Stefania Consonni / Larissa D'Angelo / Patrizia Anesa (eds.)

Digital Communication and Metadiscourse

Changing Perspectives in Academic Genres

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Digital Communication and Metadiscourse
Changing Perspectives in Academic Genres

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Contents

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'And as I said at the beginning, this is a journey in which we are embarking': Metadiscourse as a rhetorical strategy in online teaching methodology courses

Abstract

Taking for granted that "metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods and services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating" (Hyland 2005: 3), this work aims to analyse the features of metadiscourse in online teaching methodology courses. As we speak or write, we negotiate with our readers or listeners, we make decisions about the effects we want to attain on our audience (Hyland 2005, 2015). Instructors in online teaching methodology courses use a vast array of metadiscoursal features, under the form of commentaries embedded in the oral text, which express the speakers' intentions, and how confident they are about what they are saying, along with directions to the listeners, and logical connectors or frame markers referring to the structure of the oral text. After a categorization of different types of textual metadiscourse in online courses, the present study aims to investigate whether and to what extent these commentaries can be considered as ways to signal speakers' attitudes towards the content and their audiences. Following Hyland (2005), both interactive resources (to guide the listener through the text) and interactional resources (to

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involve the listener in the subject) will be considered in order to ascertain whether these features are used to control, evaluate and negotiate the goals and impact of the ongoing talk (Hyland 2015). From this point of view, metadiscoursal features can be deemed rhetorical as long as they contribute to the informative and persuasive impact of methodological lessons taught online. Therefore, metadiscourse in this genre is also investigated from a rhetorician's perspective, focusing on figures of presence, figures of focus and figures of communion, and on ethos, pathos and logos appeals which contribute to effective communication rather than being merely used for ornamentation.

1. Introduction

This paper presents a metadiscoursal analysis of online teaching methodology courses.[2]

After looking at the theoretical framework that forms the basis for this study (Section 2), the aims of the investigation will be introduced and search questions will therein be listed (Section 3). Then data will be presented (in Section 3); findings, both quantitative and qualitative, will be the object of Section 4. Several examples

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[2]   Attention should be given to the title: in the abstract first sent as a proposal for the "MAG 2019" conference, *Metadiscourse in Digital Communication: What has changed?*, hosted by CERLIS, University of Bergamo, Italy (June 27-29, 2019), the quote was "this is a journey on which we are embarking", using the preposition *on* after the verb *to embark*. The authors have now decided to keep the original sentence of the analysed transcripts and video lessons: "this is a journey in which we are embarking", using the preposition *in*. The instructor who uttered this sentence in the video lessons in this case is a native speaker of Spanish based in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and this is why this transfer from the Spanish language is found. This explanation is due for the sake of clarity but transfer and interferences from other languages into English are not topics addressed in the present study.

taken from the transcripts of the original video lessons (filmed lectures) in the teaching methodology courses will then be shown and analysed. The aim of the present research is to ascertain whether the same metadiscourse features or strategies used in written discourse and listed and recorded in much of the literature on the topic are also used in the examples of oral production under scrutiny here. The aim is also to try and discover whether these metadiscourse markers fulfill a rhetorical function. Conclusions can be considered still provisional since the corpus might seem to be quite small or not fully representative: a wider corpus would certainly allow the researchers to draw more thorough, conclusive and definitive final conclusions.

2. Theoretical framework

Metadiscourse is notoriously problematic to pin down, both because it refers to features of discourse whose functions are context-dependent, and because, despite its copious presence in texts of various types across time, researchers have disagreed on its definition and on research methodology. The term gathered momentum in the field of applied linguistics only in the 1980s, yet, it had already been used by Harris (1959), and later, in his studies on speech communication, Rossiter Jr. (1974) referred to metacommunication as being (verbal or non-verbal) messages about communication in spoken communicative interactions which inform interlocutors on the speaker's intentions and feelings. Wunderlich (1979) stated that communication partners can switch roles, can talk about communication itself, and even comment on their own speech production, all relevant aspects in the notion of metadiscourse. In the field of sociolinguistics, Ragan/Hopper (1981) speak of meta-talk when referring to talk about someone else's talk, while Schiffrin (1980), referring to spoken communication, defined meta-talk as talking about one's own talk, both aspects involved in the definition of metadiscourse.

