

Marking Importance in Lectures: Interactive and Textual Orientation

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This paper provides a comprehensive overview of lexicogrammatical markers of important lecture points and proposes a classification in terms of their interactive and textual orientation. The importance markers were extracted from the British Academic Spoken English corpus using corpus-driven and corpus-based methods. The classification is based on the markers' constituents and context. Most markers are interactively oriented towards the content (e.g. *the point is*) or listeners (e.g. *you should remember*) rather than the speaker (e.g. *I should stress*) or speaker and listeners jointly (e.g. *I want you to notice*). Many content-oriented markers also have secondary listener orientation (e.g. *these are the things to take home*). As regards their textual orientation, markers typically occur before the highlighted point. The analysis aims to reveal how the realizations of this metadiscursive feature reflect key characteristics of the lecture genre and suggests factors that may affect the efficacy of importance marking. The findings are useful for lecture listening and note-taking courses, lecturer training, and educational research assessing the efficacy of such discourse organizational cues.

INTRODUCTION

An essential aspect of successful lecture delivery and comprehension both for native and non-native speakers is the identification of important points (Brown and Bakhtar 1988; Tyler 1992; Flowerdew 1994; Kiewra 2002; Lynch 2004; Revell and Wainwright 2009). One way in which lecturers can achieve this is by organizing and evaluating their discourse using lexicogrammatical importance markers.

Importance markers can be considered an interpersonal feature of lecture discourse as they attend to students' 'needs, responses, and pedagogical concerns' (Saroyan and Snell 1997: 89). A key function of lectures is to enable students to 'perceive the subject coherently' by 'plac[ing] knowledge in a meaningful context' (Marris 1964, as cited in Hodgson 2005: 161), thus providing a 'guiding pathway' through what may be 'a morass of information' (Revell and Wainwright 2009: 216). In other words, marking importance helps them discern the big picture when processing the complex lecture message online and taking notes. As such it may improve comprehension, note-taking, and recall of lectures (e.g. DeCarrico and Nattinger 1988; Williams 1992; Jung 2003; Björkman 2011).

This paper builds on a previous analysis of the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus¹ in which the attested importance markers were mainly classified depending on their main element into adjective, noun, verb and adverb patterns (see Deroey and Taverniers 2012). Here, I propose an alternative classification of these markers in terms of their orientation towards the content or discourse participants (interactive orientation) and position relative to the highlighted discourse (textual orientation). The investigation aims to show how these metadiscursive devices can be related to features of the lecture genre and how they may vary in their efficacy. The findings can inform (EAP) courses aimed at improving lecture delivery, comprehension, and note-taking and can also be used by researchers interested in establishing the efficacy of different importance markers.

IMPORTANCE MARKERS

'Importance markers' (a term adopted from Lynch 2004) are here defined as lexicogrammatical devices that overtly mark the importance, relevance, or significance of points that are presented verbally or visually. They combine discourse organization with evaluation (Deroey and Taverniers 2011): the lecturer establishes a hierarchy of importance of points while conveying an attitudinal evaluation of these along a 'parameter of importance or relevance' (Thompson and Hunston 2000: 24). The lecturer thus acts as 'text constructor' rather than 'informer' (Hunston 2000: 183), as (s)he evaluates 'discourse entities' (e.g. *an important point*) rather than 'world entities' (e.g. *an important philosopher*) (Thetela 1997, as cited in Hunston 2000: 182). Such metadiscursive devices have been called 'importance cues' (Kiewra 2002), 'relevance markers' (Hunston 1994), 'audience-oriented relevance markers' (Crawford Camiciottoli 2004, 2007), 'emphasis markers' (Jung 2003), 'emphatics', (Bondi 2008), 'emphasizers' (Siepmann 2005), 'selection cues' (Titsworth and Kiewra 2004), and 'focusers' (Simpson 2004). They have further been subsumed under 'text-structuring metadiscourse' (Thompson 2003), 'macro-markers' (Chaudron and Richards 1986), 'pragmatic force modifiers' (Lin 2010), 'metapragmatic signals' (Flowerdew 1994), 'identification/focus bundles' and 'attitudinal stance bundles' (Biber 2006a), 'evaluators' (DeCarrico and Nattinger 1988), the 'evaluation phase' (Young 1994), and metadiscourse 'managing the message' (Ädel 2010).

