

Corpus-based materials design for EAP listening: the road less travelled

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Importance marking

- if you forget everything else i say just **remember** that kidney failure causes high blood pressure

- **ignore** that 'cause **it's totally irrelevant**



- Lexicogrammatical devices
- marking the comparative importance of
- verbal or visual points

✓ **the most important thing** to bear in mind throughout the lecture really is pest is a human definition

✓ so **we're interested in** the gradient here at two-seven-three

✗ mass warfare which is obviously such **an important thing** in the nineteenth century

‘For EAP practitioners, a key issue is how to provide as accurate as possible a model of lecture organisation and help their learners to develop the skills to interpret organising signals.’

Thompson, S. E. (2003). Text-structuring metadiscourse, intonation and the signalling of organisation in academic lectures. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 2(1): p. 6

EAP books

- Lebauer, R. (2010). *Learn to listen, listen to learn, Level 2: academic listening and note-taking* (3rd ed.).
- Phillips, T. (1999). *Skills in English listening: level 3*.
- Sarosy, P. , & K. Sherak. (2006). *Lecture ready 2: strategies for academic listening, note-taking, and discussion*.

EAP books

Authentic lectures/corpus-informed

- Firth, M. (2012). *Cambridge Academic English: an integrated skills course for EAP*. Lecture skills video worksheet.
- Firth, M., et al. (2012). *Cambridge Academic English C1 Advanced: an integrated skills course for EAP*. Teacher's book.
- Hewings, M. & C. Thaine (2012). *Cambridge Academic English C1 Advanced: an integrated skills course for EAP*. Student's book.
- Kelly, T., et al. (2000). *Listening to lectures*.
- Lynch, T. (2004). *Study listening: a course in listening to lectures and note taking*.
- Salehzadeh, J. (2006). *Academic listening strategies: a guide to understanding lectures*.

The importance of importance marking

BALEAP 2013 Can do framework

- ‘One of identified skills by interview of staff in lecturing is
- L2.1.9 Cope with con-current note-taking and listening
 - L2.1.10 Assimilate information and take full and effective notes
 - **L2.1.11 Identify ‘big’ ideas; dismiss less relevant detail’**

The importance of importance marking

Firth (2012)

Preparing for lectures

Lectures are often used to introduce the main points of a particular subject before you go on to study them in more depth, for an essay, a seminar or exam question. It will help you understand topics of lectures if you prepare in advance.

1.1 Think about why the following strategies might be useful to follow before you attend a lecture.

- 1 Know what the general topic of the lecture is and how it relates to the other lectures in the course.
- 2 Read any recommended texts before the lecture and highlight the **key points**.
- 3 If there is no recommended reading for that week, spend some time researching the topic yourself to get an overview of the **key ideas**.
- 4 Review previous lecture notes.
- 5 Find out if the lecturer has a website.

- ① **Lecturers will usually give some kind of clue as to what the key points are.** These include:
- Text and graphics presented on slides or written on a board
 - The use of tone of voice and body language to emphasise a point
 - Repetition and paraphrasing of key points
 - **Discourse markers** (language used to help guide the listener through the lecture) and rhetorical questions e.g. *So what are the three elements to this theory? First,*
 - Summaries of what has been said.

The importance of importance marking

Lynch (2004)

- Step 1: What is being said.
- Step 2: What it means (how it relates to what has been said).
- Step 3: **Whether it is important and whether to note it down.**
- Step 4: How to write it in note form.