The relatively recent research interest in metadiscourse has mainly focused on written texts such as school textbooks (Crismore 1989), or company annual reports (Hyland 1998b), and especially on academic text writing, like undergraduate textbooks (Hyland 2000), postgraduate dissertations (Swales 1990; Bunton 1999; Hyland/Tse 2004), and research articles from a variety of disciplines (Hyland 1998a). Metadiscourse has increasingly become important to research in the fields of composition, reading and text structure, and more recently in L2 writing (Ädel 2006; Toumi 2009). Interest has also been shown in the field of language learning, as the presence of metadiscourse has proven to augment text readability and comprehension (Crismore 1990; Crismore/Vande Kopple 1997; Reitbauer 2001; Crawford Camiciottoli 2003; Tavakoli/Dabaghi/ Khorvash 2010; Correia 2013; Ahour/Entezari Maleki 2014). Recently, research has also focused on spoken genres, especially in academic lectures (Ädel 2012; Àgnes 2012; Lee/Subtirelu 2015; Zhang/Sun/Peng/Gan/Yu 2017), and on digitalised discourse (Ryoo 2005). English, as used by native or non-native speakers, is the language most studied in metadiscourse research, together with Spanish, Chinese, and Persian (Hu/Cao 2011; Salas 2015; Khabbazi-Oskouei 2016;).

While Crismore (1989) classified written metadiscourse into two general categories, informational and attitudinal, Vande Kopple (1985) referred specifically to writing as being a two-tier activity, where on the one hand writers provide propositional content, and on the other hand, that of metadiscourse; they organize discourse so as to help the reader to successfully relate to the topical material provided. At this level, otherwise defined as "communication about communication" (Vande Kopple 1985: 87), he classified seven types of metadiscourse, four of which are textual (text connectives, code glosses, illocution markers, and narrators) and the other three are interpersonal (validity markers, attitude markers, and commentary). This broad approach, which takes into account both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse is also embraced by Crismore/Markkanen/ Steffensen (1993), Markkanen/Steffensen/Crismore (1993) and Hyland (1998b, 2004, 2005, 2017). Other researchers, such as Schiffrin (1980), Mauranen (1993), Bunton (1999), Dahl (2004), Moreno (2004) and

Peterlin (2005), however, considered only textual metadiscourse in their studies, and thus had a narrower approach.

Following Mauranen's (1993) comparative study of American and Finnish academic production based on the concept of *text reflexivity*, Ädel (2006) studied the use of metadiscourse in the argumentative texts produced by advanced Swedish learners of English and compared them to that of native speakers of British and American English. The taxonomy of metadiscourse that she developed is based on the model of 'the reflexive triangle' involving the text/code, the writer and the reader, representing the Jakobsonian metalinguistic, expressive and directive functions. By working on reflexivity in particular, the concept of metadiscourse is restricted to what she defined as "the world of discourse" (Ädel 2006: 44), where text, writer and reader are strictly context-related. Ädel has applied her taxonomy of metadiscourse to both spoken and written academic English (Ädel 2010, 2012), and her view of metadiscourse has been adopted in research on a variety of academic contexts (Toumi 2009; Salas 2015; Zhang 2016).

Drawing on Thompson (2001), Hyland (2005) developed a taxonomy where he distinguished between *interactive* features, fulfilling the writer's management of propositional information, to guide readers through a text, and *interactional* features, used by the writer to comment on content material. Interactive and interactional elements are considered to be essential parts of the metadiscourse resources available in both spoken and written communication. In his model, he listed five broad sub-categories as interactive resources (transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses), and five sub-categories as interactional resources (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self mentions and engagement markers).

Within the broad approach, Hyland/Tse (2004, in Hyland 2017: 18) defined metadiscourse as "an integration of talk about the experiential world and how this is made coherent, intelligible and persuasive to a particular audience". On several occasions Hyland (1998a, 2000, 2005, 2017, 2018) defined metadiscourse as the writer's linguistic choices to organize a discourse and to show their own stance towards the content matter and the intended reader. The writer's

choice of cohesive and interpersonal features is intended to help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect to it, and interpret it based on the values of a specific discourse community. Accordingly, metadiscourse is context dependent, and its features differ across genres and languages; that is to say, metadiscoursal functions may be performed in different ways, and single items may perform more than one metadiscoursal function in the same or in different contexts.

These levels of ambiguity or fuzziness in the definition of metadiscourse have influenced research from a methodological perspective. Accordingly, Hyland (2017: 18), stressing the idea that metadiscourse is a pragmatic category, recommends examining metadiscourse features "in their sentential contexts to ensure they are performing metadiscourse functions", yet does not reject corpus-based investigation. On the other hand, Ädel/Mauranen (2010) consider Hyland's model to be methodologically weak and superficial, and in referring to research on genre and language comparisons, have argued in favour of a qualitative approach to metadiscourse research. They have also criticised corpus-based approaches, which rely on predefined sets of lexical items, and consider them to be limited and limiting for the interpretation of any item's metadiscoursal function.

3. Data and methodology

Following Hyland's classification (2005) (see Table 1), the various metadiscoursal categories and their functions were the point of departure for the analysis of the data under scrutiny: interactive features help to guide the reader through the text and interactional ones involve the reader in the text (2005: 48-54). As the title of the paper anticipates, the present investigation deals with oral lessons and online videos or filmed lectures: therefore, the focus will be on communication between speakers and listeners, rather than on writers and readers.

