POIs during a Prime Minister’s or Deputy Prime Minister’s speeches also requires some tactical planning. For example, allowing an opposition to waste a POI in the first speech is very effective with Opening Opposition teams that like to vociferously offer POIs at the 1 minute bell. They often inadvertently ask a question that would be answered within the framework to follow and it serves as a POI well taken and handled.

However, receiving a POI so early in a good debate can also be debilitating since it may allow a clever opposition to force you to address a crucial point before the setting up of the framework (It never looks conclusive to say “I’ll answer your point after I set up the model and deliver my case split”). Worse still, it can change the nature of the debate, wresting from the Opening Government the

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chance to set up the issues of the debate.

In situations of the matter grab and the matter hold back, it is entirely likely that the Deputy Prime Minister may limit the POIs taken to merely one allowing more time to cover larger substantive ground before the closing half of the debate.

Advanced Methods

Teams at the World Championships and other major tournaments are increasingly leaving nothing to chance preparing even minutiae such as appropriate facial expressions. After all, merely having a good case and excellent delivery is seldom enough to get through the boardroom discussions that are today's consensus judging and one can never be too careful.

Creative signposting is of much importance, particularly when balancing the demands of tournaments that don't require extensions with tournaments that need clearly stated ones. Using signposts that seem specific and are yet worded broadly enough to encompass even the opposition case, and perhaps parts of the cases from other rounds, is only the beginning. What use is a signpost if it can't be used to minimally claim later that the entire argumentation of the closing team was already dealt with by the opening speaker?

Theatrics is another tool of increasing use in debating circles. This is very valuable for Opening Government teams to respond to the dynamics in closing debates. Where earlier there were the mere interjections of "Shame" and "Hear Hear", one can find a range of dramatic signs to imply "We said that. That's our point they are stealing", or alternatively, "We didn't say that. That's a major shift", or if the Closing Government has gone too far, teams employ brutal enactments of stabbings to ensure that their opinion of the Closing Government case is clear in the minds of the adjudicators. There is the more subtle look of perplexity during the Closing Government extension with the casual "I don't know where they are going with this" hand wave, and the occasional smile towards the Opening Opposition team with the hand-wave of consensus making – "Do you know where they are going with this?", or when bandying for a bench win, the nudge to Closing Government implying solidarity in the greater moral stand.

Conclusion

All in all, doing an Opening Government role in a British Parliamentary debate isn't as hard as, say, rocket science or finding snow ploughs in Glasgow. It does require an awareness of how the dynamics of debates can evolve dramatically out of Opening Government's control due to the nature of the set up. These methods don't guarantee you victory in the Opening Government role. Innumerable unexpected issues can come in the way ranging from snow and an epidemic of gastric flu to innate flaws such as being too easy to make fun of, or ending up in a debate about arcane British law against British lawyers. Don't let any of these issues bother you though. There is no Opening Government flaw that can't be covered up by the correctly placed grunt or sigh.

ONE POINT, ONE KILL: POINTS OF INFORMATION AS AN UNTAPPED RESOURCE

About the author: Wu Meng Tan was born and educated in Singapore before moving to the UK to pursue a combined medical degree and PhD in molecular biology at the University of Cambridge. He has been a top 10 speaker at the Australasian Intersvarsity Debating Championships and has twice been ranked in the top 5 speakers at Worlds. In the 2003 World Universities Debating Championships he was ranked Best Individual Speaker of the tournament and Runner-Up in the Grand Final.

Introduction

Points of information (POIs) are one distinguishing feature of the British Parliamentary format of debate seen at the World Universities Debating Championships (Worlds). Typically, a debater may offer POIs anytime during a speech made by a member of the other bench, with the exception of the first and last minutes of the speech. These proscribed periods are often termed “protected time”, i.e. the speaker holding the floor is protected from the offering of POIs. The decision to accept the offered POI is at the discretion of the presiding speaker, but it is generally considered good form to take two during a 7-minute speech.

POIs may take many different forms. They can be a statement of information or an argument, or they can come as a question to the speaker holding the floor. Each of these approaches, if properly exploited, can prove devastating. In the Worlds format, POIs are a particularly useful tool for Closing Government and Closing Opposition teams wishing to engage with their Opening counterparts, and vice versa. For example, the Opening Government team and Closing Opposition team do not clash directly in the course of their speeches, and POIs can add clash to an interaction described by some adjudicators as “two ships passing in the night”.

The need for judicious and effective usage of POIs would be less acute if each debater had plenty of opportunities to have their POIs accepted. However current practice at Worlds is for a speaker to accept only two POIs per speech. Thus in most debates, the Government bench of four speakers will in total accept eight points of information from the four speakers of the Opposing bench. On average, each debater, no matter how vigorously they offer POIs, can only expect to have two POIs taken in the entire debate. Yet these precious and rare opportunities are often squandered on poorly thought out POIs.

As an intellectual exercise, it is useful to consider the various aspects of a POI. These include:

Effects of Offering. Does offering the POI break the flow of the speaker’s speech at a crucial moment? This is a useful tool if the speaker declines POIs with a phrase (e.g. “No, thank you.”) rather than by waving opponents down with a hand gesture. Similarly, a speaker who is easily flustered may be driven to distraction by the moderate application of offered POIs.

Content of the POI. As mentioned above, it can be in the form of information (e.g. “The United States has consistently used its Security Council veto on such matters.”), or a question (e.g. “How do you propose overcoming the ensuing Security Council deadlock, given the United States’ veto power?”). I will discuss strategic use of POI content later.

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Motive underpinning the content. POIs can provide information that casts doubt on the speaker's argument or they can force the speaker to make a concession that may be subsequently exploited. If the motive is obscure to the speaker but not the offeror, then it makes the speaker's job harder, especially if the question expects a yes/no answer but gives no hint as to which side is correct. Similar issues apply to leading questions, which will be discussed below.

Reaction to the elicited response. It is a common lawyer's adage that one does not ask a question without being prepared for the answer. This applies equally to POIs; one should have an idea of how the speaker could respond.

Strategic Offering

The timing and synchronisation of POI offering within a team can be exploited for strategic gain. For example, if the speaker has not taken any POIs despite 15 seconds remaining before the final protected minute, it would be foolhardy to offer a POI unless the potential damage to his/her case exceeded the expected penalties from the adjudicators for not taking any POIs.

A related situation arises when one member of a team has encountered 'debater's block' and cannot think of POIs. Rather than suffer the penalties for not offering POIs, a useful coping strategy is for both team members to simultaneously offer a POI, followed by the weaker member immediately sitting down and feigning an apologetic look at the apparently accidental synchronisation. Thus both team members are credited for offering POIs even though only one team member actually had a POI in mind.

Improved team communication can also overcome 'debater's block'. If the POI does not urgently need to be offered within the next 10 seconds, it should be written onto a piece of paper so that both team members can offer it. A written record of the POI also reduces the risk of it vanishing from the team's collective memory, since a good POI may still be gainfully deployed against a later speaker.

While these tactics may appear to be of value only to the pedant, it is often the small things that differentiate teams in the top room at Worlds and in closely fought break rounds. Furthermore, even good teams may make elementary mistakes in this respect. In a recent Worlds Grand Final, one speaker actually failed to offer POIs throughout the entire first half of the debate. While other errors may have contributed to their public demise in the Grand Final, this oversight certainly did not help their situation, and in fact led to much audience speculation about how this team could have topped the preliminary rounds!

Strategic Acceptance

Given the potential strategic importance of POIs, it is important for speakers in a Worlds-style debate to accept two POIs, one being taken from each opposing team. This allows the adjudicator to more effectively assess the interaction between the speaker and the other teams.

Some commentators have suggested that speakers should avoid taking POIs from whichever opposing team is perceived to be the greater threat. This practice should be discouraged. A point of information from a 'dangerous' team should be seen not as a threat but as an opportunity for the speaker holding the floor. If the POI is rebutted robustly, the speaker's standing improves in the

eyes of the adjudicator. If the POI is ineffectual, then the offering team suffers. In fact, in situations where a highly seeded Opening team has been performing badly, it may actually make excellent sense to take a POI from them, since if they fail to salvage the situation despite extensive additional time to assess the debate, their performance assessment in the adjudication will suffer.

For those unconvinced by this advice, a technique is available to mitigate the perceived threat from a ‘dangerous’ team sitting opposite. Rather than avoiding the team altogether, simply accept a POI from the weaker of the two speakers. Very few teams in the history of Worlds (even the so-called ‘magic’ teams which broke on 24 out of a possible 27 team points) have been perfectly balanced. Every team, almost without exception, has a speaker which will be weaker – either in general, or more specifically on the topic for that particular debate. Even the best communication between team members can only mitigate, rather than abolish this discrepancy. One should take a POI from this person, rather than avoiding the team altogether.

Strategic Questioning

A well-honed question can force a fatal concession which is not even apparent to the speaker until much later. This is best achieved using language which conceals the motive of the POI, since the speaker receives no hints as to which way the ‘correct’ answer for his or her side should be. This practice is best explained via the following case studies, all of which occurred in real-world competitive debates at Worlds or preliminary Worlds-prep tournaments:

Case Study 1: The Leading Question

POI: “How often will you re-elect your judges?”

Response: “I don’t know why you’re nitpicking, but let’s make it every 6 years.”

- On the motion *This House would elect its judges*. Question asked by Closing Opposition, in the 2001 Worlds Grand Final.

This POI is a classic. Offered and taken during the first unprotected minute of the Prime Minister’s speech, the question sealed the fate of Opening Government and sealed the win for Closing Opposition. By agreeing to the re-election of elected judges, an entire line of Opposition was made available, regarding the effect of judicial decisions being abused for campaigning purposes in the run-up to re-election. While the merits of the case are debatable, the correct response to the POI should probably have entailed election for life or a fixed term – i.e. no re-election, rather than providing a timetable for re-election.

Case Study 2: The Last Chance That Was Missed

Prime Minister: “We believe this ASEAN regional parliament should have representation pegged to national population.”

POI: “Are you really saying that Indonesia should have 65 times the voting power of Singapore?”

Response: “Absolutely.”

- On the motion *This House believes that it is time for an ASEAN parliament*. Question asked by Closing Opposition, in the 2005 Worlds Octo-Finals.

This POI is somewhat less dangerous, in that the phrasing suggests incredulity at an aspect of the Prime Minister’s proposal. Thus the astute speaker would have sensed the motive underlying the POI and utilised this as an opportunity to respond to the implied attack. Unfortunately the speaker

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chose to concede the point, and both Opposition teams exploited this to maximum advantage, with subsequent rebuttals involving mockery of a hypothetical regional parliament with 500 seats for Indonesia compared to 1 for Brunei. A more sensible response to the POI would have been to cite a qualified majority voting system, which has the benefit of actually being used in reality. Sadly the pressure of the moment got to the speaker, and that team lost.

Case Study 3: Information and Ignorance

POI from Opposition to Prime Minister: “Have you heard of the Schengen Convention?”

Response: “No, I haven’t.”

Subsequent Rebuttal: “Let me tell you about Schengen, and what it means for your case.”

- On the motion *This House supports an expanded European Union.*

The precise details of the debate are not important to our analysis here; the only key piece of information is that the Schengen Convention abolished controls on the free movement of persons across internal frontiers between treaty nations. The team offering the POI had planned to make Schengen a part of their Opposition case. Rather than asking a more obvious POI (e.g. “Won’t the Schengen Convention mean that illegal immigrants can move freely once within the expanded EU?”), they chose to conceal their intention and phrase it as a question of knowledge. When the speaker confessed his ignorance of the Convention, it hurt his credibility in the eyes of the adjudicators, and provided the Opposition with ample fodder for rebuttal and mockery. Even if the speaker had known of the Convention, an inadequate response to the POI would still have provided an opening for subsequent attack by the opposing bench – in fact the speaker could have been painted as even more incompetent, on grounds of running the case despite knowing about Schengen.

The astute reader will notice that this approach to POIs can be applied as a force multiplier to augment one’s existing knowledge of treaties and legal documents. Imagine using this tactic to deploy a knowledge of the Nuremberg Principles on medical experimentation in a debate on prisoners and medical research. The possibilities for such POIs are manifold. However an important caveat is that the information must be *relevant* to the debate – asking an inscrutable question about an obscure sub-clause of an irrelevant treaty (especially when done without subsequent explanation of the POI’s purpose in one’s own speech) merely comes across as nitpicky and annoying, rather than intelligent and cunning.

Case Study 4: The Inconsistent Policy Position

POI to Closing Government: “Do you think Margaret Thatcher should have artificially supported the UK coalmining industry?”

Response: “Of course not.”

Subsequent Rebuttal: “I will extend this debate by showing how both tangible and intangible goods operate under the same economic principles of efficiency.”

- On the motion *This House would protect its service industries*, which was defined onto outsourcing. Question asked by Closing Opposition.

In this debate, the Government bench had argued that great hardship would arise due to outsourcing of call centres and other services from the First World, and that any resulting economic efficiency would not justify the immediate harms from unemployment and social hardship. The POI from

Closing Opposition was effective, in that it probed the extent of the Government's commitment to that principle – i.e. were they consistently applying it across all industries, or merely the service industry sector?

In fact there may have been no safe yes/no response to the question: had the Government speaker endorsed artificial support of the coalmining industry, they would have been left open to accusations of living outside the real world. As the debate turned out, they supported Thatcher's reforms and were subsequently painted as being philosophically inconsistent, given the Closing Opposition's analysis on how tangible goods (coal and ships) and intangible goods (services) were equally subservient to economic principles of efficiency and long-term reform.

How Not To Do Things

We have seen how expert management of POIs can boost your position in the debate. Unfortunately the converse is also true: incompetent offering of POIs (or, more commonly, incompetent responses) can compromise a team's prospects. Here are some case studies:

Case Study 5: "If you have nothing intelligent to offer..."