The importance of importance marking

Salehzadeh (2006)

- Students should
 - Record 'instructor emphasis'
 - Highlight key ideas in notes
 - Listen for the 'big picture' = main ideas
- Students' job to understand what the 'comprehension cues' are

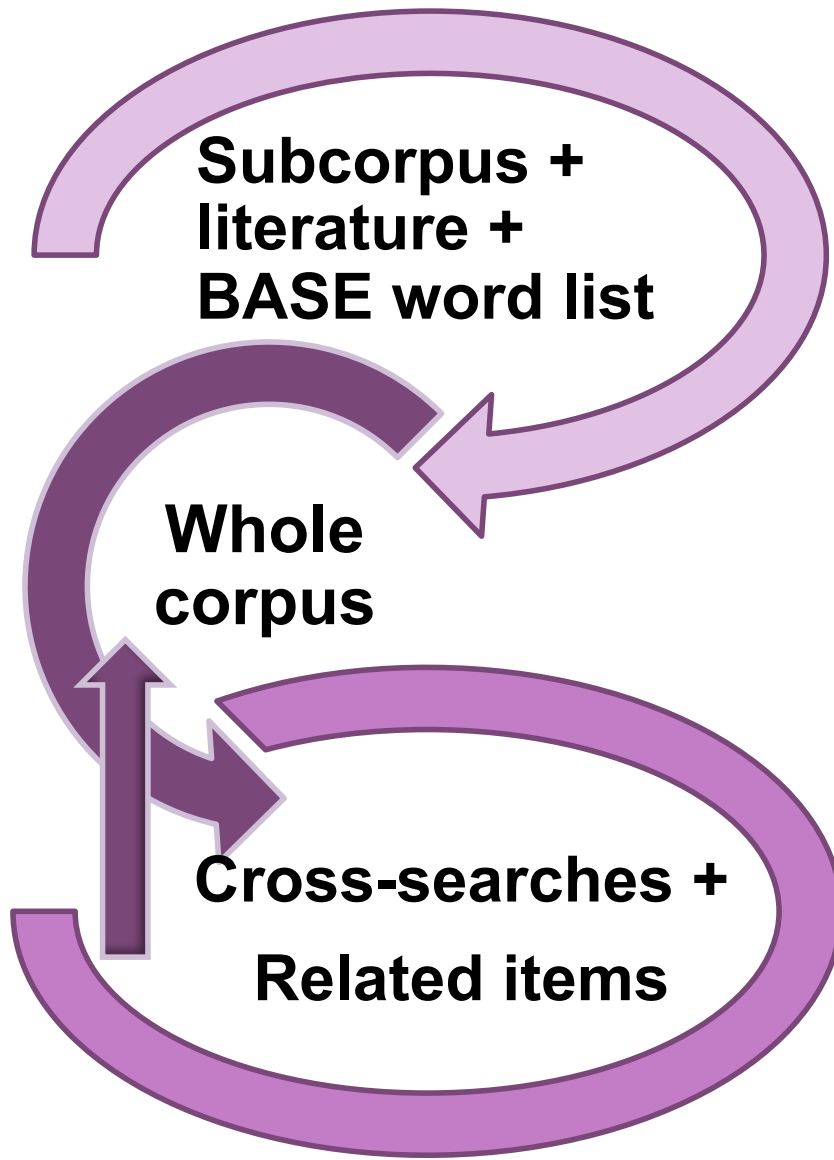
Corpus & tools

- British Academic Spoken English (BASE) Corpus
- 160 lectures
- Arts & Humanities; Physical Sciences, Life & Medical Sciences, Social Studies

- Sketch Engine, Corpus Query Language
- FileMaker Pro

Retrieving the markers

(Deroey & Taverniers 2012)



- Manual analysis 40 lectures
- Markers from other studies
- ≥ 50 BASE

- Concordance co-text
- Synonyms & derived words

Main markers of importance points (patterns)

Pattern type	Example	Frequency (N=782)
Adjective	it's important to note this is further subdivided	7%
Noun	that's the key point here	± 36%
Verb	i want to stress this point	± 54%
Adverb	significantly this is made out of virtually one block of Carrara marble	± 2%
Exam-related expressions	it's something we can sort of ask exam questions on	1%

Predominant markers

- V n/closure ± 34%
and **remember** that most developing countries are small
- MN v-link ± 21%
the point is that people can't do that
- 1s pers pron V n/closure ± 9%
i want to **stress** this point
- adj MN v-link ± 8%
the key point is they do not give up those natural rights

Surprised?

