



Closing the Distance with an Open Smile in ODFL — the impact of emotion in ODFL experience

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How important are emotions in open,
distant and flexible learning?

One to ten?

Open – there are no barriers

'Open' suggests a pathway can be found for any learner regardless of experience, skills or qualification

- Denotation: 'Open' describes the literal accessibility and ease of access to the learning ... an open door
- Connotation: suggests *free, truthful, transparent*, in ODFL, in contrast to the rule bound and economically determined nature of the traditional 'compulsory' education environment.

Open: remove and/or eliminate barriers to learning that may be educational, social and/or economic .



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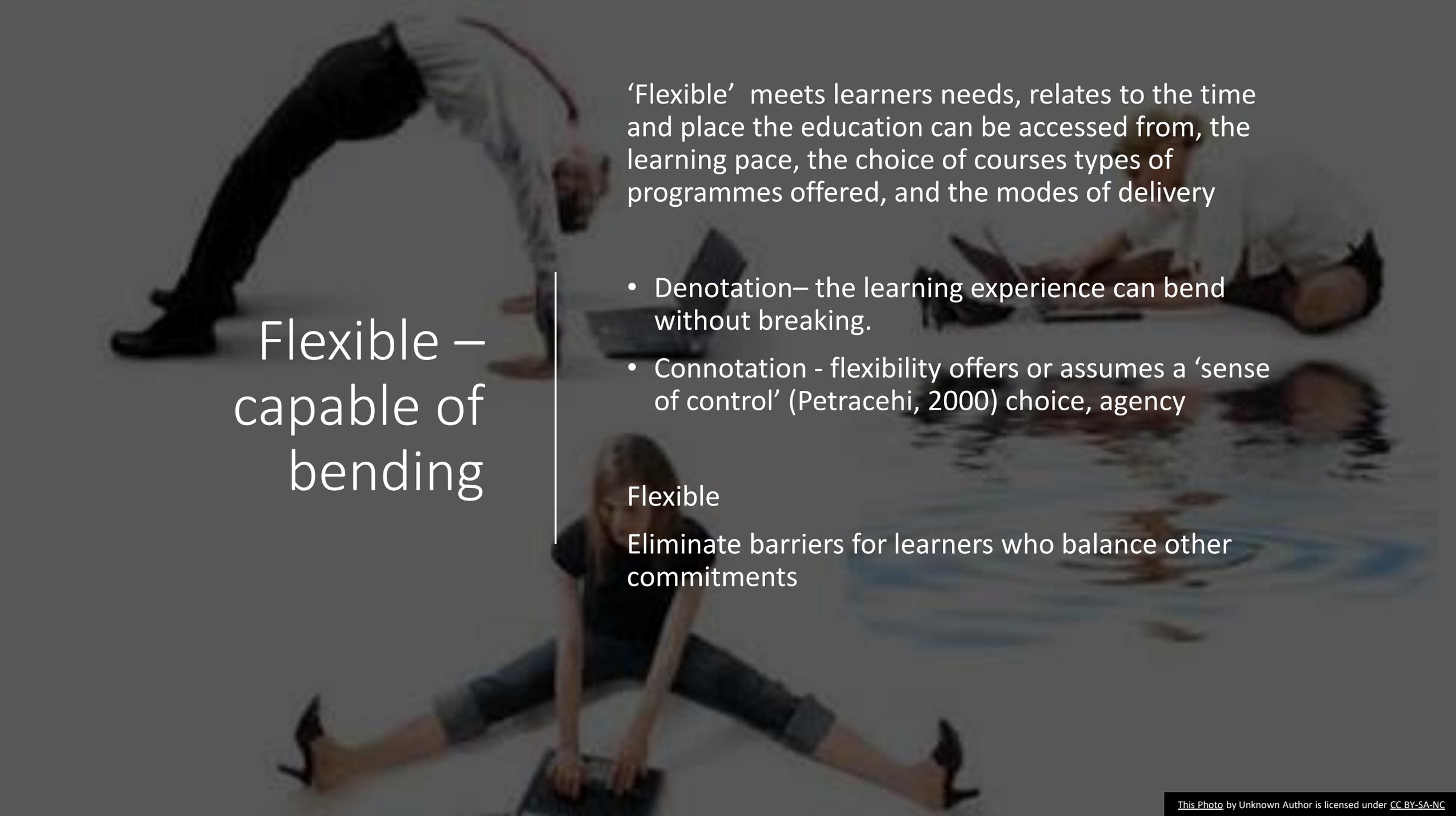
Distant – far away

There is physical separation between the learner and the institute that delivers the education.