Category	Function	Examples
INTERACTIVE	Help to guide the reader through the text	*Resources*
Transitions	express relations between main clauses	*in addition*; *but*; *thus*; *and*
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	*finally*; *to conclude*; *my purpose is*
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	*noted above*; *see Figure*; *in section 2*
Evidentials	refer to information from other texts	*according to X*; *Z states*
Code glosses	elaborate propositional meanings	*namely*; *e.g.*; *such as*; *in other words*
INTERACTIONAL	Involve the reader in the text	*Resources*
Hedges	withhold commitment and open dialogue	*might*; *perhaps*; *possible*; *about*
Boosters	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	*in fact*; *definitely*; *it is clear that*
Attitude markers	express writer's attitude to proposition	*unfortunately*; *I agree*; *surprisingly*
Self mentions	explicit reference to author(s)	*I*; *we*; *my*; *me*; *our*
Engagement markers	explicitly build relationship with reader	*consider*; *note*; *you can see that*

Table 1. Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse (2005: 49).

The corpus under exploration includes two online teaching methodology courses: "Teaching your subject in English" (Figure 1)

and "Teaching English Online" (Figure 2), both produced by the University of Cambridge and powered by FutureLearn (Figure 3). FutureLearn is a digital education platform founded in December 2012. The company is owned by The Open University in Milton Keynes, England. It is a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) learning platform, and as of May 2018 included 143 UK and international partners, including non-university partners.

Figure 1. "Teaching your subject in English" online course (www.futurelearn.com).

Figure 2 (left). "Teaching English Online" online course (www.futurelearn.com).
Figure 3 (right). Future Learn digital education platform (www.futurelearn.com).

A MOOC is an online course aimed at unlimited participation by users all over the world and with open access via the web. In addition to traditional course materials, such as filmed lectures, readings, forums, many MOOCs provide interactive courses with user forums to support community interactions among students, professors, and teaching assistants, as well as immediate feedback to tests, quizzes and assignments. MOOCs are an example of distance education. The best known MOOC platforms in English are, along with FutureLearn, Alison, Cognitive Class, Coursera, and Eduopen. Additionally, Emma has courses in eight languages and edX has courses in thirteen languages, including Japanese, Turkish, Korean and Hindi.

These MOOC courses, which are based on interactions among students, instructors and a variety of audiences, recall the concept of *community* that Hyland emphasizes by making reference to some insightful quotes such as "A discourse community is a group of people who have texts and practices in common" (Barton 1994: 57, taken from Hyland 2005: 139). Swales (1990) considers these types of communities as "having collective goals or purposes"; Bizzell (1982: 2017) talks about "sharedness" and discusses communities in terms of "traditional, shared ways of understanding experience" while Doheny-Farina (1992: 296 in Hyland 2005: 139) points to the idea that communities share "rhetorical conventions and stylistic practices that are tacit and routine for the members".

The two courses under scrutiny here are designed for teachers, mainly English language teachers, but also subject teachers. Therefore, the topics at stake range from the relationship between language and subject content, students' engagement and eliciting, to classroom routines, learning objectives and the use of technology for learning both in class and autonomously. As the courses anticipate in the Welcome week videos, there are many opportunities for teachers and users in general to repeat and respond to audio recordings, record their voices, practice pronunciation, join in the discussion with other teachers or simply read others' comments and questions, read papers and fix notions and concepts through tests and quizzes. The two courses additionally provide Q&A sections and end-of-week reviews.

A quantitative analysis of the courses' transcripts was carried out using Sketch Engine, a corpus manager and text analysis software

(developed by Lexical Computing Limited in 2003). By using this concordance software, the corpus was first examined from a basic and general statistical point of view, by looking at the overall organization of the courses, number of sections (or weeks of teaching and learning activity), number of videos and their duration in time, number of words in the transcripts of the videos, as well as tokens and total sentences. The results of this first and preliminary search are shown in Table 2 (Teaching your subject in English, henceforth TSE) and Table 3 (Teaching English online, henceforth TEO).

TEACHING YOUR SUBJECT IN ENGLISH (TSE)			
sections	*# of videos*	*duration*	*# of words*
WELCOME TO THE COURSE	1	00:00:52	236
WEEK 1	6	00:20:23	3,059
WEEK 2	4	00:12:29	2,064
WEEK 3	4	00:10:19	1,783
WEEK 4	4	00:12:07	2,194
WEEK 5	4	00:14:33	2,652
GRAND TOTALS	23	01:10:43	11,988
		tokens	13,896
		sentences	766

Table 2. Statistical data of the TSE online course.

The TSE course is organised into five weeks, plus a Welcome week. Table 2 shows the duration in time for each week's video lessons and the total number of videos, which amounts to 23, the total number of words, almost 12,000, with 1 hour and 10 minutes of recordings, almost 14,000 tokens and 766 sentences.

