Metadiscourse by 'native' and 'non-native' English speakers: importance marking in lectures

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The study

Importance markers: 'lexicogrammatical devices that **overtly** mark the **importance, relevance, or significance** of <u>points</u> that are presented **verbally or visually**.' (Deroey, 2015: 51)

- Discourse organization + evaluation
- Evaluate 'discourse entities', not 'world entities' (cf. Thetela 1997, cited in Hunston 2000: 182)
  - ✓the **key thing** is we're mainly looking at equilibrium (UK)
  - ✓it's **the column** one that **we're interested in** (UK)
  - ✓**remember** t is the upper extreme of integration (IT)
  - ✗**one thing is** you probably wouldn't believe me but **the other thing is** that it's just a generic speed (UK)
  - ✗this is I think a **nice** example (IT)
  - ✗ **it's important** in any design of of water resource systems that are fed by surface water resources (IT)

The research

- Builds on L1 BASE research into importance marking (Deroey & Taverniers 2012, Deroey, 2015)
- Do EMI and L1 lecturers use importance markers differently?
- Implications for EMI training & lecture comprehension/note-taking

The corpus

46 engineering lectures (± 365,000 words)

- EMI: 20 lectures, all different lecturers; L1: 26 lectures, 17 lecturers
- Engineering Lecture Corpus (UK, New Zealand, Malaysian)
- EMIBO (Italian) (Johnson & Picciuolo, forthcoming)

Ready-made → ✖ triangulation; English proficiency; study levels

Transcripts → ✖ multimodality & prosody
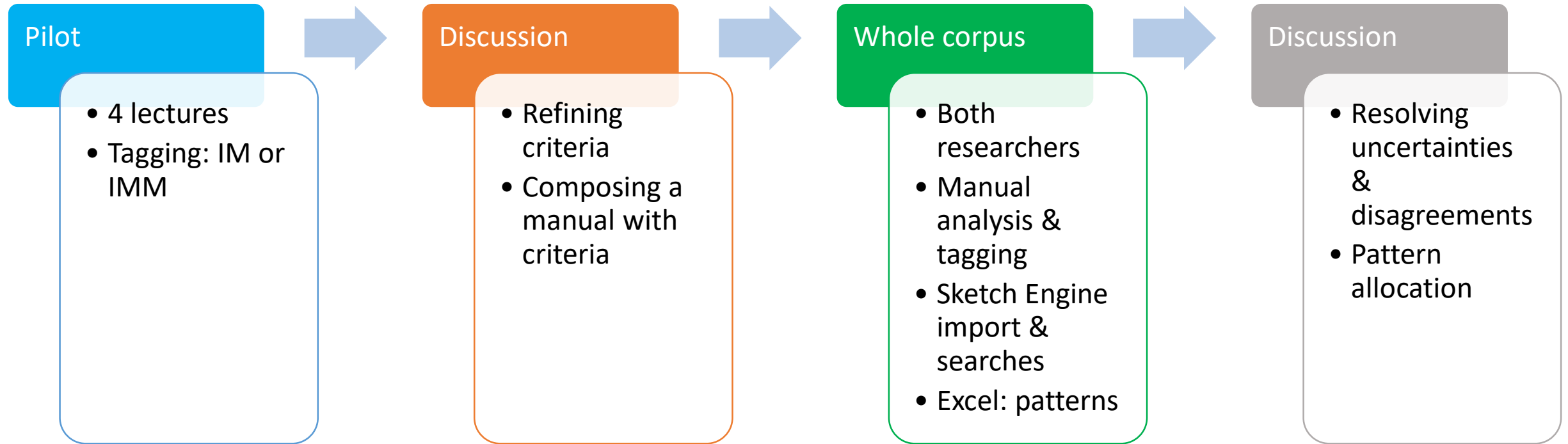
This procedure involved two researchers equally. For 'solo'-work see Deroey & Taverniers (2012).

Main pattern types	Example	N=376 (%)
Adjective patterns	it's **something** that **is** indeed **very relevant** (IT)	32 (c. 8%) L1 > EMI (c. 2% ≠)
Noun patterns	**the key thing** is we're mainly looking at equilibrium (UK)	66 (c. 17%) L1 > EMI (c. 3% ≠)
Verb patterns	always **remember** that XL is plus J and minus J is XC (NZ)	238 (c. 63%) L1 <EMI (c. 13% ≠)
Assessment references	we will definitely **ask you a question during test** one as well as **final exam** what is hydration of cement (MS)	37 (c. 10%) L1 > EMI (c. 1% ≠)
Idioms	I want you to know what V is try and **get those ideas into your mind** now (NZ)	3 (<1%)

Do EMI and L1 lecturers use importance markers differently?

