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Realisation of Proximity in Online Video Courses: A Study with Reference to Coursera

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ABSTRACT

This article examines some main characteristics of online video courses as a new popularizing genre and how the different facets of proximity are realized in such contexts. To this end, 2 courses in the realm of education and psychology from Coursera website were analyzed based on Hyland (2010) model of proximity to shed light on the nature of this concept in such contexts. The total number of sessions analyzed was 40. The investigation revealed different strategies used by instructors in video courses to comprise the five facets of proximity as for Hyland (2010) model, namely Organization, Argument Structure, Credibility, Engagement, and Stance. The need to transfer knowledge and to help students understand the new concepts are among the key requirements of classrooms. Thus, the instructions have to be intertwined with real life experiences, examples, analogies, etc. to make the new knowledge accessible to students and their already acquired knowledge base. Instructors used various techniques for achieving this important goal ranging from using second person and first person pronouns through to acting as if they are mindreading the students and looking at issues from the student's point of view and referring to the same worries, concerns and questions that students might face. By analyzing a corpus of texts in this specific genre, we tried to highlight some of the ways instructors manage their image of expertise and interactions with learners through some rhetorical devices which presume the instructor and the learner as people with similar understandings.

Keywords: Proximity, Online Video Courses, Coursera, Discourse, Distance Education

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1. Introduction

At this age of technology and communication, and with the present high pace of life, especially in developing and developed countries, online courses in which students can save a lot of time, money and energy and learn at their own individual pace is getting a lot of popularity and has already become well established (Alman & Jumba, 2017). Despite all the advantages of such online classes such as instant accessibility to materials, tailoring the pace of education, etc., one should not neglect the downside of the matter as well; the students are no longer able to be actually present in a physical class environment which, in addition to the social bonds it creates between the members, can also prove to be of high significance in focusing students' attention on the subject matter if properly exploited.

In an online educational environment, some other factors come into play, which the instructor needs to rely on to reserve himself/herself a robust place in students' mindset and earn their trust. Needless to say, students are more likely to concentrate on the subject being delivered when they feel assured that the instructor is scientifically and proficiently competent enough. Moreover, since in an online video course the instructor is no longer in control of the physical class environment to maximize students' participation by monitoring their concentration and attention as he/she used to do in a traditional educational environment, the instructor now needs to try to adopt some new strategies to enhance concentration and participation on the part of students because now the students are the ones who play the key role and are in control of their physical surroundings.



Nowadays teaching places a lot of weight on students and puts them in the center of attention (Bonnici, Maatta, Klose, Julien, & Bajjal, 2016; Crompton, 2013; Imran, Ballance, Da Silva, & Graf, 2016; Naicker & Bayat, 2016; Quintana, Krajcik, Soloway, Fishman, & O'Connor-Divelbiss, 2013; Ross & Bruderle, 2018). Thus, learner-centered approaches are gaining more and more popularity on a daily basis (Schultz, 2017). One of the assumptions that this learner-centered approach entails is the role of teacher in making the materials appealing to the students by competing for their attention. To this end, teachers usually have to use different techniques and procedures which are to some extent teacher-specific but at the same time cover some common unwritten norms of their professional community. These strategies and techniques serve to establish ties with the students and develop proximity with the learners. There are different aspects to this proximity which are discussed in the section pertaining to the review of the related literature.

Although such strategies have been the subject of study in some educational settings (Brekelmans, Wubbels, & den Brok, 2002; Fraser & Walberg, 2005; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011; Wubbels & Brekelmans, 2005), very little attention has been paid to this issue in distance education in general and online video courses in particular. The purpose of the present study is to take a closer look at such practices by teachers in online video courses as an instance of distance education.

Considering the above, the significance of investigating the effective strategies that instructors usually adopt in these new online classes becomes evident. Having known the practical strategies adopted by instructors, new instructors can more effectively commence their teaching practice in defining and delivering video courses.

The findings of such an investigation can be of various uses. On the one hand, the findings of this study can help teacher trainers with their tricky and critical job of training would-be teachers. On the other hand, they can shed light on the road ahead of all present instructors and teachers, no matter what they do and where they are. Moreover, the findings will provide educationalists with valuable information regarding the unwritten rules at work in a classroom context which can affect students' mental image of their instructors.