As can be seen from Table 3, the TEO course is divided into four weeks, in addition to a Welcome week video and includes 36 video lessons amounting to a total of about 16,000 words and 1 hour and 33 minutes of recordings. There are almost 19 thousand tokens and 1,457 sentences. One thing common to both courses is the fact that these filmed lectures are organised into different types of lessons: 1) lessons with one single instructor, teacher-fronted; 2) interactions

among two or three instructors who deal with a specific topic in front of a camera. Therefore, it should be noted that the video lessons are sometimes monologues and sometimes dialogues; nevertheless, this distinction has not been taken into consideration in the analysis so far, since both monologues and dialogues are presently considered as types of interactional discourse addressed to an ideal external audience intended as a community. What has been analysed up to now are the actual transcripts of the filmed lectures: a thorough and careful listening and watching of the video lessons shows that lectures are pre-organized, pre-structured in terms of quantity of speech, duration in time, and quality of speech or topics addressed. The instructors' performances in the video recordings are somewhat controlled, as is the case in written-to-be-spoken discourse.

TEACHING ENGLISH ONLINE (TEO)			
sections	*# of videos*	*duration*	*# of words*
WELCOME TO THE COURSE	1	00:01:15	332
WEEK 1	10	00:27:03	4852
WEEK 2	7	00:13:08	2416
WEEK 3	11	00:36:11	5019
WEEK 4	7	00:16:06	3051
GRAND TOTALS	36	01:33:43	15,670
		tokens	18,776
		sentences	1,457

Table 3. Statistical data of the TEO online course.

The second step of our research entailed a more in-depth investigation of the transcripts in the corpus in order to identify the items in Hyland's 2005 list of metadiscourse features in academic writing. The digital search and statistical investigation proved insufficient; therefore, the concordance lines obtained through the Sketch Engine search were further manually checked in order to verify and ensure that the occurrences of metadiscourse features found were indeed functioning as metadiscourse. As a final step, extraneous examples, i.e. those not functioning as metadiscourse in the specific context and

co-text, were excluded. Section 4 below shows the results obtained and provides an explanation of the findings.

4. Analysis and discussion

4.1 The interactive dimension

As mentioned above, the transcripts of the filmed lectures belonging to the two courses were analysed according to Hyland's 2005 model of metadiscourse, and all the features the author listed in his Appendix were taken into consideration, given that, as he argues, both interactive and interactional dimensions "are defining characteristics of any communication, whether spoken or written" (Hyland 2005: 50).

The quantitative analysis, carried out through Sketch Engine as indicated above, provided the means to search the *interactive* resources used to organize propositional material in ways that are reasonably coherent and convincing for the audience. Throughout the investigation, the *transitions* found are mainly *conjunctions* (i.e. *and, also, but, so,* etc.), *adverbs* (*likewise, similarly, therefore, yet,* etc.) and *adverbial phrases* (*in addition, by the way, on the other hand, of course,* etc.) used to help the reader interpret pragmatic connections in the development of an argument within the discourse. Transitions can establish additive, contrastive or causative relations between discourse parts, to show the writer/speaker's line of thought.

Based on the analysis carried out, the interactive features identified as those occurring with the highest frequency in both courses (as shown in Table 4), were the addition markers *and* (343 in TSE and 499 in TEO) and *also* (48 in TSE and 54 in TEO), used to add arguments; the comparison marker *but* (72 in TSE and 73 in TEO), used to compare and contrast events; and the consequence markers *so* (150 in TSE and 311 in TEO) and *because* (43 in TSE and 55 in TEO), used to express consequence relations and to draw conclusions.

TRANSITION MARKERS		TSE	TEO
ADDITION adding arguments	and	343	499
	further	5	0
	again	20	15
	also	48	54
	still	2	10
COMPARISON comparing and contrasting events	but	72	73
	however	1	0
	on the other hand	1	0
	rather	8	3
	at the same time	1	7
CONSEQUENCE drawing conclusions	so	150	311
	since	2	0
	of course	1	19
	because	43	55

Table 4. Occurrences of *transition markers* in the TSE and TEO courses.

TRANSITION MARKERS		TSE Tot. occur.	Metadis. function	%	TEO Tot. occur.	Metadis. function	%
ADDITION adding arguments	and	343	159	46	499	221	44
COMPARISON comparing and contrasting events	but	72	72	100	73	73	100
CONSEQUENCE drawing conclusions	so	150	111	74	311	237	76

Table 5. *Transition markers* with metadiscoursal function in the TSE and TEO courses.

Among the features occurring with the highest frequency, the addition marker *and*, the comparison marker *but,* and the consequence marker *so* were analysed in their sentential co-text in order to identify their functions in the text. Accordingly, as shown in Table 5, *and* was found to be used as an addition marker only in 46% of the times in TSE and in 44% of the times in TEO. On the other hand, the marker

but was used to contrast events in 100% of its occurrences in both courses.