Importance here encompasses the related concepts of importance, relevance, and significance. Their relatedness is reflected in existing labels for evaluative categories. For instance, Thompson and Hunston (2000: 24) propose a 'relevance/importance' parameter; Bednarek's (2008: 16) parameter of 'importance', Giannoni's (2010: 77) 'relevance' category, and Crawford Camiciottoli's (2004) 'audience-oriented relevance markers' all comprise evaluations of importance, relevance, and significance. Lemke (1998) also posits one value subsuming importance and significance and Swales and Burke's (2003: 6) 'relevance adjectives' convey relevance and importance.

Importantly, evaluations of the importance, relevance, or significance of discourse are all likely to be interpreted by a lecture audience as highlighting it.

METHODS

Corpus

The importance markers are from the 160 lectures of the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) Corpus. These lectures are mostly delivered by native speakers of English and are distributed across four broad disciplinary groups: Arts and Humanities (ah), Social Studies (ss), Physical Sciences (ps) and Life and Medical Sciences (ls). A subcorpus of 40 lectures (328,161 tokens) was created for the initial manual search. It is composed of 10 lectures from each disciplinary group, including as many different specific disciplines as possible; lecturer, study level, interactivity, and audience size were systematically varied.

Analytical procedure

The multi-pronged approach used to obtain a comprehensive picture of lexicogrammatical importance markers is detailed in (Deroy and Taverniers 2012). Briefly, we first independently identified potential importance markers in four lectures to refine our definition of importance marking. This led to the exclusion of instances where it is unclear whether a textual or world entity is evaluated (1) or where the evaluated world entity is the discourse topic (2).

- (1) they certainly haven't got any hair nude mice have no hair but that's not the important thing *the important things about nude mice is* that they don't have a thymus (lslct006)
- (2) now then so we have metal-hydrogen *metal-hydrogen is a very important reaction* and it's really based on the fact that the organometallic compounds let's say of lithium are very sensitive (pslct003)

'Pure' discourse organizational cues (e.g. *one of the questions that arises*) were also excluded. Although they may make a point salient, they are not evaluative and their inclusion would have diluted the focus of this study. Importance marking of student or third-party discourse (e.g. *an important point that Nozick makes is*) was not counted as these do not evaluate the lecturer's speech or do so only indirectly. The subcorpus lectures were then manually examined for importance markers and the findings supplemented by items from the BASE word list and other lecture research (Swales and Burke 2003; Crawford Camiciottoli 2004). Next, concordances for these items were generated in the whole corpus using Sketch Engine and further importance markers found in their cotext were added. Finally, words that were derived from or synonymous with all lexemes found through the above methods were retrieved (cf. Giannoni 2010). This combination of corpus-driven and

corpus-based approaches mainly yielded adjectives, metalinguistic nouns, verbs, and adverbs that could function as or in importance markers and that could be categorized using lexicogrammatical patterns. A representative sample was interrater by the other researcher and full agreement was reached about their in- or exclusion as importance markers.

