

Confronting corpora with coursebooks: the case of lecture listening

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Is there a problem?

(Deroey, under review; Deroey, 2017)

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, 2003, p. 6)

Listening material in an ELT classroom is rarely similar to academic lectures. (Alexander, Argent & Spencer, 2008, p. 224)

[...] most EAP listening programs are based upon commercial textbooks. The downside of this is that these textbooks tend to present the structure and language of the lectures as simply organized and transparently coherent. Actual lectures, however, are a much less tidy form of discourse. (Rodgers & Webb, 2016, p. 171)

Exposing students only to **simplified lecture texts** certainly does students a **disservice**. (Salehzadeh, 2013, p. xix)

Corpora, questions, analysis

Corpora & analysis

160 lectures: British Academic Spoken English corpus
Manual and automated analysis of importance markers

25 coursebooks (mainly UK)

Student's & teacher's books; audiovisuals

Questions

Representativeness of language

Lecture authenticity

Research-informedness

Language: Importance markers

Importance markers in BASE lectures (N=782)

Type	N	%
Remember/notice/note just remember this notice this is again a matter of express consent	264	33.7
The point/question is the point is by chance these two structures are similar	162	20.7
I want to emphasize/stress; (as) I (have) pointed out	70	8.9
The important/key point/thing is	64	8.2
You have to remember	41	5.2

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Which are importance markers?

1. **the point is** that people can't do that
2. **the point is** for you to develop your own scholarship
3. **the thing** you have to remember **is** there's no such thing as the heritability

4. if you forget everything else i say just **remember** that kidney failure causes high blood pressure
5. there is a class switch **remember**
6. **remember** slavery had already been legally abolished

Importance marking in coursebooks (N=52)

Type	N	%
The important point is	11	21.2
I want to stress	7	13.5
Remember that	6	11.5
You have to remember	6	11.5
It's important to note that	5	9.6

Coursebooks versus lectures

Type (coursebooks)	%
The important point is	21.2
I want to stress	13.5
Remember that	11.5
You have to remember	11.5
It's important to note that	9.6

Type (lectures)	%
Remember/notice/note	33.7
The point/question is	20.7
I want to emphasize/stress; (as) I (have) pointed out	8.9
The important/key point/thing is	8.2
You have to remember	5.2

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→ No or few markers

→ Common (implicit) markers underrepresented

The language presented to students in textbooks is a poor representation of the real thing. (Gilmore, 2007, p. 98)

The evidence suggests that textbook authors are not yet habitually checking their materials against relevant corpus data to ensure that the language models they provide are as naturalistic and pedagogically useful as possible.
(Gilmore, 2015, p. 517)

Corpus linguists now often point out how radically **intuition and use may converge**. (Stubbs, 2001, p. 151)

Authenticity

The use of authentic lectures is rare

Authentic lectures

Aish & Tomlinson Lectures: Learn listening and note-taking skills

Cambridge Academic English

Kelly, Nesi, & Revell EASE Volume one: Listening to lectures.

Salehzadeh Academic listening strategies

No or vague descriptions of lectures

Excerpts; unusually short lectures

Clearly structured, slow delivery

Little progression from lower to higher levels

Research-informedness

Research-informedness

Research-informed

Academic listening strategies

Cambridge Academic English

EASE: Listening to lectures

Campbell & Smith English for academic study: Listening

Lynch Study listening

Research-informed coursebooks incorporate research in a minor, non-systematic, unclear way

Most: no/vague statements about research-informedness

Textbooks continue to depend on the writer's experience and intuition rather than systematic research. (Hyland, 2006, p. 5)

Textbook writers fail to consult either appropriate corpora or appropriate applied linguistics literature when designing materials. (Flowerdew, 1992, p. 204)

Although teachers may be under the impression that a textbook is the product of a **careful collaboration between theoreticians and practitioners**, this is a **dubious assumption** (Richards, 1993).

(Harwood, 2005, p. 150)

Implications & recommendations for EAP

Things to remember when using coursebooks

We may be training students with unrepresentative language.

We may be failing to prepare students for the challenges of their lectures.

Applied linguistics researchers often energetically pursue their own narrow fields of interest with minimal concern for the accessibility [...] to other stakeholders [...]; **language teachers** are rarely encouraged (or able) to keep up to date with theoretical advances [...]; **materials writers** seem to rely more on replication of previous successful models, [...] and their own creative muses than theory-driven, principled design criteria [...], and **publishers** appear to show more concern for their bottom dollar than the provision of innovative textbooks, in tune with contemporary theory [...].

Gilmore (2015, p. 521)

What does it mean for EAP teachers?

Do your research: coursebooks & lectures

Adapt & supplement

‘Simplified texts that gradually approximate authentic ones’ (Widdowson, as cited in Gilmore, 2007, p. 108)

Strategies

Invited lectures

Discipline & institution specific lectures

You matter!

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Academia edu; ResearchGate

Lecture listening materials

Deroey, K. L. B. (2017). How representative are EAP listening books of real lectures? . In J. Kemp (Ed.), *Proceedings of the 2015 BALEAP Conference. EAP in a rapidly changing landscape: Issues, challenges and solutions*. Reading: Garnet.

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