POI: "But September 11th was clearly an attack on the world. After all, they hit the World Trade Centre."

- In a debate on extraditing Al-Qaeda terrorists to face the death penalty, in the 2002 Worlds Octo-Finals.

At this stage in the debate, the discussion had somehow come round to the question of whether the proposal was a proportionate response. The conceptual basis of this ill-fated POI was potentially laudable – i.e. that the World Trade Centre was a symbol of the global capitalist economic system and thus an attack on it was a symbolic attack on the planet. Unfortunately the POI was delivered using the phrasing above, resulting in much mirth and mockery from teams on both sides, not to mention the audience. Unsurprisingly, the team in question failed to advance.

Case Study 6: "Falling on the sword of one's own point..."

Speaker: "Not all prisoners will benefit from your proposal of organ donation as a contribution to society in return for early parole. Some prisoners will have infectious diseases like HIV, which preclude their donating organs."

POI: "It doesn't matter if the prisoners have HIV but want to donate a kidney – we'll just take the useless organs and then throw them in the garbage bin."

Speaker's Response: "I don't know which prison *you* escaped from, but brain donations must have been permitted, even if the organ was useless..."

- On the motion *This House would allow prisoners to donate organs in return for early parole.*
Question asked in the final round of a North American pre-Worlds tournament.

Even without going into the details of the debate, it is clear that the POI was ill-advised on several grounds. For instance, discarding donating kidneys would contradict the premise of a contribution to society as grounds for early parole. The POI also exuded implausibility, and thus compromised the image of competence that the offeror had earned during the debate.

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Case Study 7: "When no answer is better..."

Speaker: "China's population will stabilise on its own, much as many Western nations' population pyramids stabilised after the Industrial Revolution and the transition from agrarian economies."

POI: "That's all well and good, but how long will this take?"

Speaker: "Erm. I don't know. 200 years? 300 years?"

- On the motion *This House supports a one-child policy*. Question asked by Closing Government, directed at Closing Opposition, in the 2001 Worlds Quarter-Finals.

This is an example of a speaker not quite thinking through the motive behind the POI, and then failing to estimate a ballpark figure. While the speaker in question (despite the choice of substantive) may not have had detailed knowledge of the Industrial Revolution, it should have been clear from the phrasing of the POI that the questioner was doubting the speed of change. An appropriate estimate would therefore have been one on the order of years or decades, rather than centuries. This team, too, failed to advance.

Conclusion

Points of information are an often underrated and under-used resource. They allow engagement between teams not directly placed in opposition to each other, and can be useful tools if deployed skilfully. Adept use of POIs requires a full appreciation of their underlying principles, as I have discussed in this article and its accompanying case studies.

HOW TO WIN WORLDS FROM OPENING GOVERNMENT

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The smell of fear

The first round of British Parliamentary that I ever debated was Round 1 at Toronto Worlds, and I still remember how terrified I was walking into that room. I was terrified partly because I was a novice, partly because I didn't know the style, but mostly because my team had drawn the Opening Government position, and this was the World Championships, and, well, I assumed that everybody knew more about just about everything than I did. I felt as though there were a secret key to doing it right, and everybody had it, except me.

In my three years of debating in the British Parliamentary style, I've seen countless teams moan (or even howl) at drawing Opening Government, especially in break rounds. At last year's Cambridge IV, one half of Inner Temple (Alexis Hearnden) quite literally shrieked upon drawing Opening Government in the Final – Inner Temple had drawn Opening Government in the Final of the Oxford IV just the week before, and Alexis had been Opening Government in every final she'd ever reached.

Opening Government is almost universally acknowledged to be unpleasant, stressful, and a disadvantage in any given debate. Seeing "Opening Government" hanging like a sword of Damocles above their name on the tab causes many teams to imagine they have a giant "four" painted on their foreheads. But it needn't be so. At least, that's what I repeatedly told myself when I opened up my little piece of paper right before the World's Grand Final and it said: "First Prop... sucker!"

On reflection, however, I recalled that Inner Temple had won the Cambridge IV from the Opening Government position. I remembered that, after thinking on it just a day or two earlier, my teammate (Jamie Furniss) and I had realised that we'd taken more first places from Opening Government than from any other position. And I remembered all the things I'd said to convince some terrified Canadian freshers before the fourth round that Opening Government is actually the best position to be in, if you do it right.

I remembered all that and stopped being afraid. And won.

Learning how to do a good Opening Government, like all things debating, is best done through experience, good feedback from judges, and a healthy dose of modesty and self-criticism. But when extrapolating lessons from my experiences as Opening Government, I've found that there are a few key points to keep in mind.

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Match point, advantage Opening Government: Build your confidence

Although many debaters seem to think that Opening Government is the weakest position on the table, that perception is mistaken. One of the things you learn from having watched hundreds of British Parliamentary debates unfold is that so much depends upon what the Opening Government team does with the debate. It is true that a disastrous Opening Government can sink an entire round. And it is also valid that an Opening Government will see its weaknesses exploited ruthlessly by four speakers on the other side with only one chance of its own at rebuttal. Those weaknesses, however, conceal a secret strength: an Opening Government team can affect the debate to a degree that no other team can.

The foundation of the entire round will be the edifice that an Opening Government team constructs. They set the terms of the motion, define the clash and determine the direction of the debate. That gives the Opening Government team the power to dominate a debate from the outset. Do it right, and the other three teams will be fighting it out for second, inside the box that you've built around them.

Confidence is everything in debating. You need confidence to think clearly and plan your case. You need confidence to convince the judges that everything relevant came out during your two speeches. If you think you're at a disadvantage, then you are. It's best to dwell on the advantages you have as the team that speaks first, and come out with guns blazing.

Face your enemy: The motion

The most important is not to ever shy away from the motion, no matter how insane or asinine it seems. At the World Championships and the larger intervarsities, motions are set by experienced and highly successful debaters and adjudicators. They will not give you something that can be considered 'un-debatable'. In fact, they will deliberately craft motions that have a great deal of depth and scope to them. So it is important to stifle the panic you feel when you read that "impossible" motion, swallow the vomit that popped into your mouth, and *think*.

Nothing impresses a judge more than seeing an Opening Government team grab the bull by the horns and take a hard line. A hard line guarantees lots of clash and interesting arguments – in a word, it'll be a great fight, and everyone loves to watch a good fight.

Think about it from the judges' perspective. Even if the motion may be considered to be weighted to the opposition, clearly they're not going to fault *you*, as the Opening Government team, for that. The judges are also likely to expect something more from an opposition team with such a low burden. Likewise, if you come out with genuinely convincing analysis from Opening Government, you're bound to impress the judges.

Moreover, no one likes a coward. If you're given a hard motion and you wholly unreasonably and purposefully misinterpret the motion (also known as "tightening it" or "squirreling it"), you will look cowardly. First proposition has a fairly large reservoir of sympathy and goodwill with judges because it's seen as a challenging role, and that is a *very* valuable asset during the adjudication. You simply waste it away by squirreling.

To model or not to model: Know your topic and your audience

Whether or not to have a model, and how “complicated” it needs to be, are probably the most stressful things a team needs to consider in the position of Opening Government. In the Worlds context, it doesn’t help that there is no general consensus on the role of models. This is because the importance of the model to general debating culture varies greatly from region to region. Australasians tend to favour elaborate models that define even relatively minor aspects of the motion; for them, the devil is in the details. At the other end of the spectrum lies North Americans, who are big on first principles and small on pragmatics; their models, if they have them, will often be rudimentary and skeletal. Somewhere in the middle lie the Europeans (driven by the Brits and the Irish), who rely mostly on their accents to convince the judges they simply know better than everybody else!

Obviously the ideal would be to know the composition of your judging panel and tailor your proposition case to them. At a national or small regional competition this is fairly simple; but it less so at Worlds, where the size and the international character of the tournament mean that most people will only know a fraction of the judges there. Besides, who really has time in fifteen minutes to hunt down the room in some far-flung corner of the galaxy, find out who the judges are, *and* map out a first-rate Opening Government?

The best strategy then, is common sense. Some topics require more defining than others, so you need to consider the nature of the topic you’re discussing. Broadly speaking, there are two kinds of debates: debates about policy, and debates about principle. This is a gross generalisation of course, but it’s a useful framework with which analyse the issue. The two categories are best conceived of as poles at opposite ends of a spectrum, with most motions falling somewhere in between.

Policy debates tend to revolve principally around a cost-benefit analysis of the proposed measure. Debates about free trade or labour policy will usually fall at this end of the spectrum; ethics are less at issue than is utility. However, debates about principle are much more deontological, in that they require a balancing of competing ethical or moral axioms, rather than a material cost-benefit calculus. Torture, abortion, and gay marriage are examples of primarily deontological debates.

In general, a policy motion requires a more elaborate model than a debate about principle. The modalities of a policy are essential to achieving its outcome and determining its effects—the functional details and comparative advantages of bilateral trade frameworks compared to multilateral ones are critically important to deciding between them. Conversely, while the modalities of an ethical choice are not entirely irrelevant, they have a less important role to play than in a policy choice. The relative impact of sleep-deprivation as opposed to electric shocks on the subject of torture is less important than whether the activity, in the abstract, can be morally justified.

Keeping this general outline in mind, the question an Opening Government team needs to ask themselves is: what are the details that I need to include to make sure that the right debate occurs? It’s impossible, unfortunately, to be any more prescriptive than that. At the end of the day, it is a judgement call that individual teams and speakers need to make given the context. But it is important for any Opening Government team to ask themselves that question.

Luke, Use the Force (of the model)

Having decided how much of a model you need, you have to decide the constraints to set upon the debate through your definition and model. This is where the power of Opening Government is at

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its greatest. The limits you set on the debate will determine what arguments can be made by all sides. It will also to some extent determine where, within the policy-principle spectrum, the debate will take place. For example, in the 2005 Worlds Grand Final, the motion was: “This house would reinstate the use of corporal punishment in schools.” This is a very complex debate, involving a host of pedagogical, ethical and legal questions, and it could go in many directions. While my teammate and I have never been supporters of overly complex models, we recognised that this motion, in such a high-calibre round, required a high degree of structure to narrow the scope of the issues to be argued, if control was going to be retained over the course of the debate. So we laid out the following model:

Corporation punishment is to be administered immediately for a breach of a written code of conduct (which included mention of what punishment was associated to what offence), by strokes of a wooden paddle on the backside while fully clothed, in a separate, private room away from classmates, by a person other than the teacher who ordered it, in the presence of medical staff (school nurse). Punishment is not to leave any permanent damage. There is to be a mandatory review of the decision afterwards by the school administration. This method is to be open to all schools - public or private - at the discretion of the school administration.

While the model may seem a bit pedantic (and it was called that by many), careful examination will reveal how it eliminates several threads of argument from the opposition, which include those relating to arbitrary punishment, teacher abuse, humiliation, physical harm, and the sanction of violence as a means of conflict resolution. Because of the way the model was structured, the debate would revolve primarily around the pedagogical issues (is it effective/necessary) and a smaller range of ethical issues (whether it is a violation of rights, either of parents or the child). With a narrower range of issues, an Opening Government team can more easily impose its analysis on the round and make it last through eight speeches.

It is important to note that this is not the same as “tightening” or “squirreling” the motion, which seeks to skew the debate to the Government side. The purpose of this model is merely to reduce the scope of the debate, while preserving the argumentative balance created by the motion.

Clash of civilisations: think big and think backwards

So you’ve got your confidence back, you’re going to stick with the insane motion the Adjudication core have proposed, and you’ve decided how much of a model you need, and what it is. Now you need those pesky “arguments”.

With any given motion, most competent debaters will be able to come up with more arguments than they could coherently deliver in a seven minute speech, and this is especially true in the virgin territories of Opening Government. Opening Government is always in a particularly delicate position: being the first to speak and having only one speech in direct clash with the other side, it’s much easier for Opening Government’s arguments to drop out of the debate, especially if they deal mainly with issues that are peripheral to the main debate. Being forgotten is a first-class ticket to fourth, so it is critically important for an Opening Government team to choose its arguments very carefully.

The best way to do this is to think big and think backwards. Think through the debate as a whole, imagine yourself as the summary speaker, and ask yourself: what are the main issues in the round? Put another way, *where is the clash?* Individual arguments are always afferent to broader issues which focalise the debate, and a single issue can include a number of arguments. More importantly, the adjudicators will think of a debate in terms of issues rather than single arguments. The reason is

simple: debates can have dozens of arguments, but nine times out of ten they come down to one or two main issues.

So if you want to be remembered and relevant during the entire debate, you need to identify the key issues, flag those issues in the Prime Minister's speech by structuring it around them, and give the definitive analysis on those issues. If you manage to do all three, then the summary speeches will look eerily like the Prime Minister's speech. And if that happens, you're home free.

The bottom line: know your winning conditions

Why are you home free? Because the most important thing to know about Opening Government is that it is judged in a very different way from every other position in the round. The fulfilment of speaker and team roles are both very important in the British Parliamentary style, and inform a large part of any adjudication, but nowhere is this more self-consciously so than in the position of Opening Government.

It is always very useful to think about your role in the debate from the adjudicators' perspective. In fact, one of the best things you can do to improve your debating is to spend some time as an adjudicator yourself. It gives you valuable insight into how judges go about making a decision, what figures in their minds when they're doing so, what they remember from the round, and what they expect from the teams in it.

First proposition teams are usually judged on three criteria: whether they set up a clear debate with room for lots of clash, whether they delivered strong analysis and clashed strongly with Opening Opposition, and whether they maintained a presence during the course of the debate.

Put another way, the Opening Government doesn't have to win the debate in order to win the debate. Nobody expects your arguments to look very pretty after four people have had a go at them. Nobody expects you to be able to beat directly two teams that you never face off against. And sometimes even drawing a tie with the Opening Opposition team on the arguments is enough, given that your burden is not only to think of arguments but also to create the entire debate in the first place.