The concept of proximity is a bit tricky for it has been used throughout the literature representing different but related concepts by different scholars (Carlo, 2014; Hyland, 2010; Johnstone & Mando, 2015; Weininger & Shield, 2004). Therefore, just to clarify the point, presenting a short account of what proximity refers to as the focus of the present study seems inevitable. In the present study, proximity refers to all the techniques, strategies, norms and issues observed by experienced teachers in the context of classroom to establish themselves, in their students' mindset, as justified members of their professional community and also as competent and confident teachers upon whom their students can rely and with whom they can establish dependable ties. It also refers to the strategies and techniques used by teachers and instructors to acknowledge the presence of students and to make the material appealing as well as comprehensible to them. Moreover, the rhetorical devices used by instructors to express their stance regarding the scientific findings and theories stated within the classroom also fall within the area of proximity.

The research question of the present investigation is as follows:

-How is proximity realised in verbal discourse in online video courses?

2. Review of the Related Literature

Hyland (2010) has proposed a model of proximity for research articles and popular articles which comprises 5 different facets for proximity. The first facet of proximity proposed by this model is called "**organization**" under which Hyland (2010) addresses two issues; the *role of images* and the *placement of writer claims* within the presentation of information.

The second facet as proposed by this model is named "**argument structure**" which addresses the distinctions of argumentations based on their *appeals*, *focuses*, and *framings*. The *appeals* subsection of the facet refers to making the material appealing to readers and attracting them to spare some time reading it. The main point on which writers concentrate within their arguments is discussed under *focuses* and the way new information is made palpable and comprehensible to the readers fall under *framings* subsection.

Next comes the facet of "**credibility**" which addresses how the related sources of information are attempted to be proved credible to the readers including the writer

himself/herself as the most immediate source of information to the readers.

The forth facet "**Stance**", as proposed and discussed by this researcher, refers to the type of stance the writer takes with regard to the claims and ideas given throughout the text. How writers express their attitudes, the way they communicate their opinions and judgements, and the room they assume for others' voice all fall within the realm of this facet of proximity. In other words, "it is the ways that writers intrude to stamp their personal authority onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176).

Engagement, as the fifth facet of Hyland (2010) proximity model, refers to how writers try to side with or align themselves with their readers and connect to them or how they acknowledge their presence. A writer should try to discuss issues with readers as if they are participating in the discussion and should lead the interpretations which might form in their minds.

The main two aspects of engagement stipulated in Hyland's model are Reader Pronouns and Questions. Both of these are used by writers to acknowledge the presence of readers and assume their role as active interlocutors. Among these pronouns are YOU, YOUR, YOURS, We, US, OUR, and OURS. By using such pronouns, writers intend to establish some common ground with their readers. Questions, on the other hand form a strong and effective device for promoting active reader engagement and enhancing proximity. In fact, writers try to engage readers by asking them questions that fall within the same concerns as those of researchers.

Proximity is a concept which carries different ideas and meanings when you browse the bulk of literature available about this term. Some academic research articles like A. Myers and Anderson (2010) have addressed the issue of proximity from a physical point of view, discussing the distance at which teachers stand from students within a classroom setting. However, the concept of proximity which is the focus of the present study comes from the field of Discourse Analysis and refers to the concept presented by Hyland (2010) in which a comparison is made between the realizations of proximity in research articles and those in popular articles. He believes proximity in this sense is the same as the Recipient Design presented by Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson (1974).

He defines proximity as "a writer's control of rhetorical features which display both authority as an expert and a personal position towards issues in an unfolding text" (Hyland, 2010, p. 116). In other words, two aspects of proximity are captured in this definition; proximity of membership in the professional community, and proximity of commitment to the discipline.

When it comes to academic writing, proximity is realized as writing to the expectation of the reader. Similarly, in online video courses, one aspect of proximity can be teaching or speaking (delivering the material) to the expectations of virtual students and considering the questions and ambiguities they might face. This rhetorical construction of proximity is also known as interpersonality (Swales, 2004).