Finally, the marker *so* deserves some attention, since it is used with similar frequency in the two courses (74% in TSE and 76% in TEO) as a transition marker, to express consequence relations and draw conclusions, as in the following two examples.

(1)   I want you to predict two things that you might see in that diagram. And in this way I give them a focus, a reason for doing the task that I want them to do. And so there's quite a lot of work to be done, I think, before you actually begin working with the material, the task, or activity. (Week 4, TSE, DRAWING CONCLUSIONS)

(2)   We teach different subjects. And so we have quite a lot of different learning objectives for our classes. (Week 1, TSE, DRAWING CONCLUSIONS)

Further analysis of the remaining occurrences of *so* found that it fulfilled the function of frame marker, used to shift topic, 14% of the time in TSE and 8% in TEO (Example 3).

(3)   So what next? This weekend we will continue to read and comment on your posts. (Week 1, TSE, SHIFTING TOPIC)

Another of the functions of *so* was typically that of giving instructions to the listeners on a particular task (Examples 4 and 5), occurring 12% of the time in TSE and 16% in TEO, as shown in Figure 4 and Figure 5 (below).

(4)   Great. So let's first correct a phrase. So please type the correct version in the chat box. (Week 1, TEO, GIVING INSTRUCTIONS)

(5)   So write three things you hear that I did, OK? OK. So I am going to pause my camera so you cannot read my lips. So you are just going to listen, OK? OK. (Week 2, TEO, GIVING INSTRUCTIONS)

A close quantitative analysis of the transcripts has indicated that the occurrences of the other interactive resources enlisted in Hyland's 2005 taxonomy (frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and

code glosses) were of little relevance; accordingly, they were not taken into consideration.
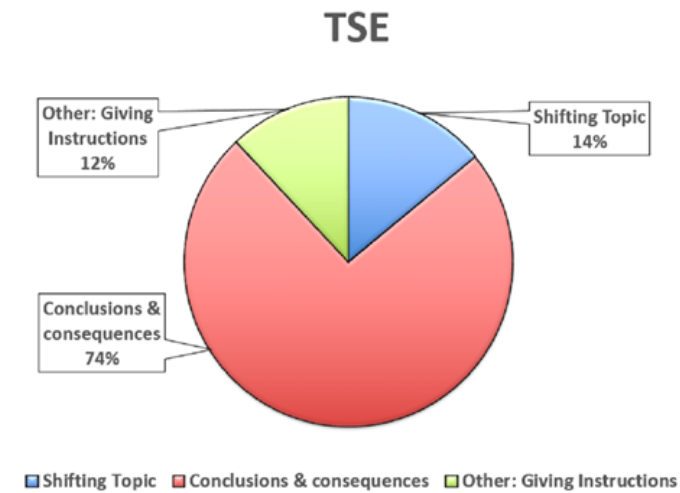

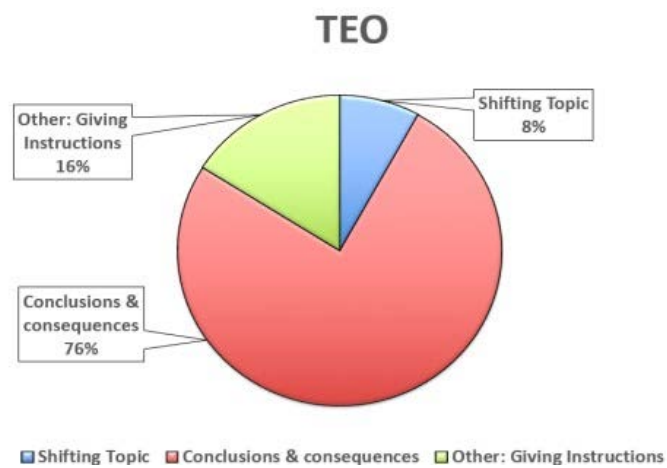Figure 4. *So* as a transition marker and a frame marker in the TSE course.

Figure 5. *So* as a transition marker and a frame marker in the TEO course.

4.2 The interactional dimension

Further analysis has shown the predominant presence of interactional resources in the form of self mentions, hedges, engagement markers, and boosters.

Self mentions show the presence of the speaker in the text, which is mostly measured by the frequency of use of first-person pronouns or possessive adjectives. Since the corpus under scrutiny consists of filmed lectures in the form of monologues and dialogues, the occurrences of the first person singular pronoun *I* were quite high in number, amounting to about 300 in both courses. Likewise, the use of the first person plural pronoun *we* was also found to have a relatively high frequency. The coding of the pronoun *we* was then carried out manually in order to identify its use as having an either exclusive or an inclusive function (Table 6). *Exclusive we* is used to refer to the speakers and the instructors involved in the dialogue, but not the listeners, as in Examples (6) and (7); while *inclusive we* includes the speakers and the audience, who belong to the same teaching and learning community, as in Examples (8) and (9). By using exclusive and inclusive *we*, speakers project an impression of themselves and explicitly manifest how they stand in relation to their arguments, their community and their listeners, as highlighted by Hyland (2005: 53).