- Markers with explicit evaluation in the minority
 - adj MN v-link $\pm 8\%$
the key point is they do not give up those natural rights
 - it v-link ADJ clause $\pm 4\%$
it's important to say that it's actually quite rare
 - deic v-link adj MN $\pm 3\%$
that's the key point here
- Exam expressions rare
it's something we can sort of ask **exam** questions on

Surprised?

- Multifunctional, formulaic markers predominate
- V n/closure
 - ✗there is a class switch **remember** (BASE)
 - ✗the papilli **remember** are part of a drainage system of the kidney (BASE)
 - ✓and **remember** that most developing countries are small (BASE)
- MN v-link
 - ✓ **the point is** that people can't do that
 - ✗ **the point is** for you to develop your own scholarship
 - ✓ **the thing you have to remember is** there's no such thing as the heritability
 - ? **the thing is** that the one of them is not good

Representation in EAP books

- Belgar & Murray (2002):
 - advice on organising main ideas and supporting details
 - no markers of this distinction
- Lebauer (2010); Phillips (1999); Sarosy & Sherak (2006)
 - few & prototypical markers
- Practice in listening for main ideas but do not really provide many devices to help recognise them
- Source?

Representation in EAP books

- Hewings & Thaine (2012) (CAE C1 Student's book)



Study tip

Notice how Professor Crystal outlines an example which provides a context and background information in support of the point he is about to make. Background information can include a story or anecdote. If a part of a lecture begins with an example or story of some kind, it is likely that you will need to listen to the key point that follows the example.



Study tip

Many lecturers use language that is similar to Professor Rings' examples in 5.1. This aims to guide the person listening to the lecture, so you know what is coming next or what has been previously mentioned. Learning to listen for this language will help you to understand the overall structure of a lecture and also listen for what are key points.

Representation in EAP books

- Firth et al. (2012) (CAE C1 Teacher's book)

1.1a Ask students to brainstorm ways in which they can identify *questions that introduce ideas or topics* – e.g. rising tone or question words, and *key points* – e.g. repetition of words or lecturer emphasis. Provide the students with a very brief overview of what *ECT* means – i.e. treatment for psychiatric disorders which uses electric shocks. Then play (D.6). Students take notes appropriately.

CAE C1: no markers

- Firth (2012) (CAE C1 Lecture skills)

Watch another ten minutes of the lecture that you have chosen. Pay attention to any strategies the lecturer employs to highlight any particularly important points. Note down the key points, and compare your ideas with a partner.

Representation in EAP books

Salehzadeh (2006)

- ‘Emphasis’ cues: *‘the important thing here is’*; *‘what you don’t want to forget’*; *‘be careful about’*; *‘here’s the tricky part now’*
- Few, prototypical
- From authentic lectures?

Representation in EAP books

Kelly, Revell, & Nesi (2000)

- Chapter 'Attitudes and significance'
- Practice distinguishing between more and less important information by asking to identify importance markers
- Importance markers: phrases to convey relative significance of a point

Representation in EAP books

Kelly, Revell, & Nesi (2000)

- Examples from BASE
 - *'The key point is; One of the most important points is; What's crucial is; An important point is; The main point is; A point worth noting is; That's the main point here; The big question is'*.
- All containing adjectives → explicit, fairly prototypical
- → Not the predominant markers

Representation in EAP books

Lynch (2004)

- Listening macrostrategy ‘evaluating’; includes listeners assessing whether they have understood the main points
- Lecturers may stress a point by speaking about
 - subject matter (adjectives & nouns): *‘the central problem is that’, ‘a basic point’, and ‘another key issue in the’*
 - audience (adjectives, cognitive verbs, listener pronouns): *‘it’s important to bear in mind that’, ‘it’s worth(while) ...ing that’, ‘remember that’, ‘don’t forget that’, ‘you shouldn’t lose sight of the fact that’*
 - themselves (communication verbs, speaker pronouns): *‘I want to stress/emphasise/underline’, ‘My point is’, ‘What I’m getting at is’*

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Representation in EAP books

Lynch (2004)

- Most extensive list
- Includes predominant markers (BASE) (Deroey & Taverniers 2012)
- Reflects BASE findings regarding interactive orientation (Deroey 2013)
- From authentic lectures?