Another aspect of proximity observable in academic writing is the way writers establish their work and themselves in relation to other members of their professional communities and their claims. This aspect also has some realization in online video courses. To attract students' attention, a speaker needs to establish his or her position in students' mindset as a competent as well as committed instructor upon whom and upon whose speech students can depend for reaching success and gaining expertise in the field.

A. Myers and Anderson (2010) emphasize the role of teachers in motivating students and considering them while delivering the lesson. They mention that teachers can do this by making themselves attractive and engaging to the learners and thus creating a classroom environment that is conducive to learning. This is actually observed in the concept of discursial proximity as well.

Hyland (2010) mentions five aspects for the concept of proximity in research as well as popular articles from a discursial point of view. What follows is a short account of each of these aspects. The first aspect that he discusses is related to the organization of the text. This organization aspect is said to have two realizations in both popular articles and research articles; one through visuals, and one through framing information. Each of these two channels of realization has a different function in each genre. That is, in research papers, visuals are used to present or support arguments, while in popular articles they have an explanatory purpose. The present investigation will try to find if they have a



similar role in online video courses or some new functions are introduced or added to those mentioned above.

The second channel through which organization is communicated is the way information is framed which has shown some differences in the two genres investigated by Hyland (2010), namely research articles and popular articles. As a result of her investigation, Hyland found that in research articles the main claims come at the end while in popular articles the claims are foregrounded at the beginning. Regarding this organization of information in journalistic articles Nwogu (1991) states that such articles start with some background information and pose the research topic as a problem for readers, then the result of the investigation is presented as a solution to this problem. Little is known about framing information in online video courses, which highlights the originality of this topic for investigation.

The second aspect of proximity as highlighted by Hyland (2010) is argument structure which covers three main issues, namely appeals, focuses and framings. The appeals, focuses and framings used for different types of audiences differ depending on the purposes they want to accomplish. As for appeals, novelty plays a key role for both Research Articles and Popular Articles. In terms of novelty Hyland (2010) states that:

In both academic and popular contexts, novelty is related to proximity by appealing to what is assumed about readers' knowledge and interests. Newness is not a property of the ideas themselves, but a relation between ideas and communities as professional writers' package material for particular readers. (Hyland, 2010, p. 120).

However, the exact nature of this factor is reasonably thought to be different when it comes to online video courses as an instance of distance education which can be considered as some simulated classroom settings. How this factor is established in such simulated settings is an issue to be investigated in the present study.

The second aspect of argument structure presented in Hyland (2010) model of proximity is focus which refers to what the writers decide to concentrate on. The focuses of arguments in research papers are mainly the procedures and methods used through the study, while in popular articles the objects of the study are usually in focus. This distinction seems logical as research papers are addressed at members of a professional community who usually look

for the originality as well as the objectiveness and replicability of the studies, while popular articles mainly address members of the public who seek for new discoveries and breakthroughs in the realm of science. With regard to the distinction between research articles and popular articles, Hyland (2010) cites G. Myers (1990) stating that research articles feature a narrative of science, while popular articles feature a narrative of nature.

And finally the third means through which proximity is established in arguments is the way information is framed by their writers in research vs popular articles. G. Myers (1991) mentions cohesion as a main difference between the two genres of research articles and popular articles. Another objective of the present investigation is to find out about the way information is framed in a simulated class environment like online video courses.

The third aspect of proximity discussed by Hyland (2010) refers to the concept of credibility. This is about the way writers or speakers try to highlight that the information they deliver comes from a credible source. This is exactly what instructors have to do in their classes in order to acquire their students' trust and encourage them to believe in the material they deliver as a reliable source through learning which they can reach success in their field.

This trust is developed by emphasizing both the credibility of the source of information and the credibility of the person delivering that information, i.e. the writer, the speaker or the instructor. It is more than evident that readers and students will be more receptive to the information they receive if they think of the writer or instructor as competent ones and experts.