(6)   So at the end of every step, there'll be comments where we ask you to exchange ideas, say what you feel about things you're learning on the course, and that sort of thing […] (Introductory video, TEO, EXCLUSIVE WE)

(7)   So again, we are talking about making sure that you have clear objectives, that you have a good reason for doing it. (Week 3, TEO, EXCLUSIVE WE)

(8)   We are a global community. We're a global community. And we're starting a journey together. (Week 1, TSE, INCLUSIVE WE)

(9)   We are teachers of pre-primary, primary, secondary, tertiary, and university levels. (Week 1, TSE, INCLUSIVE WE)

Table 6 shows the higher use of *inclusive we*, with respect to *exclusive we,* in both online courses.

SELF MENTIONS	*TSE*	*TEO*
I	292	310
me	14	30
my	21	45
we	98	148
we (exclusive)	27	9
we (inclusive)	71	137
our	19	9
us	8	4

Table 6. Occurrences of *self mentions* in the TSE and TEO online courses.

Among the other interactional resources present in the corpus analysed are hedges, used to emphasize the subjectivity of a position and the openness to possible negotiation. Writers and speakers use hedges to mitigate their own stand-point, and to present their reasoning and convictions in a prudent way. Although all the hedges listed in Hyland's model were considered and counted, the most frequently occurring have been reported in Table 7.

HEDGES		*TSE*	*TEO*
about		80	119
almost		10	3
certain		14	5
maybe		6	25
perhaps		12	3
probably		3	25
quite		24	19
sometimes		22	12
I think		61	87
M	can	93	219
O	could	38	32
D	may	43	7
A	might	39	51
L	should	11	11
S	would ('d)	41	80

Table 7. *Hedges* in the TSE and TEO online courses.

The hedges *about*, *quite*, and *sometimes* are frequently used in the corpus, especially to mitigate the force or the strength of a statement, while *I think* is used by the speakers/instructors to allow information to be presented as a personal opinion rather than a fact, thus opening their position to discussion and negotiation. The most frequently used hedges are in fact the modal verbs *can, could, may, might, should* and *would.* Modality indicates the degree of confidence, or prudence and caution in expressing a certain piece of knowledge.

Examples (10) to (14) show the co-occurring text where the metadiscoursal function of these hedges is accomplished.

(10)   But I think what you want to avoid is a lot of text, long readings. So you need to display on the interactive whiteboard, don't you? So it needs to be quite short so everyone can see it clearly, and not too much information. (Week 4, TEO)

(11)   So I think teachers maybe have to work a little bit harder at establishing rapport. (Week 1, TEO)

(12)   As to monitoring your students' progress, I think you should never underestimate the power of justified praise. I think power of praise is something extremely important, and it helps to keep students motivated. (Week 4, TSE)

(13)   You might have to spend a bit more time with a group. (Week 4, TSE)

(14)   Yeah, so if you're doing a bit of language work prior to the actual speaking activity, you might use immediate feedback. Now when students are speaking in class, and if the focus is on accuracy, you would pull a face when you want them to correct. You might repeat half of what they say up to the point where they make the error. (Week 3, TEO)

Engagement markers are another category of interactional resources classified by Hyland, and are used copiously in the online lectures analysed in the present research. They explicitly address the listeners, either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants; they are used to highlight or downplay the presence of the interlocutor in the discourse. As Table 8 shows, in both courses, but especially in TEO, the mostly used feature fulfilling the role of

engagement marker is the second person subject pronoun *you*, followed by the first person subject pronoun *inclusive we*, both used to involve the listener, as shown in Example (15). The pronoun *you* is used to orientate listeners through the discourse and focus their attention on the topic at stake. The first person object pronoun *us* and the possessive adjective *our* are used with the same purpose of communicating inclusivity.

(15)   I mean I think we do insist a lot on widening the vocabulary range. Because geography is a science. And sometimes we need to be very precise. I mean if we're talking about the term 'amplitude', that's the word that you're supposed to be using. I mean you can't talk about this stuff or that thing or that sort of thing. I mean, you need to be very precise. (Week 2, TSE, ENGAGEMENT MARKERS)

ENGAGEMENT MARKERS	TSE	TEO
you	221	737
your	36	104
we (inclusive)	71 out of 98	137 out of 148
us (inclusive)	8 out of 8	4 out of 4
our (inclusive)	13 out of 19	9 out of 9
let's	1	15
look at	7 out of 21	14 out of 23
see	4 out of 18	17 out of 46
think about	14	28
(we're) going to think about	0	11

Table 8. *Engagement markers* in the TSE and TEO online courses.

