

# 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

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**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

Deroey (2015, 2014), Deroey & Taverniers (2012a), Crawford Camiciottoli (2007), Swales & Burke (2003)

## 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 hero meets is what he has inside him so it's a way of creating a complex psychological figure

How were the markers retrieved?

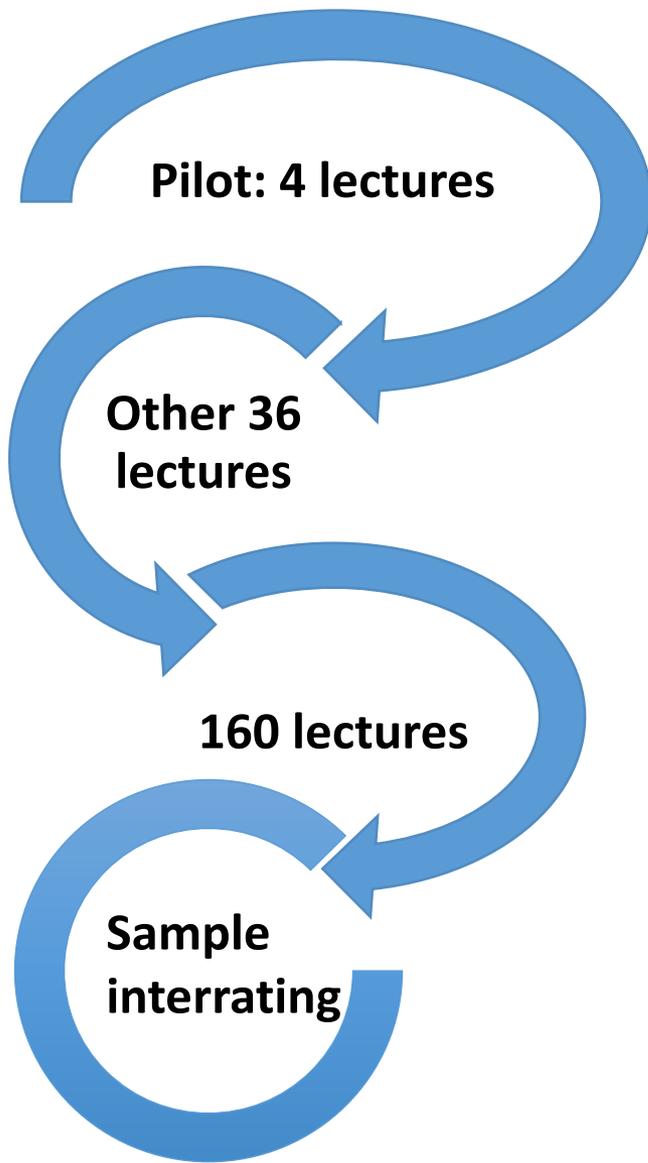
Deroey & Taverniers (2012b)

# British Academic Spoken English corpus

160 lectures

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

Subcorpus: 40 lectures (1 252 256 tokens)



Manual search  
Two researchers  
Refine inclusion criteria

Manual search  
1 researcher

Automated  
Sketch Engine

90 items  
3 researchers

irrelevance markers V3 11 7 12 Kopie

967 2673 Total (Unsorted) Show All New Record Delete Record Find Sort Share Search