Hyland (2010) lists the following as ways in which writers try to establish credibility in Research Articles:

- Putting their practices on display;
- Using research methods that are well recognized;
- Referencing to other established experts and intellectuals;

Hyland (2004), as cited in Hyland (2010), states that in Research Articles quotes are very infrequent, and in science and engineering texts the reporting verb "say" is very rare for introducing the investigations of other researchers. These points are actually related to how credibility is established in Research Articles.

On the other hand, Popular Articles address the issue of credibility in a different fashion. To highlight the credibility of a person in Popular Articles, usually his position or positions in one institute or in different institutes are mentioned. And by identifying popular scientists in the field the writer tries to establish the credibility of his or her article. So, what create science in Popular Articles are the voices of insiders.

Similarly, when it comes to online video courses as an instance of distance education or simulated classroom, this concept of credibility needs to be somehow developed in terms of both the people and the content involved in that course. How this is done is what the present study aims to shed some light on.

The fourth facet of proximity outlined in the model proposed by Hyland (2010) is stance. Like other facets of proximity, this one is also realized differently in the two genres of Research Articles and Popular Articles. In Popular Articles the claims made regarding the results, and the personal attitudes are more emphatic and are also more fully developed. However, in Research Articles hedges are very common. One of the main objectives of using hedges in such articles is to avoid overstating their ideas, and the other objective is to avoid rejection of their arguments.

Another popular characteristic of Research Articles which is in line with the facet of stance is that the writers try not to show complete commitment to an idea; they almost always leave some space for readers to dispute their interpretations.

This facet of stance needs to be accounted for in online video courses as well; however, no clear indication is available as for how this aspect is realized in such contexts.

Finally, the last aspect of proximity discussed in the model presented by Hyland (2010) is engagement. Regarding this final aspect of proximity Hyland (2001) states the following:

Engagement builds a relationship between participants that is not dependent on an assessment of what needs to be made explicit to elaborate a position, anticipate an objection, or ease processing constraints. The writer introduces the audience into the text because he or she wants to reinforce the dialogic relationship at that point. It is an intervention simply to connect, to show that they are all—writer and readers alike—engaged in the same game and are in a position to draw on shared understandings,

if not of actual content, then at least of what might be considered a relevant aside. Essentially, these diversions project the reader into the discourse and draw on the knowledge relationships that unite the writer to them. (Hyland, 2001, p. 562)

According to Hyland (2005), engagement "is an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations." (Hyland, 2005, p. 176)

As observable from above, engagement is another essential and inevitable feature of a successful classroom (Chong, Kit, Liem, Ang, & Huan, 2017; Chong, Liem, Huan, Kit, & Ang, 2018). Studying teacher-student engagement in a simulated classroom context in which students are not physically present can deepen our understanding of the concept and might open up new horizons thereof.

3. Methodology and Data Collection

For the purpose of the present investigation, two courses were selected from Coursera online courses for a close analysis; one of the courses comes from the area of Education named "Learning How to Learn" (<https://goo.gl/VW5BTr>) and the other course comes from the field of psychology under the title "Positive Psychology" (<https://goo.gl/MBpYkJ>). Having chosen these courses for investigation, the researchers carefully watched the courses a number of times to make sure that almost all the hints and clues to proximity are detected. To this end, the proximity model proposed by Hyland (2010) was used as a guideline for recognizing and categorizing the instances in which the concept of proximity was present. It is worthy of notice that the analysis was not limited to this model of proximity as the context for which Hyland (2010) developed this model is not the same as the one investigated in the present study although some common categories might exist.

From each course, some sessions were chosen from the beginning of the course and some others from the end along with a random number of sessions from the middle. All in all, 20 sessions were chosen for analysis from each course which means altogether 40 sessions were finally analyzed and investigated.



Content analysis was used to analyze the sessions. The data was coded by hand. When the researchers began watching the videos for the first time, some key words were noticed and jot down to reveal 26 subcategories. Then a table was made during this process, showing these key subcategories.

After many rounds of analysis and note-taking, the codes were grouped into different colors. Afterwards, we used the research question and the facets of Hyland (2010) model of proximity to guide the coding process and many coded observations found a greater weight which to a great extent reflected Hyland (2010) facets of proximity.