Markers of important points: conclusion

- Great variety, not reflected in EAP materials
- More intuitively obvious/more prototypical markers vs predominantly multifunctional and less explicit marking in BASE
- Frequency & multifunctionality: Training targets

Markers of lesser importance

- my cat is a demon i don't know why i put that down as a metaphor you only got to look at me to see that that's true but never mind



Markers of lesser importance

Message status

Topic treatment

Lecturer
knowledge

Attention & note-
taking directives

Assessment

Message status

- Few 'irrelevant'
the detail is **not pertinent** to the rest of what i'm going to say
- Partial, 'lesser' relevance
but what the hell do we do [[laughter]] anyway that's a complete aside
okay it's just a final piece of **entertainment** in the conclusion to the lectures on Descartes
- Boundary marking
but what the hell do we do [[laughter]] **anyway** that's a complete aside

Topic treatment

- we're **not** going to **look at** that in great *detail*
- what i'd like to do now is to say **a little bit** about water
- i'm just going to **quickly** give you some *examples* okay
- then you do a few more operations which i will **not drag** you **through** right now and why this is so **et cetera et cetera**

Lecturer knowledge

- i **can't remember** it's in the textbook but ignore that 'cause it's totally irrelevant for the actual what i'm going to tell you
- it's no coincidence that the number of phonemes in languages ranges between i **don't know** fifteen to seventy or something like that whatever it is i'm not quite sure w with most probably being forty or fifty or som or something like that phonemes i suppose

Attention and note-taking directives

- and for reasons which again i'm not going to go into these cells or some of these cells are important in things like allergy but **never mind** that's by the way
- i'll be giving you a handout which gives you these quotes so you **don't** need to **write** these down verbatim just take in the general gist

Assessment

- it won't come up on an **exam** paper
- and **don't** get tied up in **learning** too many of those numbers just remember the basic principles

Representation in EAP books

- Lynch (2004)
 - no markers of lesser importance
 - relatively quick and quiet speech may signal less important information;
- Salehzadeh (2006)
 - marking of lesser importance not discussed/exemplified
 - warns against not paying attention to digressions and anecdotes
- Kelly, Revell, & Nesi (2000)
 - lecturers may tell students if they think a point is less important
 - Identify less important point & cue (exercise): *'the third question i i want to ask which i think is probably less less less crucial less fundamental in some ways but no no no nevertheless of interest to you'*

In sum

- Examples of importance markers are generally:
 - few
 - prototypical
 - not reflecting what really happens, i.e. what students have to work with
 - not (obviously) corpus-derived

Acknowledgment

- The recordings and transcriptions used in this study come from the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus. The corpus was developed at the Universities of Warwick and Reading under the directorship of Hilary Nesi and Paul Thompson. Corpus development was assisted by funding from BALEAP, EURALEX, the British Academy and the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

Further reading

- Deroey, K. L. B., & Taverniers, M. (2012). 'Just remember this': Lexicogrammatical relevance markers in lectures. *English for Specific Purposes*, 31 (4), 221-233.
- Deroey, K. L. B., & Taverniers, M. (2012). 'Ignore that 'cause it's totally irrelevant': Marking lesser relevance in lectures. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 44 (14), 2085-2099.
- Deroey, K. L. B. (2013). Marking importance in lectures: Interactive and textual orientation. *Applied Linguistics*
- Deroey, K. L. B. (2014). 'Anyway, the point I'm making is': Lexicogrammatical relevance marking in lectures. In Vandelanotte, Lieven, Kristin Davidse, Caroline Gentens and Ditte Kimps (eds) *Recent Advances in Corpus Linguistics: Developing and Exploiting Corpora*. Amsterdam/New York: Rodopi. pp. 265-291.