Speaking and Listening – Level 9

Sample 1 Group discussion: Persuasive devices in Emma Watson’s speech on feminism

Extract 2

Note: Students have been numbered left to right from 1 to 4.

STUDENT 2 So what persuasive techniques did she use and how did she use them to position the audience and what effect did they have?

STUDENT 3 She used … I think this was at the start of the speech … she used an anecdote …

STUDENT 2 Oh, yep.

STUDENT 3 so this was talking about her childhood and how her gender determined the way she lived and how other people’s genders around her determined the way they lived, and that positioned the audience to say, ‘Wow, this person really knows what she’s talking about. She really has a connection with this issue,’ which obviously makes this speech and issue more strong for the audience to believe.

STUDENT 4 Her telling her own story, it kind of shows that she is human and she is vulnerable even though she is, like, famous, and even more so vulnerable than normal people because she was shown to the world at a very young age, and like she said, at 14 she started to be sexualised, so, like, it shows that she does care about the topic and she does want to help.

STUDENT 2 Yep.

I also feel like she used a bit of emotive language. When she was talking about how she was seen as a feminist, she used the word ‘isolating’ and, you know, I felt … I felt for her, ’cause it’s just like, you know, she’s human but she felt as if she’s been isolated from the world. And the effect that had on me was that people who, I guess, are labelling what feminists are and, I guess, removing the comfort of being a feminist, like, what it’s doing to people. So if people are feeling isolating, I guess that’s making the audience feel bad for them.

 Do you have anything to add?

STUDENT 1 Yeah.

I feel like at that point, when she was starting to describe how her views were seen, she was leaving a very long pause between each adjective, as if to let the audience comprehend what she was saying and think about it for a minute, instead of just immediately dismissing what she was saying, which sort of makes them think again, like, ‘Oh, I see what she's saying. She's not just throwing these words at us, she's actually trying to make us see how her views are seen by us as a society and not just us as a person.’

STUDENT 2 Yeah, and she also questions us, why has this word become such an uncommon one? So I feel like she was getting us to rethink where we stand and whether or not we believe what gender equality and if men and women should have equalised rights and what a feminist truly is.

How did the speaker use their interaction skills? What questions did they ask and how did they interact with the audience?

STUDENT 4 So, she used the word ‘I’, ‘us’ and ‘we’ to create an inclusive environment, to make the audience feel as though they are included in her speech or discussion. And by doing that it kind of creates, like, an honest environment to the audience and by saying … using ‘I’, it kind of shows that she does actually care and this is through her and not through, like, a campaign.

And also when she uses ‘I’, it’s kind of saying that she does want the world to be, like, better when it comes to feminism, and also she’s kind of taking responsibility for what her actions are. So she’s taking responsibility for the good in the world that her campaign’s gonna to do.

STUDENT 2 Yep.

STUDENT 1 I know that she used a lot of thought and creative words like ‘I think’ and ‘I believe’ in her argument, which I feel … It shows that she’s actually put time into her argument and she knows what she’s talking about and that she can have these thoughts and ideas and that she can get them across, but it’s all, like, an idea that she’s been building upon for this moment to convince the audience and show that she’s been thinking about this for a while.