For instance, an instructor voiced the doubts and questions that might have formed in a student's mind and answered the questions afterwards. As this was repeated a number of times, it was considered a category of Engagement which was later named "Mind Reading" as a recurrent technique of Engagement.

4. Results and Discussion

The qualitative analysis generated 26 subcategories through open coding. The researchers tried to code the data first without preconceptions and having predetermined categories. The frequency and percentage of the resulted codes are presented in the tables. We further categorized the resulted codes into major key themes and concepts which was based on the five facets that are considered by Hyland (2010) when conceptualizing how to achieve proximity: Credibility, Stance, Engagement, Argument structure, and Organization. The next sections mitigate how instructors in online courses use specific strategies to establish proximity.

Argument structure

Argument and its facets, framing and appeal, are presented in different ways by the instructors. Appeal is realized by *Strange but True*, *practicality / usefulness / effectiveness*, and *simplification* (see Table 1) which are all techniques that can help the instructors make the materials and the course appealing to the learners, as they encounter a vast majority of people who sign up from different parts of the world with different background knowledge.

Table 1: Proximity- Argument Structure

Argument Structure		Freq.
Appeal	Practicality / Usefulness / Effectiveness	183
	Strange but True	78
	Simplification	34
Framing	Exemplification	78
	Analogy	71
	Paraphrase	11

Simplification is similar to the use of definitions and reformulations in TED talks (Carlo, 2014, p. 598), where TEDsters "cannot assume a broad degree of shared knowledge" among the audience. On the other hand, since in the online classes audience do not enjoy the physical proximity of the instructors, in contrast to normal classes, they have to make the audience alert, motivated and keep them interested to the course constantly. So, they have to use some personal techniques in order to do so; techniques like simplification, strange but true, and practicality/usefulness/effectiveness. For instance:

- (1) Master the simple practical approaches outlined here, including simple tips to help prevent procrastination, and you'll be able to learn more effectively and with less frustration. (Simplification)
- (2) You'll see that many of these ideas, although simple, are incredibly powerful. (Practicality / Usefulness / Effectiveness)
- (3) We take off the skull and take out the brain. This brain weighs 3 pounds but it consumes 10 times more energy by weight than the rest of the body. A very expensive organ. It is the most complex device in the known universe. (Strange but True)
- (4) How can you handle this? Simple. Have a Plan B for the alternative career. (Simplification)

Framing is realized by exemplification, analogy, and paraphrase in our data. Instructors in our data also used different forms of exemplifications, analogy, and comparisons. In the next example, the instructor uses a kind of analogy to present another complex concept in a more simplified way. This finding corroborate with findings of other related works (Carlo, 2014; Hyland, 2010). For instance:

- (5) Taking a test is serious business, just as fighter pilots and doctors go through checklists before takeoff and surgery,

going through your own test preparation checklist can vastly improve your chances of success.

Moreover, in order to simplify and explain, instructors normally can enjoy visuals like diagrams, figures, videos, etc. which are easily provided in the online teaching applications; this can make teaching a more meaningful process for the learners.

Organization

Organization is the next aspect that helps to proximity to be achieved in online courses. Hyland (2010) indicated that serious research articles usually “begins with a general introduction on how the research will contribute to the scientific community, briefly summarizing prior work addressing the topic” and the results are presented at the end of the presentation (Carlo, 2014, p. 594). In the analyzed data, we noticed some categories that can help classes to have organization. These categories can be grouped as Question Raising, Common Experience, Personal Experience/Memories, Preview, Summary, Adding Fun, Problem/Gap Raising, Offering Solution, Purpose/Goal, and Result. Table 2 illustrates the different instances related to the facet of Organization along with the occurrence frequencies of each instance

Table 2: Proximity - Organization

Organization	Freq.
Question Raising	58
Common Experience	49
Personal Experience/Memories	23
Preview	8
Summary	11
Adding Fun	22
Problem/Gap Raising	143
Offering Solution	130
Purpose/Goal	25
Result	32