Because of the polycentric dynamic of a British Parliamentary round, evaluating the merits of an Opening Government is a delicate balancing act, and very often, the third criteria I mentioned will be the deciding factor. Sometimes this is phrased to inexperienced debaters as a recommendation to offer a lot of Points of information but in my opinion, that is rarely if ever enough, although it is important cosmetically. The main factor is whether the closing half teams are still dealing with material argued by Opening Government?

If your issues framework for the round is still alive in the summary speeches, if your arguments are still being debated, and if your set up gave the judges a clear picture of the stakes, all of which are subject to a great measure of control from the outset, then there really isn't much else that one can ask from the team that spoke nearly an hour ago.

If you do all that, they really don't have any choice but to give you a big fat first. And because those are all things over which you can exercise a great measure of control, Opening Government is a very strong position to be in.

ARGUMENTATION STRATEGY

SLOUCHING TOWARD BETHLEHEM: SLIPPERY SLOPES AND DEBATING STRATEGY

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*And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches toward Bethlehem to be born?*

W.B. Yeats

Whether you are on the left or the right, for big government or small government, a liberal or a conservative, pro choice or pro life, a civil libertarian or a defence hawk, it is likely that in one way or another you believe that society is sliding down a slippery slope. First we're locking up terrorists in Guantanamo Bay, then we are shipping dissidents off to the Gulag. One minute, gays are marrying in Massachusetts, the next Mormons are taking three wives in Utah. Euthanasia, abortion, censorship, free speech, free trade, animal experimentation, pre-emptive wars, public nudity – all variously lead us down slippery slopes either to fascism or anarchy. One compromise leads to another, until we have utterly lost our moral bearings.

Put crudely like this, it is easy to see why slippery slope arguments have traditionally been regarded as fallacious. When presented in shorthand, they are at best speculative, at worst tendentious. Often they involve a type of Puritanism: like an alcoholic refusing one drink lest they have fifteen or twenty, we are encouraged to refrain from a course of action that in itself is desirable, so as to avoid pain in the future. Often they are disingenuous: to avoid debating the merits of a particular proposal on its own terms, an antagonist will invoke the slippery slope as a kind of scare tactic. A good example is this from *The Spectator*:

- (1) Ten times as many foxes die on the roads as are killed by the hunts, and unlike the hunted fox they have a truly cruel and lingering death, haemorrhaging from the glancing blows. Is the Labour government going to ban cars? (Johnson, 2005, p. 13)

Despite all of these reservations, slippery slope arguments remain common in legal, political and ethical reasoning. They can act as a powerful bar to action, alerting us to some disastrous consequence entailed by a proposal in order to dissuade us from supporting it. While rarely knockdown arguments in themselves, slippery slopes can provide a useful way of shifting the burden of proof onto the opposing side in a debate. Consider this from an earlier issue of the *Monash Debating Review*:

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- (2) Why does dressing something as ‘art’ make it acceptable? Why is the Venus de Milo a work of art, whilst the centrefold many find beautiful such a degrading image? (Deane, 2002, p.46)

The argument is that once we censor pornography, we have no principled way of deciding what is pornography and what is art. Therefore, censoring one leads to inconsistency. Notice the argument, in its original form, does not explicitly claim that no distinction can be drawn between the Venus de Milo and a pornographic centrefold. Rather, it simply challenges the antagonist to provide one. This is easier said than done, a difficulty once famously acknowledged by US Supreme Court Justice Potter Stewart:

... I shall not today attempt to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within this shorthand description [hard-core pornography]; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it. (*Jacobellis v. Ohio*, 1977)

Slippery slope arguments, then, deserve to be taken seriously. When used artfully, they pose thorny issues for opposing teams. A proper understanding of their structure should help us avoid the pitfalls outlined above while keeping us on guard against slippery slope challenges. This article will attempt to advance such an understanding, examining the role slippery slope arguments play in debating strategy and suggesting some possible counter-arguments to them.

Two types of slippery slopes

Bernard Williams (1995) distinguishes between two types of slippery slope arguments, the *horrible result* argument and the *arbitrary result* argument.¹

The first gives us, roughly speaking, a causal chain from the proposal through a series of steps to a disastrous conclusion. For instance, this argument against a US missile defence shield:

- (3) If the US proceeds with a National Missile Defence shield, it will prompt an arms race. The diminishing threat posed by nuclear deterrence will spur China to modernise its nuclear arsenal. Faced with this increased threat from China, India will build up its nuclear weapons stockpile, which, in turn, will trigger Pakistan to do likewise.

While there is nothing formally wrong with arguments of this kind, their utility in debating is often limited, simply because of the number of steps involved in their proof. For causal arguments to work in a debate, you usually require a sympathetic audience who already understand the background to the argument. When this is the case, it means that all the causal links need not be spelt out. It is commonplace in the Kyoto debate these days, for instance, to appeal to the disastrous consequences of global warming without explaining how they come about. Most *horrible result* arguments, however, are too cumbersome to be of much practical use in a seven or eight minute speech. They also breed complacency. We assume that just because the links in the causal chain are clear to us, they are plain to all. This makes *horrible result* arguments particularly susceptible to sceptical challenges from

¹ Trudy Govier (1982) suggests there are four: Sorites arguments, dangerous precedent arguments, causal arguments and mixed cases, which combine elements of all the other three. For simplicity I have followed Williams. Govier’s finer distinctions are anyway more or less assimilable into Williams’ two categories.

the opposing team. In the Kyoto debate, one might ask, “Why should we act on Kyoto, if you cannot say with any certainty that global warming is caused by human activity?” The *horrible result* argument will then collapse failing adequate buttressing.

Arbitrary result arguments are far trickier to deal with. They are closely related to the Sorites paradox and the problem of *indeterminacy*. The classic example is baldness. A man with no hair on his head is bald. If you add one hair, he is still bald. If you add another hair, he is still bald. At what point, do you say the man is no longer bald? Let’s say we draw the line at fifty hairs. Now this seems arbitrary: a man with fifty hairs is bald, but a man with fifty-one hairs is not. This is obviously absurd. Many debates involve a similar move - most controversially the abortion debate:

- (4) If abortion is allowed in the second trimester but not in the third, what makes the first day of the third trimester any more morally significant than the last day of the second? Or, for that matter, the second day of the third trimester?

It is important to note that *arbitrary result* arguments need not always involve a continuum. All that is required is for a key term or concept under discussion to be *ill-defined* or *vague*, so that two similar cases appear indistinguishable. The point on which case (2) turns is that there can be no consistent, workable definition of pornography beyond Justice Stewart’s ‘I know it when I see it’. Such *arbitrary result* arguments are particularly common in courts. Due to the binding nature of precedent, jurists are wary of decisions that may invite broad-ranging interpretations. To take another example from the US Supreme Court, Justice William J. Brennan, Jr. argued in this way against the Texas prohibition on flag burning:

- (5) To conclude that the Government may permit designated symbols to communicate only a limited set of messages would be to enter territory having no discernible boundaries. Could the government, on this theory, prohibit the burning of state flags? Of copies of the Presidential seal? Of the constitution?² (*Texas v. Johnson*, 417)

Advice on Opening Government strategy and points of information

It should be obvious at this stage that slippery slope arguments are better suited to Opposition teams. They are naturally *conservative* arguments in the sense that they warn against proposed changes to the *status quo*. Opening Governments should be mindful of this when setting the parameters of the debate. Take this example from the 2005 World University Debating Championships: *This house would have harsher sentences for celebrity criminals*

There is an obvious *arbitrary result* argument on the opposition here:

- (6) What exactly is a celebrity? Is it just someone who is in the public eye? Do you have to have sought fame to qualify? Or will it do just to have fame thrust upon you? Do you have to be a household name? Is being on Big Brother enough? What if you are a politician? Or a well-known religious leader? Or are you famous only by virtue of the crime for which you are being tried?

² For further discussion of this case and a full survey of slippery slope arguments, see Walton (1992). The section on *Texas v. Johnson* is pp. 267-276.

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The Opening Government can shut off this line of attack from the outset by establishing a clear test for who is and is not a celebrity. Or at least convincing us that such a test is conceivable. It might be as simple as Justice Stewart's 'I know it when I see it'. That is, given an accumulation of case law and precedent, judges will be in position to make the necessary distinctions. Of course, this does not shut out the Opposition completely. It just forces them, if they wish to use a slippery slope argument, to show that the proposed test is inconsistent, or poses practical difficulties. They might argue that while the test in itself is a fair one, when in the hands of activist judges it could be interpreted too widely.

Many motions involve some degree of *vagueness* in one of the key terms, as in the above example. The very first thing an Opening Government team should do in these debates is to refine the *vague* term, so that they have a clear position to defend. If they do not, they risk the Opposition teams broadening the scope of the debate to the point of absurdity. The Government side, though, need not always be on the defensive against slippery slopes. If the Government bench can point to a precedent or analogy for their proposal, then it would appear we are already on a slippery slope. Far from setting a dangerous precedent, a precedent for the proposal has already been set.

Why then, is taking this one further step, going to be so disastrous? The Government thus shifts the goalposts in their favour. The onus is now on the Opposition, not on them, to show that this case is somehow different, or should be considered the exception to an established rule. It was a tactic used successfully at the 2005 in this year's Worlds grand final. Ottawa Law argued that corporal punishment is no more traumatic than the psychological punishments children are already subject to. It was then incumbent on the Opposition to establish why a stern talking to is ok, but a good paddling is not.

It will be noticed that such questions also make effective points of information. They are points of this kind:

(7) We take away prisoners' rights in all sorts of ways, how is the right to vote any different?

(8) If you accept that babies born with terminal illnesses can be denied medical treatment, then surely you must also accept that a foetus can be aborted in the third trimester on the same grounds?

Both are variations on the familiar construction: "We do X every single day, why is Y any different?"

Conversely, conventional slippery slope arguments also make searching points of information. These are points of the form: "If you allow X, does it not open the door to Y?" As in:

(9) If we accept the right of anyone to marry whomever they choose, regardless of societal mores, then mustn't we grant polygamous marriages? Or even incestuous marriages?

(10) If we ban the swastika, what is to stop us banning the hammer and sickle or the fasces or any other political symbol just because it might cause offence?

There is another type of slippery slope point that seeks to exploit a lack of clarity in the Opening Government's set-up. These points are best obscured, as a leg-spinner might disguise his googly, in

the hope that the Opening Government will unwittingly extend their model further than is prudent. They take the form: “Under your model, would you allow/include X?” As in:

- (11) Under your model, would Mamdouh Habib be considered a celebrity?
- (12) If I spend too much time in the sun, is that an unhealthy lifestyle?

The Opening Government is on a hiding to nothing. If they answer yes, their model seems absurd. If they answer no and provide no good reason, the model will seem unworkable. Such points underscore the importance of Opening Government teams establishing clear tests to remove *vagueness* from the debate.

General refutation patterns for slippery slopes arguments

It ain't necessarily so

The most obvious response to a *horrible result* slope is to question the links in the causal chain, thus denying the *horrible result* envisioned. Eugene Volokh (2003) in an op-ed on the Iraq War refuted the following argument from Howard Dean:

- (13) Dean: What is to prevent China, some years down the road, from saying, ‘Look what the United States did in Iraq – we’re justified in going in and taking over Taiwan?’

Volokh: When China is deciding whether or not to invade Taiwan, it will focus on its own interests, not on being consistent with what other governments have done. And Chinese officials are unlikely to be influenced by America’s judgement of when a war is just.

Apples and Oranges

When faced with an *arbitrary result* argument, it is necessary to draw clear distinctions between two apparently similar cases. These can be differences in kind or in degree. In case 1, it does not take much imagination to work out why banning cars and banning foxhunting might not be comparable cases. This is a difference in kind. In case 10, it might be argued that the swastika is a particularly egregious political symbol. That Nazi ideology is so contemptible and appalling that it should be considered in a category of its own, separate from Communist or Fascist ideology. This is a difference in degree.

So what?

Slippery slope arguments should not always be taken at face value. Sometimes the consequences might be real, but just not as terrifying as is made out. In response to example (9), we might ask if legalising polygamy would really be so catastrophic. If someone wants to take more than one husband or wife, why should the state stand in their way? This shifts the burden back onto the proponent of the slippery slope to show why the consequences of the course of action are so undesirable.

The lesser of two evils

It might occasionally be necessary to concede that going ahead with some proposal might lead to harmful results, but still contend that not going ahead would be far worse. Robert Walton calls this the counterslope (1992, p. 261) and offers this example from Frederick Schauer:

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(14) Objector: If you allow Pawtucket, Rhode Island, to erect a Nativity scene on public property, then it is only one small step to allowing organized prayers and religious services on public property.

(15) Defender: If you allow the courts to stop Pawtucket from erecting the nativity scene, then the next step is allowing the courts to prohibit any mention of religion at all, including the studying of the Bible as literature in schools and hanging Giotto paintings in publicly funded museums. (1985 cited Walton 1992, pp. 261-262)

So what else is new?

Maybe we are going to be confronted with the terrible consequences at the bottom of the slope no matter what, so we may as well proceed with the proposal. In response to example (3), we might say that China has been modernising its nuclear forces for the last twenty years, and shows every sign of continuing to do so, whether we go ahead with the shield or not.

Conclusion

Slippery slope arguments are a handy tool in any debater's kit bag. They can be, and are, used to powerful effect in all sorts of debates. Nevertheless, they continue to be regarded with suspicion. An awareness of how they work can help debaters steer clear of the more problematic arguments sketched out at the start of this article, as well as keeping debaters on guard for when they are used against them. It is of particular value to Opening Government teams to be mindful of possible *arbitrary result* objections to the motion. Taking care to close off these objections should help more Opening Governments win debates. There is also a wider point to all this. We have all seen debates collapse into a heap because no one quite knew what the debate was about. I believe the usual euphemism for such debates is 'messy'. Debating, at its best, is a forum for clear thinking, an opportunity to apply the blowtorch of reason to argument. That is to say, debating is about scrutiny of arguments, not just facts. Concern, then, for the logic and structure of those arguments makes not only for better debaters. It makes for better debates.

