Markers of lesser importance in lectures

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Cite as: Deroey, K. L. B. Markers of lesser importance in lecture discourse. 1st International Conference on Corpus Analysis in Academic Discourse. 22 November 2017, Valencia, Spain.
What are importance markers?
Markers of (lesser) importance

‘Lexicogrammatical devices that overtly mark the relative importance or relevance of points which are presented verbally or visually’

(Deroey & Taverniers, 2012a, p. 222)
Markers of (lesser) importance

**Discourse organization:** hierarchy of importance of lecture points

+ **Evaluation:** ‘parameter of importance or relevance’ (Thompson & Hunston, 2000, p. 24)
  - Of ‘discourse entities’ (Thetela, 1997, as cited in Hunston, 2000, p. 182)
  - On interactive plane of discourse (Sinclair, 2004)
  - Lecturer as ‘text constructor’ (Hunston, 2000, p. 183)
Markers of (lesser) importance

Importance markers


Markers of lesser importance

Deroey (2014), Deroey & Taverniers (2012b)

Redcrosse has a fight with one of these guys and wins and another guy and loses *et cetera et cetera* but the point is what *you have to remember* is that in an allegorical story everybody the h the hero meets is what he has inside him so it’s a way of creating a complex psychological figure
How were the markers retrieved?

Deroey & Taverniers (2012b)
British Academic Spoken English corpus

160 lectures
Arts & Humanities, Social Studies & Sciences, Physical Sciences, Life & Medical Sciences

Subcorpus: 40 lectures (1 252 256 tokens)
Pilot: 4 lectures

Other 36 lectures

160 lectures

Sample interrating

Manual search
Two researchers
Refine inclusion criteria

Manual search
1 researcher

Automated Sketch Engine

90 items
3 researchers

Deroey & Taverniers, 2012b
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>id</th>
<th>message</th>
<th>status</th>
<th>any way</th>
<th>reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aclt039</td>
<td>to have for tea tonight [laugh] but &lt;any way&gt; the door is invented i have a very rich</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>and what becomes of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt038</td>
<td>plague [laugh] but [voiced pause] but &lt;any way&gt; i'm a G-P in up the road a little village</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt037</td>
<td>better apples around when Hume was alive but &lt;any way&gt; so one can imagine that there are these</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt036</td>
<td>i'm not entirely sure what this means but &lt;any way&gt; a croist it's a kind of tense which took</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt033</td>
<td>again this week looks a bit like Mercury but &lt;any way&gt; we know they both have the same reference</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>the case then we</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt019</td>
<td>however you'd say that that's nonsense but &lt;any way&gt; the point is [voiced pause] this is the</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt017</td>
<td>nobody's going to shoot you and so on but &lt;any way&gt; we'll leave those [voiced pause] [voiced pause]</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt008</td>
<td>'m sure you know this already right but &lt;any way&gt; let's just remind ourselves Huck Finn</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt010</td>
<td>to quite where we stand and all that but &lt;any way&gt; there are two summative assessments the</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt005</td>
<td>theories according to which we can cooperate &lt;any way&gt; so there was Professor Guillebaud and he</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt003</td>
<td>that the structure with time will creep &lt;any way&gt; will try to adopt the minimum energy form</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt000</td>
<td>even have happened till after his death &lt;any way&gt; so we leave it there we've talked about</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt011</td>
<td>'use [laugh] not in a Citroen Diane &lt;any way&gt; [laugh] i do not know might be possible</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt004</td>
<td>evolution analysis or the virologists did &lt;any way&gt; [voiced pause] in your haemoglobinization</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt006</td>
<td>afterwards but okay they'd probably die &lt;any way&gt; of something or other but what happens</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt007</td>
<td>recognizing that there are going to be differences &lt;any way&gt; in so far as national law permits their</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt015</td>
<td>of the fact that we're all different &lt;any way&gt; there'd be a natural variation component</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt006</td>
<td>Germany yeah younger people are different &lt;any way&gt; that's the broad answer to your question</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt021</td>
<td>important in this course which is difficult &lt;any way&gt; you it's just don't free ride i don't</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt029</td>
<td>the same in all the different directions &lt;any way&gt; okay final point that we need to get in</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt021</td>
<td>find it rather difficult i hope we do &lt;any way&gt; to [voiced pause] [laughter] understand</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt018</td>
<td>to provide a gloss for what you would do &lt;any way&gt; in other words nobody goes out and says</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt025</td>
<td>can slow the legislation procedure down &lt;any way&gt; well there's no shortage of M-E-P's</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt037</td>
<td>one you're going to have to scroll down &lt;any way&gt; but that was where i started from that</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt035</td>
<td>couple of dozen [voiced pause] or a dozen &lt;any way&gt; [voiced pause] that's the outside [voiced pause]</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt040</td>
<td>United States which didn't like stamp duties &lt;any way&gt; [laughter] but [voiced pause] this this</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt009</td>
<td>you know the narrator is not George Eliot &lt;any way&gt; this is the narrator and not the author</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt002</td>
<td>disease is going to come from somewhere else &lt;any way&gt; and once you know something that will work</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aclt020</td>
<td>fatigued and the axles were also being fatigued &lt;any way&gt; these axles began to break for no apparent</td>
<td>Y</td>
<td>ON</td>
<td>question</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do lecturers mark less important points?