Although it is not always possible to have fixed categories for other situations, Carlo (2014), for example, finds some categories that are repeated in many of the TED talks. In the videos we analyzed, 8 out of 40 sessions start with some kind of previews like, “in this video we are going to...”. The important point about the sessions is that the learners normally have previewed the course sessions in the website and can see a bio and even a photo of the instructors; so, there is no need for the instructors to actually introduce what is going to be presented. It seems that such introduction, though seems unnecessary, are

employed to draw the learners’ attention from the outset of the video and make them mentally prepared for what comes next. In some cases, as the following instance, a preview is presented at the end of a session for the following session:

(6) In our next video, we are going to see how...

Since detailed course and session descriptions are already introduced in the related website, in contrast to other previous studies, there is normally no need to formally introduce the topics in the videos. However, instructors express the purpose/goal of the sessions in some (8 out of 40 sessions) of the videos as in the following example.

(7) This course is meant to help you reframe how you think about learning, to help reduce your frustration and increase your understanding.

In order to engage the learners with the materials presented in the videos, the instructors also used Question (Freq= 58) and Problem/Gap Raising (Freq= 143) from time to time.

(8) This raises a puzzle. In the face of so much turnover, how do memories stay stable over so many years? (Question Raising)

(9) Everybody has some issues with procrastination. Because if you’re working on something, it means you’re not working, on a lot of other things. But some people have more issues with procrastination than others. (Problem/Gap Raising)

It seems that the audience are also being kept interested to the courses by Offering Solution (Freq= 130) and Results (Freq= 32). This is partly because these course, although free to watch, have to sell by showing tangible effects on the learners’ life. Such strategies create more contact with the audience and help the instructor construct audience involvement. For instance:

(10) If you have problems with procrastination, that’s when you want to use the Pomodoro, that brief timer. (Offering Solution)

(11) And you’ll learn to condense key ideas you’re learning about, so you can grasp them more easily. (Result)

The sessions are delivered in a simple and clear way, in contrast to other genres like research and popularized scientific articles; moreover, it seems that they are delivered in a an enjoyable way for the learners trying to engage the learners with the instructor through *adding fun*. For instance



(12) Let me introduce you to your brain.

Finally, there are many cases in the videos of the courses containing a form of recounting of first-hand common (Freq= 49) or personal experience (Freq= 23) that the instructor has with. For example:

(13) You'll see how you can fool yourself about whether you actually know the material.

(14) On my way here, I thought about the journey that would take us to the last day of the course and how much we will learn along the way. Our goal is to give you a better understanding of how we learn, so that your brain becomes a better learner.

Such personal and common experiences, which are abundant in our data, construct "a sense of communality and similarity between the scientific community and the audience" as Carlo (2014) states. Instructors use personal, everyday experiences and stories to convey trustworthiness and credibility. When the learners know why an issue matters to the instructor personally, it makes them care emotionally and intellectually; therefore, learners' attention can be captured "to create deeper empathy with the audience" (Carlo, 2014, p. 597) especially where physical proximity cannot be established. Thus, they are integral for creating organization, as they are used to establish credibility between the instructor and the learners by drawing on shared emotions as human beings.

A final category used by instructors to signal the end of a session or to recap what went on is summary (Freq= 11); this category is employed in a little more than 25 percent of the sessions. It is expected to be seen more in normal classes, since in online classes the learners have the ability to rewind the videos whenever they want to. Such features make summary a less important category for creating argument structure in online videotaped classes.

Stance

When teaching students some new skills or giving them new information, the teacher usually takes some stance regarding the dependability of the transferred data. Such stances are usually communicated using some discourse devices called hedging which indicate the falsifiability of the transferred ideas and theories. In these courses and the investigated educational videos few instances of hedging were detected as stipulated in Table 3.