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HOW TO STOP LOSING

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Introduction

You’ve just sat down after giving a stupendous speech in a Worlds Break Round. You were intelligent and lucid. Analytical yet accessible. Funny not flippant. Combative not aggressive. Your matter-manner balance was, well, little short of perfect. Has anything ever felt this good before? Will it ever again?

We’ve all been there. Waiting in eager anticipation for the results in a few minutes time, knowing that this time we really deserved it. This time we had made it. Except you hadn’t. Because the judges return to tell you that you took a fourth. Not only did you take a fourth but it was clear and unanimous. In fact, it was so clear and so unanimous that you weren’t even discussed. And, just to make you feel better, the two teams that you thought had (so clearly) come last are through to the next round.

Despair. Disillusion. Another debating season of shame. How can this be? How can such an inversion of natural justice have occurred? The common answer (which you and your partner will give for the rest of the tournament, if not your lives) typically involves the technical debating vulgarism: “shafting”. For those unfamiliar with the term, a loose definition would be “a decision so manifestly, abundantly and painfully wrong that in any sane world the judges would be made criminally liable for their unspeakable, uncivilised, vile behaviour”. Or else bring back the death penalty, just for them.

Judicial Advantage

However, what every good debater needs to understand is this: occasionally, a truly terrible judging decision does occur but far more frequently, in close debates, audiences and participant debaters call a debate incorrectly. I believe there are four entirely understandable reasons for this:

1. *Notation:* Judges record everything that is said in a debate, unlike an audience or participants who typically fade-in and fade-out.
2. *Analysis:* Judges are often better at analysing debates by virtue of their superior experience, but moreover, because they have far more time to do so in a more concentrated environment. They can benefit from clarifying details and testing ideas against each other and seeing how far they carry.
3. *Flexibility:* Judges will frequently change their minds in BP judging, according to the analytical discussion in the judging room. First impressions are often wrong on a closer inspection and recognising this, at times, makes you a *strong* judge, not a weak one. How often do audiences ever change their mind based on discussions in the foyer? Rarely if at all.

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4. *Objectivity*: This is the key reason as far as I'm concerned. As an audience member, however much you think you're a fair and impartial judge, you simply cannot be. Audience members influence each other by mid-debate chats, friendships, and their own take on debating. One simply cannot be objective until you have to be in the silent and lonely position of the judging panel with no idea of what anyone else around you thinks.

Some Examples

There are some specific reasons which have led to debates being called in a way which (I later found out) surprised the audience. Here is what they may have missed:

Example 1: Case set-up. What looked like a bad case set up to the audience by virtue of being 'simplistic' was perfectly good enough to the judges who liked the simple, solid and 'down the line' case approach, rather than over-complicated model which would have veered the debate away from the core issues.

Example 2: Subject matter. Whilst one team out-analysed all the other teams in the room, a long adjudication concluded that they were actually debating a very slightly different question to the one before them. They certainly looked the most slick and sophisticated to the audience, but upon closer inspection, it was clear they were having a different debate.

Example 3: Style. What an audience finds hysterically funny, a judging panel found incredibly irritating. Rudeness, aggressiveness and impoliteness just does not go down very well on paper and in the judging room even if it provides a hilarious anecdote for the hotel room party later.

Example 4: Timing. This is a common one. The audience went wild for a point made just before the double-knock. I'm sure it was a great point, but it probably took up 0.2% of the judges' notepad and was weighted accordingly. It's not about a concentrated impact for judges or the last thing on their mind. It's all about a slow, careful, sustained analysis that fills up their judging box with lovely, detailed matter.

How to Stop Losing

When you lose a debate in a seemingly brutal fashion, anger will provide catharsis but it will do nothing to ensure you fill up your trophy cupboard. You will only do that when you fully understand why you lost and then you iron out those errors from your debating. And it is *crucial* that you have the courage to admit them as errors rather than just nodding glibly at the judge and then walking off muttering how wrong they were. Once you start disagreeing with the judges' reasoning, you can learn nothing. To be blunt: if you want to win at debating, do what the judges tell you to do. I would adopt the following approach after one of those famous shaftings:

- (1) Take a deep breath (and maybe a tranquilliser)
- (2) Go up to the judges immediately with you head held high, shake their hands and ask them for constructive feedback. It doesn't matter how much you want to punch in their faces, do it anyway. And smile a lot.
- (3) When the judges have given you their teary-eyed spiel, ask them again. Say: "OK, that's your polite version of events, now tell me the truth *how bad was I?* Be

harsb?. (Note: this is the really painful bit but you have to say this to get to the core of why you lost).

(4) Now you get what you asked for. *Everything*. That speech you thought was good – you now realise how bad it was. And if you don't then keep asking. There is no point losing a debate until you understand quite how badly you lost it. Even if you disagree with every word. Get the full whiplashing.

(5) Say thank you. Smile. Tell the judges you will take on board their helpful advice for next time. Oh, and we must have a beer later. Say "mate" a lot. Smile more. And leave.

(6) Now, a few beers later, sit down with your partner and discuss those two or three things you really didn't realise you had done wrong but you really can't do again.

(7) Go into your next debate with those judges or with other judges and don't make the same mistake again.

I have encouraged a number of young teams to adopt this approach in the past year. One Australian team for which I've done some coaching, used to consider every defeat they endured a travesty of justice. It wasn't. They deserved to lose because they were bad. But when they started forcing themselves to accept their losses, embrace their mediocrity and resolve to fight it, they sky-rocketed in ability. It's the quickest and easiest means of self-improvement at debating, if not more generally.

And even if you don't accept any of the above, then you should still follow my advice because you've got to recognise there is nothing else you can do about it. Making a huge fuss guarantees you a terrible reputation which will spread like toxic waste. And, like it or lump it, that will affect how judges perceive you and everything you say.

So excise the phrase 'it was a shafting' from your otherwise exemplary vocabulary. It's vastly overused and it's terribly coarse. Instead, try the phrase 'we lost and we now know why'. It might be more painful and it might force you to choke on humble pie. But I promise you, it maximises your chance of winning next time.

WHO'S AFRAID OF FEMINISM?

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All major debating tournaments around the world appear to share one thing in common – the collective groan that echoes throughout the room when topics relating to feminism are announced. I don't believe that this groan is the result of any antipathy toward women, nor a particular objection to the women's movement, but rather is an acknowledgement that most debaters seem to fear debating about feminism. Of course there are several who revel in the opportunity, but they appear to be the minority.

In this paper I want to examine several problems, which teams encounter when approaching feminism debates and discuss some strategies that may help teams to avoid these pitfalls.

Feminism debates at university debating tournaments are, almost without exception, mechanistic debates. Whether the debate is about maternity leave, the banning of headscarves or female genital mutilation (FGM), mechanistic debating is a constant. The current political climate of debating worldwide assumes that women must be treated better and that some form of feminist resistance to the patriarchy is both necessary and to be celebrated.

The clash lies in how the aims of the feminist movement or more accurately, women, can best be reached. To argue that women should remain bare-foot and pregnant in the kitchen, or that the removal of the clitoris from pre-pubescent girls is a good thing is usually considered debating suicide! With this in mind, let's look at some of the common mistakes, with case studies, teams make in these debates and why they are bad.

Problem One – Reverse stereotyping

Too often teams attempt to covertly define what a woman should be. In the age of political correctness the figure of the 'female' is type cast as a victim figure and little else. The problem with these characterisations is that they assume both a singular identity for the females they debate about, and come across as immensely patronising.

The female as singularly victim is most prevalent in debates such as the FGM debate. Teams often attempt to outlaw the practice try far too hard to locate the woman as a victim and end up isolating her in that position. While this is not the only debate in which this occurs, it is the best example to analyse to make the general point.

The classic model for this is in debates in which the proposal entails intervention by the West in the 3rd World feminist problems. The 3rd world woman is often classified as destitute, poor, unable to

resist the evil black man oppressing her and in need of old whitey to save her. Post-colonial feminists the world over would cringe to see the extent to which this occurs in debates! Too much time is devoted to explaining the specific violence that FGM entails. We all know that this practice is violent and barbaric, five minutes of the opening speech explaining what the procedure involves and how nasty it is is unnecessary. Secondly, teams tend to focus so much upon the violent effects of FGM upon women, that women become synonymous with victimhood and nothing else. Whether through ignorance or a tactical decision, women are involved in the debate solely through their status as victims.

The problem, from a debating point of view, is twofold – a) it is factually inaccurate, and b) it can make you look ridiculously simplistic and risk contradiction.

So, factual inaccuracy. In countries which practice FGM, not only is it often the mothers and grandmothers of the girls who insist most strongly that the rite be performed, there also exist female-led resistance movements attempting to halt the practise in countries such as Kenya and Sierra Leone. By locating the figure of the female as singularly the victim, you, as a team, risk being contradicted by fact. This is the case in most circumstances – women are rarely, if ever, solely the silent, accepting victims of male oppression; they are often loud, outspoken and full of fight.

In debates about feminism, creditability plays a major part in the adjudicators mind (whether it should or should not is another issue), so appearing not to know your stuff, or being revealed to be engaging in stereotyping is extremely harmful – even if your stereotypes are geared toward ‘saving’ these poor, poor girls.

The second problem that locating the woman as singularly the victim is that you can look like a fool! Stereotypes are never healthy in debates, even if you are trying to help. By looking women in cases such as these as purely victimised entities you come across as simplistic, at best, and at worst, offensively patronising. Women, like any other group of people, encompass a wide and almost endless range of identities, belief and relationships, with each other, and with men.

In a close debate, the refusal to conform to stereotypes can often make the difference, especially if the third speaker, or second in the British Parliamentary format, is able to point out the stereotypical nature of the opposing case. Speakers should look for this when planning their speech. Given that, as discussed above, the assumption in debates is that women are valuable creatures and we want to help them and pointing out that the opposition is patronising women in their attempt at liberation is a persuasive strategy to pursue.

Problem Two – Assumed Desire

This is a problem usually isolated to debates about women in the West – women who have achieved basic rights and are now attempting either the extension of these rights (such as maternity leave) or are merely resisting patriarchal social structures.

Women in these debates are too often characterised as educated, professional, driven to succeed, wanting to combine children and a career, and, most importantly, bereft of sexual desire.

In a recent debate I adjudicated about whether or not Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera were good for feminism, this stereotype was on display in full force. The affirmative team, arguing that Britney and Christina were not friends of feminism, cited the fact that they “dressed like hoes” as

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key material. The assumption was that they could not possibly be feminists if they chose to dress in a revealing nature and to actively promote themselves as sexual beings. This, as I told the team (which, incidentally won the debate) is as offensive a stereotype as arguing that all women should stay at home with the kids – and far more common. A good feminist, so the extension of this argument runs, must dress in power suits, thoroughly covering themselves and refuse to acknowledge that they, like men, are sexual beings. To do otherwise is to merely conform to male stereotypes that women are sex objects and should be ogled at and violated at every opportunity.

Women are allowed to have sex, they can like sex and they can even love sex. They can have as many sexual partners as they like and dress as they like. To argue otherwise is simplistic, patronising, betraying a double standard, and thoroughly anti-feminist. There is a world of feminist literature and theory supporting this, Germaine Greer being arguably the most prominent exponent of this.

However, this argument, if put correctly, can be a very good one. The argument should not have been that they are “dressing like hoes” but that they have no choice but to do so. The issue here is one of choice. If you can establish that women such as Britney and Christina have no choice but to dress and act in this manner if they wish to succeed, then you have an argument – they are victims of patriarchal power structures. If, on the other hand, they are able to succeed in another manner, but have *chosen* to fast track their success by playing up to the sexual stereotype, they are actually liberated women, using their sexuality and attractiveness to further their careers. Here we have a genuine clash – and sophisticated argumentation.

This is also a strategy for argumentation that can be applied to debates about prostitution, or the porn industry. The issue is choice – do the women have it, or not. If so, then their involvement in whatever practise the debate centres around is not (necessarily) anti-feminist, but can be construed as actively feminist. If not, then we have a problem for the women involved.

These arguments are by no means perfect however, by looking at these issues as ones of choice and empowerment (or the absence of both), a team can avoid the stereotypes and provide genuine analysis of the feminist issues involved.

Basically, women can want a variety of things – existing outside the mould of the professional, driven, sexless femi-Nazi is not necessarily a bad thing – provided that you can establish that the decision to do so has been actively made and without obtrusive patriarchal pressures influencing that decision.

Problem Three – Wanting the World

This is possibly the most contentious of the problems I have witnessed in feminism-based debates – the feeling that teams must provide women with everything that they want and that it must happen immediately.

This is of particular significance when issues of maternity leave and such are so readily debated at tournaments everywhere. In looking at this, I will focus upon the maternity leave debate and the problem that teams arguing against it have.

Everyone knows the arguments about backlash and the effects that maternity leave will have upon small business etc – these comprise the ‘opposition to maternity leave 101’ case.

The problem is, that in a lot of current debating, certain arguments that are often very persuasive

cannot be run for risk of breaching etiquette. In this case, the argument that many teams fear to run is that women may have to make a choice – kids or a career. Most proposition teams will set up the debate in a context in which women must make this choice and that it is harmful for them to have to do so – opposing teams rarely contest this. However, if run well, this is entirely the case that teams should run.

To argue that this choice is a defensible one is not that difficult – it is only fear of appearing anti-feminist which prevents people doing it. However, if you can establish that you do not care which parent stays at home, and that children are too important to leave in day-care, this argument is a very good one, though, like all arguments in debates, it has an opposition.