lsict036	knackering but [[voiced pause]] [[laughter]] but < anyway > that 's me [[voiced pause]] i am a human	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	irrw
ahlct039	to have for tea tonight [[laughter]] but < anyway > the doer is invented i have a very rich	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	and what becomes of
lsict038	plague [[laughter]] but [[voiced pause]] but < anyway > i 'm a G-P in up the road a little village	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	n medical school
ahlct037	better apples around when Hume was alive but < anyway > so one one can imagine that there are these	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	
sslct036	certain consequences for for change but < anyway > i 'm not i wo n't be going on on to those	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	more speakers so that
ahlct036	do we already have papers do n't know but < anyway > there 's three there 's [[voiced pause]]	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	there 'll be three
sslct036	'm not entirely sure what this means but < anyway > aorist it 's a kind of tense which took	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	CRM
ahlct033	again this week looks a bit like Mercury but < anyway > we know they both have the same reference	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	the case then we
lsict019	however you 'd say that that 's nonsense but < anyway > the point is [[voiced pause]] this is the	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	RM
sslct017	nobody 's going to shoot you and so on but < anyway > we 'll leave those [[voiced pause]] [[voiced pause]]	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	IRM
pslct019	interface okay so that creates problems but < anyway > this is the simple or the simplest approximation	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	
ahlct013	is is kind of old enough to remember but < anyway > [[clears throat]] but there are other ways	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	events [[voiced
ahlct008	'm sure you know this already right but < anyway > let 's just remind ourselves Huck Finn	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	
lsict031	to quite where we stand and all that but < anyway > there are two summative assessments the	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	
ahlct035	manages to catch a ball dogs do it too but < anyway > is it plausible to suppose that the dog	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	question
sslct037	obvious and it again is logically the case < anyway > is that if you 've got a very narrow line		OY OM ON	anyway	
ahlct007	same Indians because they grow in Chile < anyway > who are the Araucanians so badly spelled	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	question
pslct032	law but these are times when you can come < anyway > you do n't need to ask me first can i come		OY OM ON	anyway	
pslct020	railways one of the Austrian railway companies < anyway > he started to investigate this business	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	no check
sslct005	theories according to which we can cooperate < anyway > so there was Professor Guillebaud and he	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	we keep talking and
pslct023	that the structure with time will creep < anyway > will try to adopt the minimum energy form		OY OM ON	anyway	does n't look right
ahlct003	even have happened till after his death < anyway > so we leave it there we 've talked about		OY OM ON	anyway	our mind that
pslct011	use [[laughter]] not in a Citroen Diane < anyway > [[laughter]] i do n't know might be possible		OY OM ON	anyway	Citroen Diane that i
lsict011	ilution analysis or the virologists did < anyway > [[voiced pause]] in your haemagglutination		OY OM ON	anyway	then calculate back
lsict006	afterwards but okay they 'd probably die < anyway > of something or other but what happens		OY OM ON	anyway	
sslct007	recognizing that there are going to be differences < anyway > in so far as national law permits their		OY OM ON	anyway	he it 's a tax
lsict015	of the the fact that we 're all different < anyway > there 'd be a natural variation component		OY OM ON	anyway	we should all be fairly
sslct006	Germany yeah younger people are different < anyway > that 's the broad answer to your question	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	d that 's good for us
ahlct021	important in this course which is difficult < anyway > you it 's just do n't free ride i do n't		OY OM ON	anyway	i 'm going to ask you
pslct029	the same in all the different directions < anyway > okay final point that we need to get in	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	radiance is going to
ahlct021	find it rather difficult to i hope we do < anyway > to [[voiced pause]] [[laughter]] understand		OY OM ON	anyway	it so what Darnton
sslct018	to provide a gloss for what you would do < anyway > in other words nobody goes out and says		OY OM ON	anyway	ignore morality he
sslct025	can slows the legislation procedure down < anyway > well there 's no shortage of M-E-Ps	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	got different standing
sslct037	one you 're going to have to scroll down < anyway > but that was where i started from that		OY OM ON	anyway	the trouble is i 'm ass i
lsict035	couple of dozen [[voiced pause]] or a dozen < anyway > [[voiced pause]] that 's the outside [[voiced pause]]		OY OM ON	anyway	creen [[voiced pause]]
pslct040	United States which did n't like stamp duties < anyway > [[laughter]] but [[voiced pause]] this		OY OM ON	anyway	government sees
ahlct009	you know the narrator is not George Eliot < anyway > this is the narrator and not the author	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	if it 's a he or a she
lsict002	disease is going to come from somewhere else < anyway > and once you know something that will work		OY OM ON	anyway	
pslct020	fatigued and the axles were also being fatigued < anyway > these axles began to break for no apparent	message status	OY OM ON	anyway	no check

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 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 bugged **anyway** [[voiced pause]] but nonetheless i think we have to [[voiced pause]] adopt a positive approach

# Interpreting pragmatic function

## Lecture genre

e.g. if something is important, the lecturer

- will cover it

i'm **not going to talk about** the second equation

- will remember it

i **can't remember** the exact details of the case

- is less likely to advise against note-taking

**don't** bother to try to **copy** it down

# Markers of lesser importance

Message status

Topic treatment

Lecturer  
knowledge

Attention- & note-  
taking directives

Assessment

# Markers of lesser importance

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graph LR; A[Markers of lesser importance] --- B[Message status]; A --- C[Topic treatment]; A --- D[Lecturer knowledge]; A --- E[Attention- & note-taking directives]; A --- F[Assessment];
```

Message status

Topic treatment

Lecturer  
knowledge

Attention- & note-  
taking directives

Assessment

# Message status

## Assign negative value

that's a little bit of a sideways **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

# Topic treatment

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

# Lecturer knowledge

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)

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## **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.

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