- Denotation: the spatial difference between the institute and the learner
- Connotation: the emotional distance between the learner and the institute ... emotional distance is coldness, unresponsiveness, loneliness

Distant: increase barriers to learning that may be emotional and/or psychological.





Flexible – capable of bending

‘Flexible’ meets learners needs, relates to the time and place the education can be accessed from, the learning pace, the choice of courses types of programmes offered, and the modes of delivery

- Denotation– the learning experience can bend without breaking.
- Connotation - flexibility offers or assumes a ‘sense of control’ (Petracehi, 2000) choice, agency

Flexible

Eliminate barriers for learners who balance other commitments

ODFL
meanings
shaped by
emotional
associations

Open – free, transparent, easy
truthful = remove barriers

Distance – separation, coldness,
unresponsiveness, loneliness
= create barriers

Flexible – bend without breaking,
come and go, in control = remove
barriers

Tania makes her first post on-line:

*“I am a 35 year old single mum of three, my youngest being 10 months. I work full time in a government department and have never done study, let alone online distance learning, and it definitely **terrifies** me. I am very hard on myself, and not the best academically.”*





Tania begins her first experience in on-line learning feeling “terrified” – but we don’t know this

- In the provision of on-line learning we need to be especially mindful of the influence of emotions and affect in learning because of all we don’t know about our learners.
- We cannot read the faces of our learners, we cannot sense their mood or read their body language, and we cannot manage or even know the physical environment within which they learn.
- What we do know is that ODFL learners are managing multiple complexities in their lives and that they come before their screens with any of range of emotions.
- ODFL is a way to hide



Emotion and affect

Emotions as 'e-motion' are about movement – action tendencies

(Lazarus 1991)

Emotions are the body's response to lived experiences - inner prompts, nudges, stirrings, drawing attention to what is meaningful.

In learning, emotions produce **movement away or towards** - motivational as the result of positive emotions, inhibiting as the result of negative emotions.

Affect is relational, it is the energy that arises in interactions with each other – **to affect and to be affected** is the essence of our interactions

not limited to human relations only - our environment, culture, social and political context all participate in affect (**and technologies**)

Shifting our understanding of the power of emotions in learning

Then:

Emotions are confused thoughts or perceptions, unreliable judgements, inferior, subjective and private experiences which could not be understood by objective means and should be controlled or regulated (Descartes)

Now:

- Emotions are a critical force in learning (Immordino-Yang 2016)
- Emotions actually shape the way we think (Berninger, 2016)
- All teaching and learning is emotional practice (Ings 2017, Yoo & Carter 2017, Zembylas 2007).
- Emotions in teaching and learning are “collaboratively constructed terrain,” shaped by structures and experiences of race, class, and gender (Boler, 1999).

The action tendency for Tania's fear/ terror is awayness.

Tania didn't enrol because she was terrified, she enrolled **because she hopes for change**

How do we leverage **hope** and minimise **terror** - what affect can we have?