Both adjudicators and debaters need to realise that women do not have to wear power-suits, and that child rearing is not a degrading profession, but a necessary part of being a parent. Arguments such as these can be run without being accused of being patriarchal, misogynist dinosaurs!

Stop being scared of Virginia Woolf people, she's lovely. Really.

**WHAT'S THE MATTER
WITH MANNER?**

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MATTER?

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In the inaugural issue of this journal, an article was published reminding us all that manner is an integral part of debating, and should be assessed with equal weighting to questions of matter. The title of the article rhetorically asked the question "what's the Matter with Manner?" Over the years I have considered this question, and I have come to the conclusion that there is a great deal that is the 'matter' with manner. Recently the argument for manner as an equal criterion to matter was resurrected in the MMU Worlds brochure, and while I wholeheartedly respect the views of its author, I feel that the other side of the argument should be advanced.

It is true that most debating guides, adjudication guides and even some rulebooks indicate that matter and manner should be considered equally by judges, often as separate categories on a score sheet, or at least as separately described categories during briefings from Adjudication Cores. The growing trend towards matter-heavy adjudication is however a positive step towards more consistent, reliable and objective adjudication. Assessment of manner as a separate category only reinforces subjectivity in adjudication, and propagates some of the worst stereotypes that exist in the world debating community. I am certainly not advocating for debates with no style and no verbal artistry, however there is a large gap between encouraging style among debaters and actually adjudicating it on some sort of objective scale.

The first question that needs to be answered in order to justify the adjudication of style is "what makes good style?" Is it being loud? Is it having a good grasp of sound-bytes? Is it being witty or spending the first half of your speech cracking jokes elaborately crafted hours before the round. Most experienced adjudicators have no problem accepting that there are a multitude of ways to give a good speech. In particular, at a tournament as regionally diverse as the World University Debating Championships, we need to embrace a broad range of speaking styles. Accepting the principle that there is no "way" to give a properly styled speech, means that assessing manner is almost entirely subjective. I'll openly concede that the art of persuasion inherently must have subjective elements, but I think that a balance needs to be sought.

If we accept that there is a multitude of ways to successfully style a speech, and that at international tournaments we ought to be sensitive to the variances in style that accompany an event as multicultural as the WUDC, then it makes very little sense to compartmentalise "manner" as a category unto itself and adjudicate it as either good or bad. Sensitivity to different cultural styles, and to different individual styles requires adjudicators to work with the debaters at the competition. When we judge rounds at Worlds, there will always be people that speak faster than others, people with accents that we find difficult to understand, people who speak softly and people who use sarcasm or wit to advance an argument. All of these components, and many more, can be lumped under the heading of 'manner'. We must recognise that an adjudication of this area engages all sorts of cul-

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tural biases that really ought to be minimised in the interest of fairness. As an adjudicator the questions we should be asking are; “Did I understand the speaker’s argument?”, “Was the argument supported by evidence/analysis/examples?”, “Was the argument effectively presented?”. The last of these questions clearly engages the issue of manner, but as a subset of matter that is not to be given a weighting equal to matter.

We also need to be aware that assessment of manner can occur where systemic barriers exist towards identifiable groups, specifically although not limited to, ESL debaters. I’m sure that at some point we have all been in a room where a team had absolutely brilliant ideas, but linguistic issues kept those ideas from being presented as forcefully as the rebuttal that came from a native English speaker. To my mind, valuing an argument of poorer quality over an argument of superior quality as a result of the manner in which the two arguments were presented is poor adjudication. If a debater manages to present a well-constructed argument, with cogent examples and solid analysis, but does so while struggling with the language, the argument is still a good one. I would like to think that, in as much as debating mirrors the real world, we are a community of people intelligent enough that we would rather be persuaded by good ideas than by good salespeople.

The trend towards matter based adjudication has no doubt been discussed to death all over the world, but since I am familiar with it, I will use Canada as an example. Anecdotal evidence strongly suggested that there were institutional barriers to women’s success in Canadian debating. While there were a number of theories as to why, including hostility in social environments etc, one of the most plausible reasons was that there was a singular or limited conception of ‘good manner’ that existed within the majority of senior adjudicators. This style was the classic soapbox style speech, filled with sound-bites, aggressive rhetoric, often sarcasm and the occasional ad hominem attack. As a result of cultural biases, many men succeeded in this style, while often women who attempted this style were seen as pushy or even ‘bitchy’. The answer to this that seems to have achieved some measure of success is to shift our adjudication criteria to be more sensitive to matter than to manner. In the past few years Canada has seen a growth in the success of female debaters and debates are still interesting and entertaining despite the fact that ‘manner’ is no longer as valuable to the ballot as an independent category.

Lastly I would add that the notion that we can separate matter from manner and treat them as separate categories is an entirely synthetic and false distinction. A debater whose analysis is largely superficial, but is funny and speaks with a good presence may entertain me for a moment or two, but ultimately will not sustain my attention for the duration of a seven minute speech. If the purpose of ‘manner’ is to make the adjudicators want to listen to you, then quality argumentation is a necessary component of manner, and the distinction between matter and manner collapses on itself. Attempting to separate matter and manner as categories for adjudication is an intellectually useless concept. You get very little from it, and you allow the institutionalisation of the worst kinds of cultural biases.

We’ve done away with the enforced humour or “style” round. We’ve accepted almost universally that there is no one way to define “good manner”. We’ve recognised that there are cultural differences in debating regions, and individual differences within those regions. Isn’t it time to formally change the way we adjudicate debates to recognise this new reality?

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH MANNER?

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The credibility of debating as a discipline turns on its ability to have meaningful judging. Without it, results don't tell us anything and tournaments don't mean anything. So every time someone tells me of a round that they have judged and says that manner was the decisive factor, it makes me cry a little inside. Even worse is the statement, 'one team just convinced me more.' It's a mealy mouthed short-hand for 'I didn't understand the debate so I just gave it to the team who told more jokes.' Here are some of the reasons why self-proclaimed (or even covert) manner judges need to be burned as witches if there is to be any integrity in debating.

Manner judging is lazy, arrogant...and tempting

Adjudicators don't need any encouragement to judge on manner because it is a tempting option. It is a whole lot easier to sit there 'getting a feel for the debate' than going through the tedious process of making extensive and thoughtful notes on what is being said. You can do it if you are thick. Or drunk. That is why when people pull a bin room in the ninth round of Worlds they often don't make many notes. But a move to putting manner at the heart of judging amounts to treating all debates as though they don't matter. They do to the participants so they should to adjudicators.

That is partly because manner judging amounts to a snap judgement - impressions are all that matter. When people discuss matter they have to analyse and balance the many issues that were raised in the debate. They have to consider how they flowed, and how to weight the strengths and weaknesses of the teams. Deciding on the basis of manner reduces an adjudicator's judgement to a single assertion. It isn't open to meaningful discussion and it isn't open to division into aspects that can be weighed and measured. On that single assertion of faith, adjudicators are able to send teams out of tournaments.

Manner judging appeals to the ego. It relies on the assertion that an adjudicator can instinctively get a feeling for what happened in a debate without going through the boring processes that lesser mortals rely on. It also frees the judge from the constraints of accountability. Of course judging decisions in debating are never open to review, but the discipline of knowing that you are going to have to really explain your analysis of all the matter in the debate can work wonders. It forces you to take responsibility. On the other hand, who can argue with a judge's assertion that one side had a more convincing manner? Everyone knows you can't rebut a rank assertion and that frees the judges to put themselves, and not the debaters, at the centre of the narrative. What do they think about the debate? What messages do they want to send out about the way people should debate? None should care, but they have to when a judge can use manner to justify whatever they like.

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Perhaps all of this explains why there sometimes seems to be an inverse relationship between the joy people get from judging and how good they are at it. Good judging is a lot of work, an intensive administrative and analytical task which doesn't allow much scope for the ego. It's boring because it's about listening, not talking.

Manner judging: the fastest route to the wrong decision

Manner judging allows the subjective free rein. Of course, there is subjectivity in all judging, but one of the key barriers to that subjectivity is being forced to look at each argument in a rigorous and analytical way. The moment the question is reduced to 'who convinced me more' it removes those barriers. Arguments that we instinctively agree with are likely to be more convincing. People we find interesting and attractive convince us more. It is only by putting in the extra analysis that is required to judge matter, that we allow ourselves to take a good look and see beyond those things. It doesn't always work for all of us, but it is a whole lot better than not bothering.

Manner judging is unfair to women, unfair to less experienced speakers, unfair to people with 'funny' accents and unfair to people who aren't from your region. Of course, our understanding of manner *should* be wide enough to address all of those groups, but the reality is that it never is. The very subjectivity of manner judging makes it easy to fall back on what is comfortable and familiar. When adjudicators say they judge on manner, they are, in effect, conveying that they have a negative marking scheme which refers to an optimal model they have in their head. How close are you? I am not saying that some people have a good model and some people have a bad model. The problem is that any model is incapable of dealing with the diversity of the ways in which people communicate arguments effectively. There is an effective way of rewarding that variety. It is matter judging.

Manner judging makes consensus judging meaningless. Find a judge who says, 'I never change my mind in the discussion' and you have found yourself a manner judge. If you reduce the basis for judging to 'gut feeling', then you have removed any basis for meaningful discussion and consensus. Consensus judging, within a matter led paradigm, means comparing how each adjudicator analysed the debate and supplementing each other's analysis. Consensus judging, in a manner led paradigm, means shouting at each other until someone gives in. So really, it looks just like the type of debating it encourages. That's because manner judging is all about talking, both in the debating chamber and the judging room, whereas matter judging is about listening too.

Matter judging: Hallelujah!

Manner judging double counts manner because manner is inevitably taken into account when matter is assessed. When adjudicators assess arguments they don't just count them up. Rather, they analyse the relevance, credibility and weight. How judges analyse these arguments is integrally affected by the way that argument is presented. The vocal style and authority, the organisation of the arguments, the choice of phrasing, and the explanation of why that argument matters all allow the speaker to change the way adjudicators assess the value of that argument. That is manner, but it isn't manner in the narrow sense that is the preserve of a few chosen white boys. It is manner in the broader sense that allows us to give credit to good manner in all its forms. That's because it is assessed in the context that justifies its existence, that being how it helps to communicate argument. If manner doesn't contribute there, then it's just stand-up comedy and we might as well go and watch clowns.

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Manner judges also don't have a monopoly on instinctive reactions or getting a feel for the debate. It is just that when a matter judge gets a feel for a debate, it is probably based on what actually happened, since judging on matter forces an adjudicator to really think about the debate as it goes on, to note it and to understand it. The fact that manner judges talk so much about gut feeling is indicative. I prefer people to get a feeling for a debate with their brain and not their digestive tract, because we all know what comes out of the latter.

Finally, let's not forget that matter is what actually gives the semblance of meaning to this weird activity. Matter doesn't just mean a list of facts and it doesn't imply a dictionary reading contest. What it means is argument, fact, analysis, and the tactical judgement that knits them all together and makes them important in the debate. In the real world advocacy is about things like political and legal argument: using rhetorical skills for a purpose. The purpose is what gives meaning to the skill.

SOUND AND FURY? TOWARDS A MORE OBJECTIVE STANDARD FOR MANNER

About the Author: Anthony Jones graduated with a First Class Bachelor of Arts degree with Honours in Asian Studies at the University of Sydney. Most recently, Anthony studied at the University of International Relations, Beijing. Anthony currently works at the New South Wales Cabinet Office. He has represented the University of Sydney Union at the AustralAsian Debating Championships and the World Debating Championships. Anthony was awarded Best Speaker at the 2001 Australian Novice Debating Championships.

Introduction

To so many debaters of all levels of ability there has always been something very suspect about the role of manner in the assessment of a debate. We all know well enough (especially here in Australasia) what makes up good method, and how to judge it. Manner almost takes care of itself, appealing as it does to the proudly dorky quality that got so many of us involved in the debating game in the first place. But the reputation of manner, due in no small part to the limp attempts of lazy adjudicators the world over, is poor indeed. Manner (or rather, the assessment of manner, on which this article focuses) can be a nasty trump card that adjudicators can use to snatch victories away from deserving teams on the most shaky and subjective grounds. But more commonly, it is an element largely overlooked in the decision-making process and, consequently, in the training of debaters.

This situation is doubly a shame. On the one hand, unjustifiable, incorrect decisions get made by bad adjudicators in the name of manner. On the other, the majority of adjudicators shy away from assessing one of the key criteria of debating because of its image problem. While bad decisions that are unaccountable are obviously a problem for debating, an lack of willingness to judge the essential criterion that makes debating a spoken art, rather than a dumbed-down essay competition, gives us no way of working out exactly what it is that makes debating appealing as an intellectual exercise in persuasion.

Part of the problem lies in defining what manner is. A common and unhelpful perception exists that manner is some kind of grab-bag, including jokes, eye-contact, voice modulation and, perhaps most ridiculously, how many palm cards a speaker holds. Analysis of a speaker's manner becomes some sort of checklist to be ticked off, with little connection to the substance and dynamics of the debate.

The lack of any considered thought as to why these *style elements* might be things that ought to be encouraged, or indeed whether these elements are worthwhile, leads to adjudicators subjectively rewarding what appeals to them, more often than not as a reflection merely of what they would have done in the situation. This amounts to entering the debate to a degree that is just as reproachable as marking teams down on the basis of what arguments they didn't say.

In this article I propose that the assessment of manner *can* be done objectively and that, by considering the general purpose of manner as a part of the persuasive program of debating, we can gain an understanding of why certain things are regarded as good manner.