Furthermore, 15 occurrences of the imperative form *let's* were found in the TEO course, and imperative forms such as *look at* and *see* were present in both courses, where the verbs of perception account for the immediacy and interactivity of the filmed lectures. Moreover, the presence of 11 occurrences of the expression *we're going to think about* was noticed in one of the courses (TEO).

Although they are not present among the engagement markers listed in Hyland's model, the authors of the present work decided to classify three further features as engagement markers. The first is the voice *OK*, occurring frequently in both courses. As the concordance lines show in Figure 6, expressions such as: "*So, OK, lovely,*", "*OK.*

All right?" or "*OK Wonderful. OK, so I'm going to start telling you the story*", check listeners' involvement and comprehension and signal the speakers' engagement in the interaction.

Figure 6. Concordance lines of "OK" in TEO.

The other two features classified as engagement markers are the assertions *yes* and *yeah*, especially present in TEO, as shown in Table 9, possibly because of the higher presence of dialogues between different instructors in these video recordings. The markers *yes* and *yeah* fulfil the same functions as *OK* does, likewise, they may also contribute to calling the audience's attention, as in Example (16).

(16)   Absolutely, yeah. OK, so today I'm going to tell you about a special weekend. (Week 2, TEO)

OTHER ENGAGEMENT MARKERS	TSE	TEO
OK	25	68
Yeah	5	99
Yes	11	50

Table 9. Other *engagement markers* in the TSE and TEO online courses.

The last interactional resources taken into consideration in this work are boosters, used to emphasise certainty, confidence, to express

commitment to a proposition, or close off alternative viewpoints by strengthening the position of the speaker (Carrió-Pastor/Muñiz-Calderón 2015: 221). As shown in Table 10, the most frequently used booster in both online courses, but especially in TEO, is *really,* used as an adverb, also in a reinforced formula with *important*, as in Examples (17) and (18).

(17)   Starting off with pair work or with smaller group work is really important to make it easier for our learners to work effectively. (Week 4, TSE)

(18)   And correction, of course-how to give feedback in speaking and writing activities. Really important. Absolutely. We are going to show you some useful digital resources [...] (Week 4, TEO)

BOOSTERS	TSE	TEO
actually	20	23
always	13	18
certain	15	5
clear	14	16
really	23	93
really important	5	10

Table 10. *Boosters* in the TSE and TEO online courses.

Figure 7. Concordance lines of "really important" in TEO online course.

The dialogic and interactional character of the booster *really important* is also shown by the co-text in the concordance lines in Figure 6, where in a number of occasions it appears together with other expressions aiming at reinforcing the statement, such as in "*Really important, Yeah, I agree.*", "*Really important I think so, yes.*", "*Really important. Absolutely.*", or "*Really important, isn't it*".

The other boosters occurring with relatively meaningful frequency are *actually, always, certain,* and *clear*, as shown in Table 10 above.

5. Metadiscourse and rhetoric

Following Conley (1983, cited by Crismore 1989: 83) metadiscourse in this genre will also be examined from a rhetorician's perspective, focusing on figures of presence, figures of focus and figures of communion. It will be argued that the three are mainly used to contribute to effective communication rather than merely for ornamentation and embellishment of the texts. "According to Conley", Crismore (1989: 83) explains, "figures of thought are important, necessary aids to argument, exposition and narrative".

Figures of presence include repetition, which helps make the discourse more vivid and memorable. Some examples follow, taken from the two online courses:

(19)   Well I think one of the most fundamental strategies that you can use in this sort of approach is to get students who have the aims and the vocabulary in advance […] it gives them much confidence. […] So I think that gives them much confidence to work throughout the unit. (Week 1, TSE)

(20)   Yeah, I think quite often, online lessons are one-to-one, not always, but they seem to be more commonly one-to-one. And just one-to-one lessons face-to-face, I think quite often the teacher becomes a listening resource. (Week 2, TEO)

Figures of focus such as similes, metaphors, and definitions help the audience focus on something in the discourse. Metaphors are widely used in both courses. One of the most utilized metaphors is that of a *community of learners*:

(21)   We are a global community. (Week 1, TSE)

(22)   I think this online community thing is an important thing. (Week 4, TEO)

(23)   Join an online community is another important thing. (Week 4, TEO)

Another important metaphor found in the courses is that of the *journey*, through which the commitment to follow and engage in an online distant learning course is seen as undertaking a journey, with successive steps and stops:

(24)   We are going to take you through the course over the next four weeks. (Welcome Week, TEO)

(25)   And in every week, in every step, there are activities for you to do. (Welcome Week TEO)

(26)   So at the end of every step, there will be comments where we ask you to exchange ideas, say what you feel about things you're learning on the course. (Welcome Week, TEO)

(27)   We're a global community. And we're starting a journey together. (Week 1, TSE)

(28)   This week our first stop is getting learners ready to learn [...] (Week 1, TSE)

(29)   Back to our first stop, getting learners ready to learn [...] (Week 1, TSE)

(30)   The second stop of our journey was reviewing learning [...] (Week 1, TSE)

(31)   The last stop in our journey this week is engaging with learners, eliciting. (Week 1, TSE)

(32)   This is a journey in which we are embarking. And enjoy the ride! (Week 1, TSE)

Another metaphor is that of *light juxtaposed to darkness*: sharing objectives with the students is shedding light on what they are going to learn and making students aware of every moment of their learning process.