Table 3: Proximity - Stance

Stance	Freq.
Hedging	12

Unlike Hyland (2010) model of proximity in which hedging was a significant feature of proximity in research articles, it did not turn out to be very frequent in these online video courses. This might be related to the specific nature of classrooms in which instructors usually try to make emphatic claims just to attract the attention of learners and make them more focused on the topic being discussed. On the other hand, in the context of a research article, researchers try to be very cautious in making any type of claim and always leave some room for disagreement (Hyland, 2004). Due to this reason, research articles are full of such rhetorical devices and discourse markers to express their findings and ideas with great caution. This way, they not only try to preserve their place within the professional community and show their familiarity with the unwritten norms of that community, but also want to show that they are well aware of the nature of scientific claims and theories. What follows are a few examples of the use of Hedging in the online video courses investigated. In all the following cases the parts in bold typeface are instances of Hedging.

(15) **As far as** neuroscientists know right now

(16) When you're checking your work if you start more towards the back and work towards the front, it **sometimes seems** to give your brain a fresher perspective that can allow you to more easily catch errors. **Nothing's ever certain.**

(17) We've learned from Nobel Prize winner Santiago Ramon y Cajal that if you change your thoughts, you can really, truly change your life. **It seems** people can enhance the development of their neuronal circuits by practicing thoughts that use those neurons.

Engagement

The fourth facet of proximity is engagement. It is a dimension "where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, and including them as discourse participants" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176).

Table 4: Proximity - Engagement

Engagement	Freq.	
Use of Pronouns	YOU	515
	WE	128
Social Act (Thanking)		19
Social Act (Welcoming/Wishing)		22
Social Act (Introducing Oneself)		24
Mind Reading		27
Imperative		83

As discussed by Carlo (2014, p. 603), the “TED corpus mainly achieves engagement by means of personal pronouns” while it seems that instructors in online classes try to achieve this engagement by applying a combination of personal Pronouns (e.g. you and we), Social Acts (thanking, welcoming/wishing, introducing oneself), Mind Reading and Imperatives (see Table 4). For instance:

(18) Thanks for learning about learning.

I’m Barbara Oakley. (Thanking)

(19) Welcome to learning how to learn.

My name is Terry Sejnowski.
(Welcoming & Introducing Oneself)

(20) Next stop, we’ll be talking about chunking, the vital essence of how you grasp and master key ideas. I’m Barbara Oakley. (Personal Pronouns & Introducing Oneself)

(21) Occasionally you can study hard and the test gods simply don’t cooperate, but if you prepare well by practicing and building a strong mental library, and you approach test taking wisely, you’ll find that luck will increasingly be on your side. I’m Barbara Oakley. Thanks for learning how to learn. (Personal Pronouns)

The pronoun ‘you’ is the most frequent personal pronoun when one wants to involve the audience directly (Fairclough, 1989), admitting their presence to create a balanced interaction with them. However, in other genres like TED talks inclusive ‘we’ is more preferable. Engagement can be reinforced through using imperatives by addressing the learners directly. Such rhetorical devices connect the instructor to the learners and allows the instructor to approach the learners. Therefore, the instructor tries to create a less authoritative atmosphere. For instance:

(22) And finally, remember that not getting enough sleep the night before a test can negate any other preparation you’ve done. I’m Barbara Oakley, thanks for learning about learning. (Imperative, Introducing Oneself, & Thanking)

Another key strategy of a successful teacher is to make the students feel their

presence matters to the instructor and they should feel like an active teacher-student communication is going on. Various techniques were used by the instructors for accomplishing this point. The final strategy instructors use is acting as if they are mindreading the students and looking at issues from the student's point of view and referring to the same concerns and issues that students might face. Take the following instance as an example:

(23) Now, you might think “well, you know, that’s ok for an artist”. (Mind Reading)

Credibility

Finally, promoting proximity in the classes can be obtained by laying emphasis on learners’ credibility. While scientific research and popularized articles achieve such credibility by referring to other experts with related prior works, in other genres like TED presentations, “speakers rarely introduce themselves or give their credentials at the beginning of the talk” (Caliendo, 2014, p. 101); simply “after the achievement of a common ground do the TED speakers state their membership in a professional group” (Carlo, 2014, p. 601). In online courses, as mentioned before, there is really no need for stating the instructors’ affiliation; instructors are already introduced to the course description in the website. Therefore, examples like (24) bellow are rare in comparison to other oral presentations like TED. This is while referring to other scholars’ affiliation, Specialist Referencing, and Achievements are pervasive. For example:

(24) It’s strange to realize I’m now a professor of Engineering. I enlisted in the army right out of high school to study language at the Defense Language Institute.