Manner as a relationship

I would propose that the role manner plays in debating is to add persuasiveness to the content of a speech. It is not an add-on to the argumentative process, but rather a fundamental part of that process. The style of a speech impacts the persuasiveness of an argument and the effectiveness of the speaker in convincing the audience of the correctness of their view. Since manner works towards persuasiveness, it must necessarily be prompted by the content of the argument being presented. But manner is more than a simple case of adding ‘style to substance’. Persuasiveness relies on evoking certain responses from the audience, therefore assessing manner must be an exercise in assessing the likely success of what might be called the *persuasion relationship* between speaker and audience, far more than it is a judgment of a set of *style elements*.

There would appear to be four types of *persuasion relationship*:

- i. the *emotional*, in which audience members feel personally affected by the speaker;
- ii. the *social*, in which the audience members come to like or support the speaker;
- iii. the *intellectual*, in which the audience members come to respect the person speaking or believe them due to their intelligence; and,
- iv. the *contextual*, in which the audience members feel that the speaker is sincerely taking part in an actual argument, and is not merely fulfilling the arbitrary requirements of a debate.

In general terms then, the appropriate way of assessing manner is to judge to what degree the speaker’s style adds or detracts from any or each of these four relationships. The building blocks of these four *persuasion relationships* are familiar enough: voice modulation, gesture, humour, eye contact and the like. But by considering the overarching purpose of manner – to establish effective *persuasion relationships* – we now have a more useful way of determining why, and whether, these checklist elements should be rewarded.

Elements of persuasion relationships

Persuasion relationships of the *emotional* type rely on the audience feeling a personal connection to the speaker when the speaker maintains authentic eye-contact with them at appropriate times in the debate. Confident, clear delivery that employs a register of formal conversation might also be expected to give the audience the impression that the speaker is naturally discussing the issue with them. The criterion that is important in this regard is the authenticity of the emotional relationship. And so the adjudicator’s role is to assess this authenticity, not to tally how many times the speaker looks at their cards. Specific *style elements* thus need to be considered in light of their contribution to this speaker-audience bond.

But a broader context conditions that bond too. Depending on the debate, the audience, or even the specific point being made, eye-contact and an empathetic expression might be inappropriate (or down right creepy). For instance, a pleasant smile and doe-eyed innocence when discussing the specifics of Abu Ghraib couldn’t be considered an example of good manner, nor could a heavily simplified language register (the frequently encountered “affable boofhead” genre) when trying to make fine distinctions on points of treaty law.

Looking now at the *social* type of *persuasion relationship*, it is ‘likeability’ that is the key trait that a speaker needs to project. Audiences are more prepared to listen to speakers they like, and more prepared to take on board the ideas of those speakers than to the unlikable. This is essentially an instantaneous home-ground advantage – a speaker that can, through manner, make friends with the

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audience deserves credit. Appropriate use of humour, being rare in all forms of serious competition, will obviously cast the speaker as likeable.

Yet interestingly, likeability is frequently defined negatively. By not offending large sections of the audience (for example, through the inappropriate use of humour), a speaker's persuasive ability is augmented because the members of that audience are less likely to be alienated and more likely to be supportive. This support is due to the audience's participation in a *social* relationship with the speaker. We might expect a reasonable audience to be equally 'put off' by a speaker who is actively annoying through the use of repetitive verbal and physical tics.

In assessing *persuasion relationships* of the *intellectual* type, we need to examine manner elements that contribute to, or detract from, the speaker's intellectual credibility – the impression that the speaker knows what they are talking about. I would suggest that a reasonable person perceives a speaker as intellectually credible when the speaker pronounces words correctly (especially the names of countries and significant people). Style of presentation can also sever the *intellectual persuasion relationship*. A speaker who appears flustered, card-bound and looking to teammates for support when explicating the voting structures of the World Trade Organisation hardly gives the impression of being an expert (or competent) in the field.

Contextual persuasion relationships can be created through a speaker's ability to match the tone of their delivery to that of their material. Through an appropriate tone, the speaker is able to give the impression of sincerity rather than mere participation in a debate. This tutored authenticity persuades because it leads members of the audience to treat the speech as a testimonial. The question is asked: "If this apparently rational person sincerely believes this line of argument, why shouldn't I?" *Style elements* contributing to the construction of this type of *persuasion relationship* might be calm, slow speech when logically explaining complicated details, or passionate vim (and forceful gestures) when discussing moral issues.

Weighting given to the elements of style must be on the basis of the degree to which the *persuasion relationship* is enhanced. It is only through this "big-picture" assessment of manner within its persuasive context that some objectivity and standardisation can be achieved in this area.

Signifying something

Real skill, practice and judgment is involved in turning the often drab subject matter of competitive debating into truly persuasive argumentation that influence the way that an audience thinks. Manner must be considered in determining success in debating – but it must be the right sort of consideration. By focusing on the purpose of style - which is persuasion, in its four types – and the relationship with the audience built up by the speaker, we have a schema for assessing what good manner is in a variety of debating contexts. And more certainty that purposeful manner will be rewarded can only serve to raise standards. That goes for adjudicators, too.

DEBATING POLICY

REFORMING THE AUSTRALASIANS: THE CASE FOR

About the Authors: Representing the University of Sydney, Andrew Chapman was an Octofinalist of the 2005 World University Debating Championships. He has participated in many national and international tournaments including the AustralAsian Debating Championships, the Melbourne Invitationals (where he made the Semifinals) and the Australian British Parliamentary Debating Championships, where he ranked 3rd best speaker.

Ben Cohn-Urbach has also participated in many national and international tournaments, taking part in the 2004 and 2005 World Championships. Ben fulfilled the role of Senior Tournament Organiser, providing tabulation support for the 2004 AustralAsians and was been central to the organisation of the Australian British Parliamentary Debating Championships in 2002 and 2003.

Points of Information

Australs-style debating is the only internationally practised debating format that does not allow Points of information. The question is whether this uniqueness should be preserved, or whether the style would be tangibly enhanced by introducing POIs.

There are two fundamental skills that a debating format should seek to maximise: firstly, the ability of a speaker and a team to develop a substantive case, and secondly, the engagement between the two opposing benches in a debate. The reason POIs would improve Australs style is that it would lift the level of engagement between the two teams in a debate, without substantially sacrificing the development of material that Australs celebrates more than any other style.

The problem with the current Australs format is that teams do not have the opportunity to immediately address what is being said by a member of the opposition. For example, the debate has to wait for eight minutes before the Negative has the chance to raise any arguments. Furthermore, a speaker can develop a bad argument confident that it cannot be refuted by the opposition until the next speech in the debate. This means that the debate is static, and opportunities for engagement are limited.

Engagement is enhanced when there is the ability for a team to immediately question the validity of an argument being presented to the debate. POIs therefore reward the ability of a team to develop immediate questions in response to arguments being put forward by the opposition. They also impair the ability of speaker to misrepresent the arguments of their opposition, because the opposition has the opportunity to immediately defend their case by offering a POI.

Also importantly, POIs raise the entertainment value of debating. Australs Semifinals may be admired by purists for their integrity of case development. But the simple fact is that most debates at Australs don't possess this quality, and most debates would become substantially more interesting by the introduction of POIs. Debating should be about entertainment as well as intellectual skill, and POIs reflect the concept of debating as a rhetorical art form, as well as an argumentative science.

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The practical upshot of the proposal to introduce POIs is that there will be around two interruptions in each eight minute speech. It is a gross exaggeration to claim that this will reduce the ability of a speaker to develop their case. In fact, if anything, POIs test speakers as to the veracity of their arguments. If they are developing their material well, there will either be silence from the opposition bench, or questions that can be immediately dismissed by throwing back the weight of the speaker's case.

Debating should be about argumentation and explanation. POIs increase the level of argumentation and place more challenges upon debaters to explain their substantive material well.

Replies

Replies are the great mystery of the Australs format. Few debaters know what purpose they serve, and even fewer debaters know how to do them well. The result is that for the vast majority of debates, replies are boring, gangrenous appendages that are totally meaningless to the outcome. *Ergo*, they should be abolished.

First, most adjudicators are implored to put little weight, if any at all, on the reply speeches. This is probably a good thing, because of the manner in which many speakers attempt to use replies to “assist” the adjudicator with their jobs. Either that, or they are used to misrepresent the other team's arguments as much as possible within four minutes.

Indeed, the only time replies serve a useful purpose is in debates when the speakers know how to do them properly and the debate is close enough after six speakers that the reply can have a genuine influence on the adjudicator's decision. These debates are very rare, and occur perhaps only a handful of times at any Australs tournament.

Even in this handful of rare debates, the replies still serve little purpose. A good adjudicator should be able to decide a debate, no matter how close, on six speakers. Forty-eight minutes of argumentation should enable the adjudicator to arrive at a decision. This is especially the case bearing in mind that these rare debates are usually in top rooms or post-break rounds, where the quality of adjudicators at least matches the quality of the debaters.

Otherwise, the vast majority of debates at Australs are either already won or lost by the replies, or the replies are not even done correctly (for example, they merely repeat what the 3rd speaker has already said). For these debates, the extra eight minutes adds an unwelcome extension to debate that is either already over, or was interminably boring from the beginning. It is all very well for debating connoisseurs to admire the use of replies in an Australs Semifinal, but for the other dozens of debates that occur at a tournament, the debates would be better off without the extension. Debating tournaments should not just be about catering for the Semifinalists, but also the far greater number of debaters who miss the break.

Overall, it is a matter of balancing the usefulness of replies against the desirability of shortening the length of a debate. The usefulness of replies is questionable at best, their contribution to debates is rare, and limited to the top debates at a tournament. Twenty-four minutes is more than enough time for a team to construct arguments, engage with their opposition, and summarise their position in the context of the debate.

DYNAMICS & ENGAGEMENT: THE CASE AGAINST

About the Author: Ray D’Cruz is the author of the AustralAsian Debating Guide, the WUDC World Parliamentary Debating Rules and most recently a co-author of the “An Introduction to English Language Debate in Asia”. Representing the Monash Association of Debaters, Ray has adjudicated the Grandfinals of the AustralAsian Debating Championships and the World University Debating Championships. He was a Semifinalist debater at the AustralAsians in 1994 and 1996 where he was ranked in the top ten best speakers of both tournaments.

There are two proposals to reform the style of debate of the AustralAsian Debating Championships – to *introduce* points of information (POIs) and *abolish* reply speeches. This contribution contends that POIs should not be allowed in this style of debate and that reply speeches should be abolished. However, it also contends that if POIs are introduced, reply speeches should be retained.

Points of Information

Proponents for the introduction of POIs argue that debates will be more entertaining and more engaging. This contention assumes that the POIs will be well made and well answered. *Poorly* executed POIs from either the offeror or answerer will not make for a more entertaining or engaging debate. In fact, they will make for a messy and disjointed debate.

Aside from this, it is important to note that POIs are not necessary for an entertaining debate. Over the years, there have been many engaging, entertaining debates at Australs, and not just in the finals series. These good debates involve two teams arguing and rebutting persuasively, structuring arguments clearly and concisely and presenting them in a manner that engages listeners. The use of humour is another contributing factor. Entertaining and engaging debates have got more to do with effective matter, method and manner than the presence of POIs. POIs may lead to more theatrical debates, but theatre should not be confused for either entertainment or engagement.

It’s also important to consider the origins of the Australs style. Australs style emerged from Australian debating traditions. These are distinctly non-parliamentary traditions: there is an affirmative and negative, not a government and opposition. There is a third speaker, not a whip. We debate topics, not motions. Both sides are encouraged to present substantive cases. There are no POIs.

There are certain consequences from this largely non-parliamentary approach. One is that having few affections and formalities means that speakers are encouraged to speak plainly and get straight to the point. Another is that the style encourages strong argumentation because poorly conceived or developed arguments cannot be disguised in an uninterrupted speech. Both of these attributes are important reasons why Australian debaters have enjoyed so much success on a world stage in other forms of debate, including parliamentary debate. If speakers really want to participate in competitions with POIs, they should seek them out.

Reply Speeches

Those who argue that reply speeches should be removed suggest that they serve no purpose and that as a consequence, they’re a waste of time. They’re right on both counts.

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The reply speech also distorts the roles of speakers. The role of third speaker is confused by the presence of reply speeches. Those who coach debating understand how difficult it is to contrast the role of the third speaker and reply speaker. Should we encourage third speakers to engage in detailed rebuttal or compare how both teams have addressed the pivotal issues in the debate? Most people would suggest the latter, but that confuses the role of the reply speaker.

Some coaches and trainers get around this by describing the reply speech as “a biased adjudication”. What is the point of presenting a biased adjudication? The role of speakers is to present arguments, not adjudicate.

The *only* justification for having reply speeches is where there are POIs. The level of interruption and distraction from POIs is significant. Even the act of declining POIs can be a distraction. The theatre of three speakers jumping to their feet to ask a POI can easily throw a speaker, adjudicator and audience member from their focus. Reply speeches provide an uninterrupted opportunity for the adjudicator and audience to gather their thoughts about the debate. POIs can make a mess of substantive speeches; the reply speech will assist in clarifying the major issues and each team’s approach to the major issues.

The AustralAsian debating community, who will decide on these proposals, should retain three on three debating in its best form: they should remove reply speeches and keep substantive speeches free from POIs. Good Austral debating is both entertaining and engaging. The benefits of this style of debate have contributed to the success of debaters from this region. And if these same debaters seek a parliamentary debate experience, they have many options from which to choose.

WHY LISTENING IS IMPORTANT: THE CASE AGAINST

About the Author: Tim Sonnreich is currently a Masters of Arts (Politics) candidate at Monash University. Representing the Monash Association of Debaters (MAD) Tim has been champion of the AustralAsians three times (2000, 2001 & 2004) and twice named AustralAsian Best Speaker (2002 & 2003). In 2003 he was a Grandfinalist at the World Championships and in 2004 won the World Masters competition. Tim is a former President of MAD and a former editor of the Monash Debating Review.