(33)   I share learning objectives with learners, because I think it's a principle of good teaching, never to leave them in the dark about what the desired outcome of a particular unit or a lesson is. (Week 1, TSE)

The metaphor of *building and construction* is utilized to mean that students and teachers have to use strong and solid materials in order to create new understanding: just as building a strong and sturdy house requires strong materials such as iron, wood and concrete, in the same way building learning and knowledge requires scaffolding and building blocks:

(34)   It's important, I'd say, to scaffold learning. So in the sense of constructing, we think of building a building. You could imagine having the building blocks in this which might be those words, adding to them to create those sentences, and then building on […] Yes, I agree with Paul that scaffolding is absolutely essential. (Week 2, TSE)

Figures of communion (allusions and rhetorical questions) help form a common bond with the audience. The authors of this paper argue that *question tags* also have this function of creating a connection with the public or the listeners:

(35)   It makes them really keen to want to know it in English then, doesn't it? (Week 1, TSE)

(36)   Referencing, and substitution, ellipses, and things like that that can sometimes prove problematic for learners. And those are the kinds of things that you can also do in the classroom as well, aren't they? (Week 2, TEO)

With regard to metadiscourse and rhetoric, it should be underlined that all features found and analysed in the two MOOC courses satisfy the appeals of classical rhetoric (Mortara Garavelli 2008; Hyland 2005: 63-67) in modern forms of persuasive discourse. The metadiscourse items identified have distinct rhetorical effects but, as can be seen

from the examples given, many of them perform more than one function simultaneously (Hyland 2005: 84). For example, transitions, by which the instructors connect elements in the discussion, explain, orient and guide the audience, appeal to *logos*, which according to Classical Rhetoric is persuasion through logical reasoning. This can be noticed in Example (33) where the instructor illustrates her use of learning objectives at the beginning of the lesson and, through the causal transition *because* she explains the reasons behind her choice. As a matter of fact, sharing learning objectives with learners contributes to effective learning, favours awareness and triggers motivation.

Hedges, boosters, self-mentions are features by which the instructors underline certainty and establish an individual presence in the discourse. This confident, decisive and commanding image appeals to *ethos*, which can be defined as persuasion through personality, stance and credibility of the speaker. As the following example shows, through the repetition of the personal pronoun *I*, and the listing of activities linked to the planning of a lesson, the speaker is successfully building her credibility and expertise on the matter.

(37)   When *I* plan my lessons, what *I* like to do is to spend quite a lot of time thinking about the questions that *I*'m going to be asking. And *I* have to do a lot of lateral thinking, because *I* not only have to think of the questions that *I* would like to ask, but also what the learners are likely to say so that *I* can think of further questions. *I* also like to use prompts. They may be visual, they may be linguistic. (Week 1, TSE)

Attitude markers, self-mentions, engagement markers are those features by which the instructors empathize with the audience's values and goals, invite them to participate and respond, consider their attitude to the arguments and establish a relationship with them. Therefore, it can be affirmed that these features appeal to *pathos*, which means persuasion through affect, empathy and sharing.

(38)   And I like learners to reflect not just on what they think they've achieved, but specifically, what they've achieved in subject learning and what they think how their English has improved to communicate the subject. So that they're

also feeling good about how much their English has developed through learning a subject. (Week 5, TSE)

In Example (38), the instructor is explaining how she appeals to learner's emotions and how she manages to establish a relationship with them by reinforcing their feelings about their achievements.

6. Conclusions

Concluding, spoken discourse in the filmed lectures use many of the metadiscourse markers found in written discourse and identified by several scholars, Hyland (2005) in particular. The quantitative analysis reveals a higher frequency of interactional features such as self mentions, engagement markers, hedges and boosters, rather than interactive features. The commentaries in the transcripts signal the speakers' attitudes towards the texts and their listeners. The authors of the present paper argue that interactional features are more frequent precisely because of the spoken character of the texts analysed, i.e. video lessons.

The commentaries used are not just ornamentation but they actually bring the material alive, and certainly perform a rhetorical function since they persuasively reinforce the speakers' attitudes and stance. It can thus be affirmed that metadiscoursal features found in the two online courses present information in ways which engage the participants as members of a community, where commitment and dedication, common ground and sharing seem to be fundamental and essential aspects.

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