(25) Susan Sajna-Hebert, a professor of psychology at Lakehead University, advises her students to cover up the answers to multiple choice questions and to try to recall the information. (Affiliation)

Sometimes, credibility is obtained by talking about ongoing learning and research that shows the instructors have personally involved in what they are going to teach and thus it is more likely for the learners to believe the instructors.

(26) The old view of the brain is that once it matures, the strengths of synapses can be adjusted by learning but the patterns of connectivity does not change much unless there is brain damage. (Ongoing Learning/Up to Date)



Another strategy used to increase credibility among the audience is the use of quotations and referencing to affiliations, since by referring to a reliable source one can increase the credibility. Quoting and referencing can enhance the credibility, authority or acceptability among the learners. Here are some examples:

(27) And Bob Bradshaw, a professor of math at Ohlone College, tells his students about good worry and bad worry. Good worry helps provide motivation and focus, while bad worry simply wastes energy. Achievements, (Affiliation)

(28) But in the meantime, I'm going to let you in on a handy little mental tool. This tool is called, the Pomodoro. It was invented by Francesco Cirillo, in the early 1980's. (Referencing)

Quoting specialists and using exact figures or numbers corroborate the instructors' statements and strengthen their discussions in attempting to convince the learners; since it causes instructor's claims to be seen more credible and trustworthy. It lets the learners to look up to the instructor as an authority and consequently to be more interested. Like TED talks, these courses "base their credibility more on a personal rather than an institutional level" (Carlo, 2014, p. 602). The detailed frequencies are presented in Table 5, below.

Table 5: Proximity - Credibility

Credibility	Freq.
Specialist Referencing	87
Affiliation/Position	19
Achievements	20
Ongoing Learning/Up to Date	32

5. Conclusions

The focus of the present study was to find out how the different facets of proximity are realized in online video courses. To this end, 2 courses in the realm of education and psychology were analyzed based on Hyland (2010) model of proximity to shed light on the nature of this concept in such contexts. The investigation uncovered different strategies used by instructors in video courses to accomplish the five facets of proximity as for Hyland (2010) model, namely Organization, Argument Structure, Credibility, Engagement, and Stance. Since among the key requirements of classroom contexts is not only the need to transfer knowledge, but also the need to help students understand the new concepts, the instructions have to be intertwined with real life experiences, examples, analogies, etc. just to make the chunk of new knowledge

accessible to students' mindset and their already acquired knowledge base.

One of the most colorful facets of proximity in online video courses was the facet of Engagement especially because one of the key strategies of a successful teacher is to make the students feel their presence matters to the instructor in way that the students should feel like there are an active interlocutor in teacher-student communication. A diverse range of techniques were used by the instructors for accomplishing this important point ranging from using second person pronouns through to acting as if they are mindreading the students and looking at issues from the student's point of view and referring to the same worries, concerns and questions that students might face.

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Appendix: The Table of Revealed Subcategories for Proximity		Freq.	
Argument Structure	Appeal	Practicality/Usefulness/Effectiveness	183
		Strange but True	78
		Simplification	34
	Framing	Exemplification	78
		Analogy	71
		Paraphrase	11
Organization	Question Raising	58	
	Common Experience	49	
	Personal Experience/Memories	23	
	Preview	8	
	Summary	11	
	Adding Fun	22	
	Problem/Gap Raising	143	
	Offering Solution	130	
	Purpose/Goal	25	
	Result	32	
Stance	Hedging	12	
Engagement	Use of Pronouns	YOU	515
		WE	128
	Social Act (Thanking)	19	
	Social Act (Welcoming/Wishing)	22	
	Social Act (Introducing Oneself)	24	
	Mind Reading	27	
	Imperative	83	
Credibility	Specialist Referencing	87	
	Affiliation/Position	19	
	Achievements	20	
	Ongoing Learning/Up to Date	32	