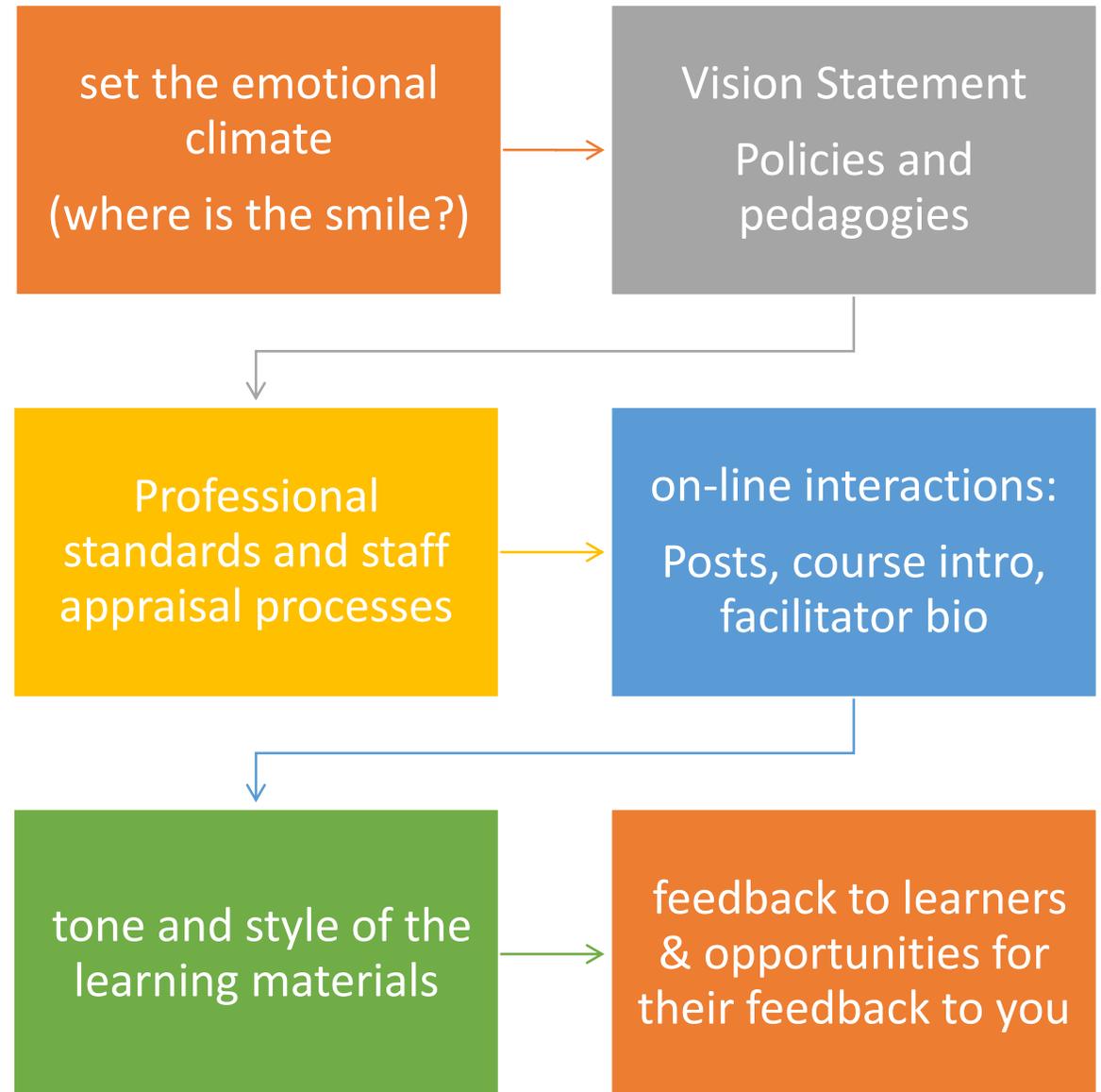
How do we
create
“affect” in on-
line learning?

In F2F learning, Tania could be put at ease on her first day with a warm smile from her tutor or other students, by spatial arrangements, and the ease with which she navigates the environment, her orientation – this is affect.



in ODFL, the technologies, learning platform, course materials, welcome messaging, onboarding experience, targeted just-in-time support, are participate in the creation of affect.

Explicitly
address
learners'
emotional
needs in
every aspect



Privilege “feeling” above “thinking”

Using feeling language: *“I feel therefore I am”*

“how does this make you feel?” instead of “what are your thoughts about this?”

“How are you feeling about the learning so far?”

“What feelings do you experience when....?”

“Don’t worry if you feel”

“Do you have strong feelings about...?”

Enable
tuakana/teina
relationships
across
distance

Recognise learners need to off-load and provide opportunities

Encourage peer to peer interaction on-line/ private or public

Study buddies

Message in a bottle

(How I felt when I started this course, how I felt at different times during the course, how I feel now.)

Innovate ways to affect

- Our challenge is to put the smile into the on-line experience. Being aware of the emotional impact of all our interactions helps us do this – we should be constantly asking ourselves: “Where is the smile in what I am doing here?” “Where is the humour and joyfulness in this experience?” “What can I do to make this bright and attractive?”
- In purposefully leveraging the emotions of hope, excitement, and pride in any component of ODFL we mobilize positive affect in ways that secure success for all involved.

Just in time support...

“I phoned Tania to welcome her to the course and found she was quite closed off and seemed uninterested in speaking with me about logging on. She said she had logged on already and it was “fine”.

We spoke about her ‘why’ (what she hoped for in doing the course) and she seemed to relax a bit.

After chatting for awhile, she admitted she had logged in, but felt “completely stupid” because she couldn’t understand where the learning material was. We spent some time exploring the LMS together and after ten minutes she was like a different person.

She said, “I don’t know what I would have done if you hadn’t called. I didn’t want to appear dumb, so I probably would have just quit.”

I received an email from her today saying she now felt completely confident navigating and was really enjoying the course.”

one to ten?



Questions...