# Rhetorical Analysis

“Why Do People Freak Out About MSG in Chinese Food” is a YouTube video produced by Yara Elmjouie, an Iranian-American, and it was released on August 14, 2018. This video shows that people are afraid of a common ingredient found in Chinese food. The author explains the background of this stigma and uses several examples to illustrate that MSG is not harmful to humans. First, many institutions proved that MSG is not harmful to humans. Elmjouie states that "The FDA, the EU, and the UN all say it's safe to eat"(0:43) Secondly people are freaking out when they found MSG in Chinese food; however, they eat MSG foods such as snacks and fast food in their daily life. People who state they have Chinese food syndrome feel nothing after they had MSG foods. Third, the author starts an experiment that treats his roommates with MSG dumplings without their noticing to see if they feel uncomfortable when they finish; it turns out they are perfectly fine. Elmjouie tried to convince the audience that MSG is not harmful by interviewing them through his video, and he tried to find out the reason why people are afraid of this common ingredient. Someone points out the racism may cause this stigma. The author effectively convinces his audience that MSG is not harmful by using pathos and logos, and he also uses various techniques to decreases the rhetorical distance such as flash-animation and post-editing.

In “Why Do People Freak Out About MSG in Chinese Food”, the author uses a lot of logos to demonstrate that MSG is not harmful to humans. Since this a scientific topic, the author has to show the audience numbers, the result of experiments, and other federal institution conclusions about MSG. At the beginning of the video, the author said that people always eat MSG in their daily life; after that, the author points out that some federal institution's report about MSG uses; then he interviewed a chef who opens a Chinese restaurant in New York and uses MSG during his cooking. Those facts show the audience that MSG is not harmful to humans. At the end of this video, the author illustrates an experiment that he fed his roommates MSG dumplings, and turns out his friends had no Chinese food syndrome after they ate those MSG dumplings. In this case, the author appeals to logos due to it was an experiment but also pathos because it's his own experience.

For the pathos part, Elmjouie interviewed many people. He tried to use people's own experience or daily life to illustrate that MSG is not harmful but tasty. His first interviewee is Chris, a Chinese American chef who uses MSG in his food. Chris explained that people use MSG instead of boiling chicken for 8 hours to get the same taste. Elmjouie's second interviewee is Dr. Ken Lee, a food scientist. He claims that MSG is an essential ingredient of Chinese cooking such as pepper and salt. They ate snacks contains MSG in front of the camera with a smiling face. After Dr. Ken's interview, Elmjouie interviewed Sarah Lohman who wrote a book about the eight flavors that make American cuisine. She explained the history of MSG as they ate take-out Chinese food which contains MSG. In Sarah's opinion, people freak out about MSG in Chinese food because Americans like to blame immigrant food. One example is garlic which first comes with Italian foods which people take five to six generations to accept it. Finally, Elmjouie visits Chef Line's home and gives her an interview. They cooked two dishes with the same ingredients, one meal with MSG and the other one without MSG. Although Chef Line's mom refuses to use MSG during her cooking, they admitted the meal with MSG is tastier. All these personal opinion and experience are pathos which Elmjouie used to illustrate that people from other countries use MSG all the time, and they do not feel uncomfortable after eating MSG food.

Elmjouie uses different techniques to make his video attractive which makes his message easier to follow. At the beginning of his video, he uses a nicely edited flash-animation which is a cartoon that is commonly used to express tedious terminology on YouTube. This flash-animation is significantly helpful when explaining boring concepts and makes technical terms more entertaining. This makes the audience more likely to listen to the author. Secondly, the video maker is a professional editor otherwise he must have an excellent post-editing team, this video captures the audience's eye from the very beginning due to the professional editing and pace control. This technique is crucial because it allows the audience to follow his narration without distraction. This video's pace is vigorous, and people would stop watching within 10 seconds if this video was filmed like a traditional documentary. The speed of talking, the pace of the scene cutting, and even the rhythm of the interview is just the right speed. Those features effectively shorten the rhetorical distance.

The author’s video uses emotional appeals through his convincing personal narratives by interaction with different interviewees in his video. He also uses facts and authoritative statements as logos to show the audience that MSG is not harmful. The skillful editing and well-made flash animation are critical to reducing the rhetorical distance between this video and the audience. However, I think he can make some improvement in some details. For instance, how to convince his audience to believe that he is no relation with the company who sells MSG? Is everything he said in this video credible? Perhaps he should list all the related evidence to support his narration in the video such as FDA’s report about MSG. One flaw cannot obscure the splendor of the jade; in my opinion, it’s a well-made video with a limited budget.

# Works Cited

Elmjouie, Y. (2018, August 14). *YouTube.* Retrieved from YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sm8Yx-gWlMs&index=15&list=WL&t=106s