- Mainly they **don't**: similar overall frequencies, preferences for certain patterns and variety of pattern (sub)types

- *But* intracorpus variation: e.g. UK & MS fewer markers than NZ & IT → L1 and EMI lectures vary

- *But* idiolect: listener-oriented 2 pers pron V clause/nom twice as frequent in EMI but large nr of EMI instances by one IT lecturer

  you also **remember** that [] L time []G is [] to the cube, to the third part, ok? (Idiolect IT02)

- *But* low frequencies → statistical significance?

- *But* language proficiency, lecturing experience & educational culture?

Identifying and categorizing metadiscourse: some issues

Just a few of the issues…

- Identifying metadiscourse & its functions: multifunctionality (cf. Bouziri, 2021) → context!

- Requires fine-grained, manual analysis → small/self-compiled corpus *but* firm conclusions require large corpus

- Feasibility:

    Clear (rigid) in/exclusion criteria

    Prosody, multimodality, triangulation

- Subjectivity → interrating

Illustration 1: multifunctional *'remember'*: co-text, prosody, idiolect

(see also Deroey & Taveniers, 2012)

✓ **remember** T is just changing the way you see the system (IT)

✗ so we always work at one level at a time start at the top level **remember** (tag: recall, cf. Tao, 2001)

✓ **you**'<u>ve got to</u> **remember** <u>that</u> they're at right angles to each other (NZ)

✗ **you**'<u>ll</u> **remember** that it's all sine tan cos in this case (UK) (modal: recall)

✗ please **remember** <u>to</u> put a negative sign here (MS) (*to*: action directive)

✗ **you remember** the tunnel effect? (prosody: recall)

✓ **you** also **remember** that [] L time []G is [] to the cube, to the third part, ok? (Idiolect IT02)

Illustration 2: multifunctional '*you/we + know*': disciplinary function & quantitative effect of decisions

✓ what **you** need to **know** actually is how to classify the section that's the main thing (remember this)

✗ right we've got a resistance of point oh five and **we** want to **know** the potential drop along it (UK) (guiding through procedure: worked example)

Illustration 3: communication verbs: continuum

(Deroey, 2015)

stress → point out → make a point → say
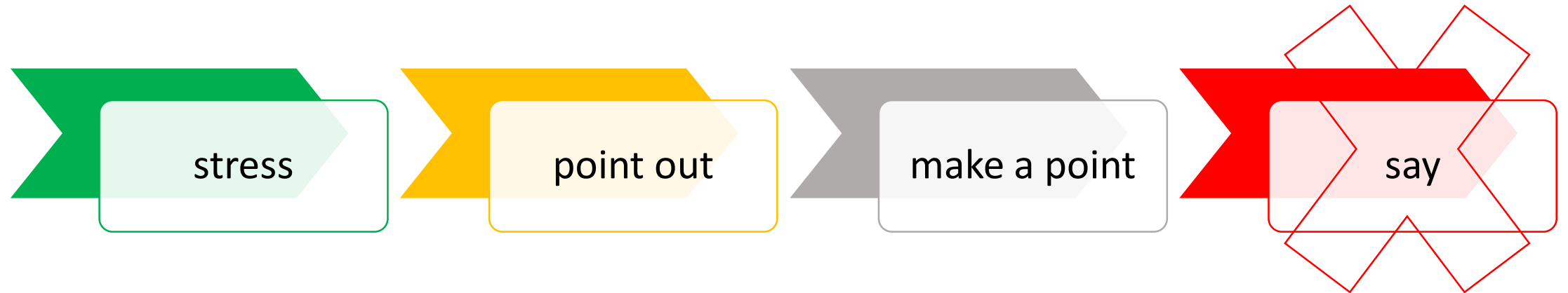
Safeguards & recommendations

- Do a pilot study and interrate

- Use triangulation, multimodality, prosody where feasible

- Have clear in/exclusion criteria/definitions and state them (feasibility and credibility)

- Be open about issues and limitations (overlap, assigning functions, discarding instances)

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