The proponents of these sweeping changes – the most profound changes in the more than a quarter century – want you to think that Australs debates aren't dynamic and engaging enough. That's total rubbish.

The obvious problem with the proposals to include Points of Information and remove replies is that they are unnecessary and will lower the standard of Australs debates.

Let me be honest, if there is a common problem at Australs - and I've been to the last seven as both an adjudicator and debater – it's that people don't *listen* to each other. They misrepresent, they oversimplify and they try to gloss over issues and arguments. It's happening more and more, and it's bad habit being dragged over from Worlds. If we are going to make profound changes to the style then we should be doing it with the aim of dealing with that most crucial issue, rather than supporting a proposal that has been defeated many, many times before because it makes things worse, not better.

Why have POIs at all?

POIs are needed in some styles like British Parliamentary because there are more than two teams and they need POIs in order to remain dynamic and responsive in the debate as it progresses. The All-Asians style has POIs because the aim of the tournament is to train people to succeed at both Worlds and Australs, and so the style is a compromise.

Every style of debating has its strengths (and weaknesses), and each style offers a unique blend of the skills and techniques of persuasion. Australasian's style puts an emphasis on *deep analysis, critical thinking* and a *balance between the fine details and the big picture*. BP focuses on other skills that are also valuable, but the debating community already has opportunities to practice those skills at tournaments like Worlds.

Having a mix of different styles across the debating calendar benefits us. The facts bare this out. Firstly universities in the UK are starting to hold their own tournaments in the Australs style – beginning with the Bristol Intersivity – because they can see its benefits. And they didn't drop replies or add POIs - they want what we already have.

Part of the reason why Australians have had so much success at Worlds is because *3 on 3* styles occupy at least half the debating season here (first Nationals and then Australs, none of which have POIs). We learn how to build a strong case and deeply analyse our opponents. And yet Australians at Worlds can hold their own against Europeans who have competed almost exclusively in BP style.

CONSISTENT ADJUDICATION AT WORLDS

Equally, is it any wonder that MMU is arguably the most successful debating society in Asia? It has been in existence less than a decade and already it is equal to or has surpassed debating societies that have been around for decades or more. Why? Are people at MMU just smarter than other people? Or could it be their training, which is focused very much on what it takes to succeed at Australs; deep analysis and the ability to engage, not misrepresent. Its not a surprise that their principal coach is Praba, the only Asian ever to win Best Speaker at Australs and features many guest trainers who are experts in the Australs style.

While I concede that POIs can *sometimes* increase engagement, its important to recognise that only one thing *always* ensures that teams can properly engage and deliver deep analysis: listening. POIs can be fun to watch (when they aren't embarrassingly bad) and they can make a debate superficially more dramatic, but they don't improve engagement in a 3 on 3 debate. If it's a good debate then the part of the definition of a good debate is that the teams are engaging with each other, and if it's a bad debate its not because they don't have a chance to interrupt each other every 30 seconds, its because the teams have not set up their cases properly so that they clash.

Good debates are more than being loud and scoring cheap shots – it's a clash of ideas before anything else. You don't need 3 speakers constantly offering POIs to have a clash of ideas. Every high quality debate we have ever had at Australs is proof of that.

Ultimately, there can be no 'perfect' style, each format of debating places emphasis on different skills and the debating community is stronger for such diversity. I love the deep of analysis that you only get at Australs, but I love the tactics and cunning that you need to survive at Worlds. Why should we give up either of those? Both are teaching us highly valuable, highly marketable skills that will serve us well. In the real world you don't get to cut people off in the middle of their presentation, you have to wait – otherwise you would be considered incredibly rude. It doesn't hurt to practice that skill now.

One half of a truly persuasive speech

Half of what you need to give a really great speech is to know what you're talking about. There has to be some 'truth' in your argument and it has to be realistic and give a sense of credibility to the speaker. Eight uninterrupted minutes per speech gives debaters a chance to really do that.

If you have ever coached high school debaters you will know what I'm talking about – you spend some time with them, explaining the issues and the key themes and then you send them off to write a speech. During the debate things go wrong the moment the opposition raise an issue that you didn't explain to your team – because they don't truly *understand* the issue, so they don't know how to respond properly and they say something dumb.

Now let me be clear, I'm not saying we all should be experts in the things we debate, far from it, but we need to take the time to *understand* the issues we are debating and then have the time to make an audience understand them too. A really great speech ends with the audience feeling (amongst other things) that firstly they have really learned something interesting about and issue and that they have a much better *understanding* of it than they did before. Australs is the best style to do this. However POIs encourage people to focus more on buzzwords and aggression and less on logic and analysis. Speakers have the time to explain themselves, without often rude and abusive interruptions and without having to resort to oversimplifications to defend themselves against oversimplifications.

Remember that the problem of POIs is two fold: first, you have to answer two (although at Worlds people are accepting less and less POIs), which take up time and, secondly, you have to tolerate the almost constant offering of interjections, usually in a loud, rude and distracting way. People know you won't take more than two so they are mostly just trying to make you uncomfortable and to distract the adjudicator. What has that got to do with convincing the 'average reasonable person'?

For people who don't like Australs style, the simple answer is that they don't have to attend. As has been pointed out previously, there are a very large number of tournaments and styles that have POIs. For the rest of us, we will benefit for learning different styles and mastering the different skills that they require.

Replies are crucial

I'm disappointed that Ray didn't offer unqualified support for replies, and with all due respect to a friend and mentor, he's wrong.

Replies are not a waste of time, anymore than the summary given by a 3rd speaker is a waste of time. Sure, most debates have been won or lost before the 3rd neg begins their summary, but that doesn't mean we would abolish them.

Replies offer a chance to step back, to clarify, to clean up and to focus on pure persuasion (not attacking or actively engaging). All the arguments are on the table and the Opposition have had a chance to discredit them, now the reply speaker gets a chance to take what their team has built and really show how persuasive the whole package was.

A well crafted reply, like those from Michael Smith, Alex Croft or Logan Balavijendran are inspiring, entertaining and persuasive. They tie together all the ideas that have been raised in the debate and put them into perspective. Its incredible that the aim of these proposals is for more engagement but replies are to be abolished, which is when teams can demonstrate how well they have engaged with their opponents.

Conclusion

POIs favour bullies. They favour people who don't truly understand the issues and they favour those people who don't have the patience to *listen* carefully for 6 to 8 minutes and carefully consider their response. Often people don't mean to misrepresent their opponents, they just weren't listening properly and POIs reinforce that bad habit.

There is no reason why POIs will necessarily make either good or bad debates any better, but anything that makes it harder to *listen* (like being forced to think of snappy POIs and discussing them with your teammates) will make our debates more analytically shallow.

There is a reason why people who focus on Australs style do well in all other formats. There is a reason why British debaters are embracing Australs style. There is a reason why this idea has been put up before and failed. Because Australs style promotes deep analysis, deep engagement and the core skills of listening and understanding *before* you speak.

For the sake of your own development as debaters, reject this proposal and enjoy the benefits that Australs style brings and the benefits of diversity amongst the major competitions.

“BAKA NO KABE” DEBATING EDITION: INTRODUCTION TO THE WORLD OF DEBATING IN ENGLISH AS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

About the Author: Masako was born, has grown up in and continues to live in Japan, and has never lived outside of Japan, where English is, in every way, a foreign language. She completed her Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts at Keio University and is currently a doctoral candidate in cognitive science. Masako has participated widely in national, regional and international debating tournaments for a number of years. She was Deputy Chief Adjudicator of the 2005 All-Asian Debating Championships and is the current Equity Officer of Worlds Council, a position that she has held since 2004.

*“It takes military power to establish an international language,
but it takes economic power to maintain and expand it”*

- Yasutaka Yano “World Englishes in 2000 and beyond”

I am a Japanese girl, debating in English as a Foreign Language at Keio University. Gender, language, ethnicity, nationality, institution and religion: in all senses, I belong to various minority groups at international debating tournaments. Then why do I frequently raise issues focused on the language barrier? While I have no intention to discourage any kind of attempt to seek equity on other factors, I have to admit that the language problem has been the single most critical factor for me as a debater at international tournaments. Although my personal experience cannot generalise what debating life is for a foreign speaker; I have decided to make a contribution here because of the very unique characteristic of this problem. Those who have the greatest need, in this instance, are always the most marginalised people with the biggest language barrier and the least access to the discussion. This paper therefore argues the necessity of further measures to accommodate EFL debaters.

Why should international tournaments accommodate EFL debaters?

Globalisation and the spread of English as a lingua franca go hand in hand. As the reach and extent of globalisation further progresses, the value of English is reinforced as the essential means of global communication. Yasutaka Yano argues that this is because transactions, of the cultural, social, political and economic kind must be carried out in the customer’s language. English as an International Language (EIL), English as a Global/Glocal Language (EGL) are now unprecedented resources. As English has established itself as the international language, the usage of English has become more diverse. Many terms such as English as a Native Language (ENL), English as an Additional Language (EAL), English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) have become commonly used.

“ESL tends to concentrate on English for daily needs, and for living in an English-speaking community. EFL indicates the learning of English for eventual use in a non-English-speaking region.”

It is clear, that through many aspects of one’s life, a difference can be detected between ESL and EFL. Is your major media source in English? Do you have access to TV programs in English? Which language do teachers use at school most? Which language do your family members communicate in? Which language do you use to explain your situation to local government officials? Which language do you use to advertise a debating event at university?

For ESL speakers, most of the situations listed above are in English. For EFL speakers, all of them are in local language. For example in Japan, major media sources are all in Japanese. We do not have TV channels in English. A very limited number of people have access to English media such as BBC, CNN or NBC. Teachers speak in Japanese. Most Japanese families use Japanese to communicate at home. Local government officials rarely understand English. Invitation letters for debating tournaments are usually in Japanese. In fact, debating is the only occasion for Japanese debaters to use English.

“Can I say that the other debate going on at the moment, about whether we should have an ESL or EForL break seems to me to be a bit irrelevant. It’s semantic at best. I don’t mind if you call it the Wee Willy Winky Break.” (Excerpt from a post to the australs mail list)

At international debating tournaments, people who speak EAL may be a minority. Participation by EFL speakers is obviously even smaller. But does it reflect the world outside of debating community? The answer is clearly no. For 91 per cent of world population, English is a Foreign Language.

	Minimum	Maximum	Per cent of world population
English as First Language Speakers	0.32 billion	0.38 billion	5.08 - 6.03 per cent
English as Second Language Speakers	0.15 billion	0.3 billion	2.38 - 4.76 per cent
English as Foreign Language Speakers	5.62 billion	5.83 billion	89.21 - 92.54 per cent

Table 1: ESL/EFL population (From David Crystal, *English as a Global Language*).

Tournaments without systematic measures to accommodate EAL debaters are the real “Wee Willy Winky” tournaments, that are designed for only 6 per cent of people. Debating is about accepting diverse perspectives. It is about getting to know the world with help from others. It is against the principle aim of debating to exclude such a significant proportion of the population.

What are the barriers?

A range of barriers exist for EFL speakers, which affect speakers in different ways depending on their specific context. I offer 10 such barriers which relate to:

- Language
- Mentality/Psychology
- Opportunity
- Finances
- Media Sources
- Marginalisation
- Tournament Structure
- Prejudices
- Awareness
- Inner Prejudices

“BAKA NO KABE” DEBATING EDITION

“When I took part last year, I has [sic] absolutely no idea there even was a criteria, I just assumed it was something Asian teams did. I am however certainly not under that criteria an “ESL” speaker [sic].” (Excerpt from a post to the allasiandebate mail list)

The most obvious and important barrier is the language barrier for debaters; it is about understanding and using different grammar, vocabulary, and tenses. However, another issue is that some people just assume that the language barrier is too critical and there’s no way that EFL debaters can be competitive. This is evidenced by the following excerpt of a post to the Australs list, “I was at Easters, Japan had fun, though I believe they were the worst teams there result wise”(Excerpt from a post to the australs mail list).

The language barrier has nothing to do with the intelligence or the level of understanding about debating. It is not about training either. It is about familiarity to the language. It is irrelevant to have a special debate seminar for EFL students, it is also irrelevant to say “the more established teams can take a positive step by shedding the unwanted tag and move forward”(Excerpt from a post to the australs mail list). It is not about division between established and non-established teams. It is about language. The aforementioned statement is truly offensive, established or not established, as you do not debate in the English as Second Language division when you do not speak English as your Second Language. Similarly, no matter how established it is, a team that makes a significant effort to overcome the language barrier should be awarded as being classed as an ESL team.

Among roughly 20 international tournaments that I have attended, none of them had a motion focused on North Korea. At almost every All Asians I have attended, there has been at least one or two ASEAN topics, plus a domestic host country topic. And I am yet to debate topics related to North East Asia at Asians. Even if there is a geographically neutral motion such as a debate on alternative life styles, the fact that a majority of debaters and adjudicators are from South East Asia, means examples from North East Asia are disregarded or seen as irrelevant.

Japanese debaters prepare to debate on Myanmar, the Thai government considering owning a football team in the UK, Muslim riots in Southern Thailand, a Malaysian religious party, the Malaysian educational system, Singapore’s trade issue, Singapore’s criminalisation of oral sex, Singapore’s relation with US and so on. But there is no such a requirement for debaters from South East Asia to have a knowledge of specific issues related to Japan, or North East Asia.

“If ESL wouldn’t have been here, then yes initially it would have been tough to go against English speaking country’s but actual development would have taken place, and in the long run we would have forced to learn better English and compete in the top level, but thanks to ESL today we are lurking in its shadows [sic].” (Excerpt from a post to the australs mail list)

The toughest part of the challenge for debaters with a language barrier is that sometimes debaters who overcame the barrier become the harshest critics. People who speak fluent English but are in an EFL situation often forget how hard it was for them to overcome the barrier, and start criticizing less fluent speakers. This mind-set is one of the most discouraging aspects of the whole issue for the debaters who have difficulty with English.