Deroey & Taverniers (2012b)
Deroey (2014)
Spot the marker(s) of lesser importance

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

Co-text

Non-verbal, visual, prosodic cues

Lecture genre
Interpreting pragmatic function

Co-text

that does have certain consequences for change but **anyway** i’m not i won’t be going on on to those
Interpreting pragmatic function

Non-verbal, visual, prosodic cues

forty per cent or so of diabetics get bad diabetes including the eyes the kidneys et cetera and so if you were a cynic you'd say well why bother for those forty per cent 'cause they're buggered anyway [[voiced pause]] but nonetheless i think we have to [[voiced pause]] adopt a positive approach
Interpreting pragmatic function

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecture genre</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>e.g. if something is important, the lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• will cover it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i'm not going to talk about the second equation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• will remember it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i can't remember the exact details of the case</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• is less likely to advise against note-taking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don't bother to try to copy it down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Markers of lesser importance

- Message status
- Topic treatment
- Lecturer knowledge
- Attention- & note-taking directives
- Assessment
Markers of lesser importance

- Message status
  - Topic treatment
  - Lecturer knowledge
  - Attention- & note-taking directives
  - Assessment
Assign negative value

that’s a little bit of a sideline **sideline**
i'm **joking**

Signal transitions between more & less important

that does have certain consequences for for change but **anyway** i’m not i won’t be going on on to those
Markers of lesser importance

- Message status
- Topic treatment
- Lecturer knowledge
- Attention- & note-taking directives
- Assessment
Indicate limited discourse / time is devoted to topic

what i'd like to do now is to say a little bit about water

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
Markers of lesser importance

- Message status
- Topic treatment
- Lecturer knowledge
- Attention- & note-taking directives
- Assessment
Suggests imprecise / partial 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 never called that in film study i don't know why but it isn't
Markers of lesser importance

- Message status
- Topic treatment
- Lecturer knowledge
- Attention- & note-taking directives
- Assessment
Attention- and note-taking directives

Direct students not to pay attention / take notes

you don't need to copy them all down

ignore that 'cause it's totally irrelevant
Markers of lesser importance

- Message status
- Topic treatment
- Lecturer knowledge
- Attention- & note-taking directives

Assessment
Assessment

Indicate what information won’t be examined

it won't come up on an exam paper

you don't have to know the details of Keynes' economic theories
What does it mean?
Findings about lecture discourse

Lecturers tend not to label their discourse as irrelevant.

Discourse organization often happens through multifunctional, ‘muted signals’ (Swales & Burke, 2003, p. 17) that require contextual disambiguation. Lecturers rarely refer to assessment.
Implications for pragmatic corpus studies

When looking for forms performing a function, starting from preconceived items limits representativeness. Consider methods to limit subjectivity. Analytical accuracy is affected by triangulation, multimodality, prosody, & non-verbal communication. How reliable & feasible is quantification? Adopt a ‘hard to classify’ category (cf. Swales, 2001)
‘Much evaluative meaning is not obviously identifiable, as it appears to depend on immediate context and on reader assumptions about value.’
(Hunston, 2004, p. 157)

‘Judgments of plausibility rather than certainty’
(Mann & Thompson, 1988, p. 245)


Acknowledgement
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.
References


References