What can we do?

	Debaters with the barrier	Debaters without the barrier
<i>Linguistic Barrier</i>	Work hard. Work extremely hard. Nothing else can help.	You can't do anything much here
<i>Mental Barrier</i>	Be strong	Be friendly. Be patient.
<i>Opportunity Barrier</i>	Create cheaper opportunities by yourselves. Host events.	
<i>Financial Barrier</i>	Work as a team. Fundraise as a group.	
<i>Media Source Barrier</i>	Access more English media.	Be aware of the diversity of media and issues.
<i>Marginalisation Barrier</i>	Accuse abusers and cheaters. Accuse harshly.	Don't abuse/cheat EAL opportunities.
<i>Tournament Structure Barrier</i>	Keep improving your reputation. Demand fair representation.	Provide positions. Hear is what they need. Meet the demands.
<i>Prejudice Barrier</i>	Be friendly. Let them get to know you.	Imagine if you debated in a foreign language.
<i>Awareness Barrier</i>	Speak up.	Don't discourage discussion.
<i>Inner-Prejudice Barrier</i>	See statistics	

Step the first step: Countless flew over/Too many staying in their nest

MCMURPHY: *"But I tried. Goddammit, I sure as hell did that much. Didn't I?"*
 - "One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest"

"A solution will never come in Worlds Council or Australs Council or Asians council, because language is so hard to define, and the arbitrary conditions will arise. Answer? Have honest and reasonable discussions in your own unis, and then decide which of your teams are ESL/EFL."
 - Excerpt from a post to the allasiandebate mail list

“BAKA NO KABE” DEBATING EDITION

We need to be aware that we need structural changes as individual efforts have hardly scratched the surface.

People who need the greatest consideration on this issue are the most vulnerable people in the community who have biggest language barrier and the least access to the discussion. There is always a structured marginalisation. Have marginalised people fought enough? Have people who are free from such marginalisation spoken enough for the marginalised people? These issues suddenly become complicated. The answer is yes and no. Many have tried extremely hard but the vast majority have given up or are unaware of the issue.

In Japanese, there is an expression, “Shikatanai”. It means that you have no power to change the situation you are in and needs to be accepted as it stands. It is a word we use to swallow difficult circumstances. Countless people before me have said “Shikatanai” countless times. “Shikatanai” because we, ourselves, have decided to compete at the debating tournaments in English. “Shikatanai” because we have not won, and people want to have Deputy Chief Adjudicators with polished debating resumes. “Shikatanai” because major institutions are from other regions and they get the positions to decide motions.

I do not think so. It is not “Shikatanai” at all. What debaters in EFL situations need to do is to speak up. If we say “Shikatanai”, we undermine the community. Debaters should not think that they have no right to speak up. It is vital, in this context, that debaters and adjudicators who form this vibrant community continue to discuss structural changes and never stop striving for further discussions.

Oh, swallows, swallows, from the up height in the sky, tell us where the stars on earth have gone).

- From a song by Nakajima Miyuki
“Chijo no Hoshi” (Stars on Earth))

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RESULTS

The MDR would like to congratulate:

World University Debating Championships

Host: Malaysia Multimedia University, Malaysia
 Champions: University of Ottawa A (Erik Eastaugh & Jamie Furniss)
 Runners Up: University of Cambridge A (Daragh Grant & Joe Devanney)
 University of Oxford D (Alex Just & Jonathan Bailey)
 University of Toronto (Hart House) B (Michael Kotrly & Joanna Nairn)
 Best Speaker: Kylie Lane (Monash University)
 ESL Champions: National University Of Malaysia (Tan Ai Huey & Khor Swee Kheng)
 ESL Runners Up: Nanyang Technological University A (Ajay Andrews & Anirudh Baliga)
 Nanyang Technological University B (Ankit Bahri & Karthik Raveendran)
 MGIMO A (Alexander Zalivako & Yauheni Akulich)
 ESL Best Speaker: Nicolo Cabrera (University of Philippines, Diliman)
 Masters Champions: Australia (Roland Dillon & Michael Smith)
 Public Speaking Champion: Rahim Moloo (University of British Columbia)

AustralAsian Intersivity Debating Championships

Host: University of Technology Sydney, Australia
 Champions: Monash University A (Tim Sonnreich, Kylie Lane & Roland Dillon)
 Runners Up: Malaysia Multimedia University A (Logandran Balavijendran, Suthen Thomas
 Paradatheth & Prashanth Sreetharan)
 Best Speaker: Mathew Kenneally (Australian National University)
 ESL Champions: University of Putra A (Muthukkumaran Thiagarajan, Tizreena Ismail & Kamalan
 Jeeva)
 ESL Runners Up: Malaysia Multimedia University B (Sumithra Rajendra, Goh Sze Ying & Pong
 Yu Wern)
 ESL Best Speaker: Anirudh Baliga (Nanyang Technological University)
 Best Novice Speaker: Christopher Croke (University of Sydney)

All-Asian Intersivity Debating Championships

Host: Assumption University, Thailand
 Champions: Ateneo de Manila University A (Jess Lopez, Eleanor Uy & Lisandro Claudio)
 Runners Up: Ateneo de Manila University B (Madeleine Dy, Mahar Mangahas & Rhyan Uy)
 Best Speaker: Jess Lopez (Ateneo de Manila University)

Asian University Debating Championships

Host: Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
 Champions: Ateneo de Manila University A (Jess Lopez, Sharmila Parmanand & Charisse
 Borromeo)
 Runners Up: Nanyang Technological University B (Ajay Andrews, Ankit Agarwala & Sushil Sriram)
 Best Speaker: Jess Lopez (Ateneo de Manila University)
 EFL Champions: Kung Hee University A (Yumi Jung, Sungil Jo & Eunjoo Seo)
 EFL Runners Up: Bina Nusantara University A (Siti Nur Aulyana, Christiyani Ranthy & Andreas
 Fender)

RESULTS

Northeast Asian College Debate Championships

Host: Kyung Hee University, Korea
Champions: Claremont McKenna College (Kyle Warneck, Allison Westfahl & Amy Nelson)
Runners Up: Ewha Woman's University (Song, Ji Eun, Shin, Yoon Ah & Reel Khalifa)
Novice Champions: Hanyang University
Best Speaker: Kyle Warneck (Claremont McKenna College)
Best Novice Speaker: Don Ho (Hanyang University)

European University Debating Championships

Host: University College Cork, Ireland
Champions: University of Durham A (Bob Nimmo & Erin O'Brien)
Runners Up: University College Dublin (L&H) A (Ciarán Lawlor & Eoghan Casey)
Inner Temple A (Greg O'Ceallaigh & Charlie Spalding)
Oxford University C (Timothy Saunders & Alex Hill)
Best Speaker: Niall Kennedy (Glasgow University Union)
ESL Champions: Erasmus University A (Lars Duursma & Sharon Kroes)
University of Haifa A (Shir Barniv & Anat Gelber)
University of Haifa C (Nimrod Gruver & Reut Rubinstein)
IDC A (Ohad Orgal & Benny Feifel)
ESL Best Speaker: Anat Gelber (University of Haifa)

North American Debating Championships

Host: Cornell University, United States
Champions: Hart House, University of Toronto (Joanna Nairn & Melanie Tharamangalam)
Runners Up: Harvard University (Fuad Faridi & Alex Schwab)
Best Speaker: Rory Gillis (Yale University)
Best Novice Speaker: David Denton (Yale University)

Australian Intersvarsity Novice Debating Championships

Host: University of Western Australia, Australia
Champions: University of Sydney A (Julia Featherston, Sasha Brodero-Smith & Jack Wright)
Runners Up: University of Sydney B (Tom Robertson, Tim Mooney & Amy Knox)
Best Speaker: Tom Robertson (University of Sydney)

Melbourne Invitationals

Host: University of Melbourne, Australia
Champions: Monash University A (Kylie Lane & Andrew Fitch)
Runners Up: Sydney University A (Ivan Ah Sam & Brad Lancken)
Monash University B (Roland Dillon & Doug Stewart)
Australian National University A (Mathew Kenneally & Mike Stanton)
Best Speaker: Ivan Ah Sam (University of Sydney)

Australian British Parliamentary Championships

Host: University of Sydney, Australia
Champions: University of New South Wales A (Vanessa Collins & Ian Holmes)
Runners Up: Sydney University A (Ivan Ah Sam & Brad Lancken)
Australian National University A (Toby Halligan & Emily Byrnes)
University of New South Wales B (Gillian White & Rob McMonnies)
Best Speaker: Ivan Ah Sam (University of Sydney)

CUSID National Championships

Host: University of Alberta, Canada
 Champions: Hart House, University of Toronto (Rahool Agarwal & Michael Kotrly)
 Runners Up: McGill University (Jess Prince & Alex Campbell)
 Best Speaker: James Renihan (Hart House, University of Toronto)

Indonesian Varsities English Debate Championships

Host: Bina Nusantara University, Jakarta
 Champions: Sekolah Tinggi Akuntansi Negara (Nidya Hapsari, Jeni Wardin, Redwan Firdaus)
 Runners Up: Universitas Indonesia (Mahardika Sadjad, Lulu, Verdinand)
 Best Speaker: Mahardika Sadjad (University of Indonesia), Nidya Hapsari (Sekolah Tinggi Akuntansi Negara), Nilufar Rizki (University of Indonesia), Minerva Annuri (Universitas Padjadjaran), Adisti Ikayanti (University of Indonesia)

5th JPDU Tournament

Host: Tokyo International University, Japan
 Champions: Yokohama National University A (Mirhat Alykulov & Takeshi Sasaki)
 Runners Up: University of Kitakyushu A (Kaori Ogata & Aya Fuluju)
 Best Speaker: Mirhat Alykulov (Yokohama National University) & Takaaki Kubozono (International Christian University)

6th JPDU Tournament

Host: International Christian University, Japan
 Champions: Keio University A (Ryo Takigawa & Mari Murakami)
 Runners Up: International Christian University A (Chika Urashima & Eri Hashimoto)
 Best Speaker: Mari Murakami (Keio University)

Royal Malaysian Intervarsity Debating Championships

Host: Universiti Malaysia, Sabah
 Champions: International Islamic University (Asrul Izzam, Nadia Zainuddin, Raihan Ismail & Fareez Zahir)
 Runners Up: UT-Mara (Daniel Amir, Iqbal Hafiedz & Shamaredza Abdullah)
 Best Speaker: Tan Ai Huey (National University Of Malaysia)

Second National Health Sciences Debate

Host: International Medical University, Malaysia
 Champions: Multimedia University (Suthen Thomas & Mohd Shariq)
 1st Runners Up: National University Of Malaysia (Tan Ai Huey & Khor Swee Kheng)
 2nd Runners Up: UT-Mara (Daniel Amir & Iqbal Hafiedz)
 Finalists: International Islamic University (Fareez Zahir & Nadia Zainuddin)

Officers Cup, New Zealand National Debating Championships

Host: Otago University, New Zealand
 Champions: Victoria University of Wellington A (Chris Bishop & Gareth Richards)
 Runners Up: Otago University D (Marcelo Rodriguez-Ferrere & Laura Fraser)
 Best Speaker: Colin Fyfe (University of Canterbury)

RESULTS

Joynt Scroll, New Zealand National Debating Championships

Host: Massey University, New Zealand
Winners: Otago University B (Jesse Wall, Marcelo Rodriguez-Ferrere & Melanie Bunce)
Runners Up: Victoria University of Wellington A (Chris Bishop, Gareth Richards & Joe Connell)
Best Speaker: Chris Bishop (Victoria University of Wellington)

Victoria Open Intervarsity

Host: Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand
Champions: Victoria University of Wellington (Chris Bishop & Gareth Richards)
Best Speaker: Joe Connell (Victoria University of Wellington)
Best Novice: Melanie Bunce (Otago University)

National Filipino Debate Championships

Host: San Beda College, Philippines
Champions: Ateneo de Manila University A (Jess Lopez & Eleanor Uy)
Runners Up: University of the Philippines Diliman A (Carl Ng & Sir Martin Cortez)
Best Speaker: Carl Ng (University of the Philippines Diliman)

The Dorothy Cheung Inter Tertiary Debating Championships

Host: Nanyang Technological University, Singapore
Champions: Nanyang Technological University A (Ankit Bahri, Karthik Raveendran & Anirudh Baliga)
Runners Up: Nanyang Technological University B (Varun Prakash, Sushil Sriram & Madhav Mathur)
Best Speaker: Shuvam Dutta (Singapore Management University)

SMU Hammers Debating Championships

Host: Singapore Management University, Singapore
Champions: Singapore Institute of Management A (Amit Bhatia, Ravi Vishwanathan & Rajesh Krishnan)
Runners Up: Nanyang Technological University B (Nandini Seshadri, Ankit Agarwala & Varun Prakash)
Best Speaker: Rajesh Krishnan (Singapore Institute of Management)

South African National Debating Championships

Host: University of Cape Town, South Africa
Champions: University of the Witwatersrand E (Brent Archer & Richard Stupart)
Best Speaker: Seth Cumming (Rhodes University)
ESL Champions: University of Stellenbosch L (Anje Boshoff & Pieter Koornhof)
ESL Best Speaker: Anje Boshoff (University of Stellenbosch)

National Environmental Intervarsity Debating Championships

Host: Chulalongkorn University, Thailand
Champions: Thammasat University (Rattana Lao, Chong-Jua Yanthaworntrakoon, Praewta Sorasuchart & Pachara Yongjiranon)
Runners Up: Assumption University (Thepparith Senamngern, Kotchaporn Apichatpanichakul, Savinee Keetanitinun & Visnu Pumbanchao)
Best Speaker: Pachara Yongjiranon (Thammasat University)