For this study, these markers were classified in terms of their interactive and textual orientation by examining their constituents and immediate context. A sample of ~100 concordances was first interrater to refine classificatory criteria. Interactive orientation pertains to the inclusion of elements referring to discourse participants (speaker, listener, or joint orientation) or the absence thereof (content orientation). A distinction was made between primary and secondary interactive orientation. The classification of a marker's primary interactive orientation depends on its main constituents, namely Subject or Object pronouns, full verbs, metalinguistic nouns, importance adjectives, and adverbs, while its secondary interactive orientation depends on possessive determiners, pre- and postmodifiers (adjectives, pronouns, verb type), and accompanying discourse markers. For example, the Subject pronoun *you* in (3) and the imperative *bear in mind* in (4) means these markers are viewed as primarily listener-oriented. By contrast, (5) exemplifies primary content orientation since the main part of marker contains no pronouns or verbs referring to the participants or their actions; however, the cognitive directive in the post-modifying subclause is considered to introduce secondary listener orientation.

- (3) now *you* also need to just bear in mind that there are things like Welfare to Work programmes (lslct014)
- (4) and *bear in mind* Marx was quite quiet about the work of art (ahlct030)
- (5) now th th the most important thing *to b bear in mind* throughout the lecture really is pest is a human definition (lslct004)

Textual orientation pertains to the position of the marker relative to the highlighted discourse and can be prospective, retrospective, or combined. The prospective orientation of a marker was generally apparent because the noun phrase or clausal complement presenting the highlighted point followed (e.g. *that there are things like Welfare to Work programmes* in (3)). Alternatively, textual orientation was determined by establishing whether the referent of the discourse encapsulating deictic (mainly *that* and *this*) occurred before or after the marker, as in (6).

- (6) what is spatial frequency *that's very important* (pslct034)

To keep the study manageable, I examined transcripts only. The analysis is therefore not informed by visual, non-verbal, and prosodic cues or information from the discourse participants. Given that these can affect the analysis of evaluation, we should bear in mind that this common approach to studying evaluation yields results that are based on 'judgments of plausibility rather than certainty' (Mann and Thompson 1988: 245). Furthermore, as with other types of evaluation, relevance marking is not an 'all-or-nothing'

phenomenon and attempts to identify and quantify it necessitate categorizations that cannot fully capture its true complexity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The proposed interactive and textual classification of importance markers uses the markers reported in (Deroey and Taverniers 2012), which were categorized as adjective, noun, verb, or adverb patterns depending on their chief constituent (cf. Hunston and Francis 2000) and assessment-related expressions. After introducing the classification according to interactive orientation, I here discuss the composition and frequencies of markers with primary content orientation, followed by markers with primary or secondary listener, speaker, and joint orientation. The section on textual orientation reviews these markers with regard to their position to the highlighted discourse and distinguishes prospective, retrospective, or combined orientation.

Interactive orientation

As regards their interactive orientation, markers have been classified as being oriented towards the content or participants (listeners, speaker, or both) (Table 1). Interestingly, having devised this classification based on the data, I discovered Lynch (2004) also classifies examples of importance markers as referring to the subject matter (e.g. *a basic point*), addressing the audience (e.g. *remember that*), or including speaker reference (e.g. *I want to stress*).

Additionally, I have distinguished between primary and secondary interactive orientation. In markers with primary participant orientation, the main part of the marker contains Subject or Object pronouns referring to the discourse participants and/or main verbs denoting actions by the listeners, speaker, or both; content-oriented markers lack such constituents in the main part of the marker. As Table 1 shows, markers with primary content (ca. 46%) and participant orientation (ca. 54%) are almost equally common and most participant-oriented markers are listener-oriented (ca. 39%). The predominance of content and listener orientation seems logical: like textbooks, a key goal of lectures is to provide learners with ‘a picture of the field as a coherent canon and a discourse through which this may be assimilated’ (Hyland 2002: 220). The focus is thus on the content and on guiding the listeners’ understanding of it.

Secondary listener, speaker, or joint orientation (Table 2) is due to possessive determiners and elements (personal pronouns and verbs) in the pre- and post-modification or accompanying discourse markers.² Again, listener orientation predominates (51%), although speaker orientation is also common (ca. 36%). Joint orientation is relatively infrequent (ca. 13%).

Table 3 depicts the proportions of markers with different primary interactive orientations (N=782) that also have secondary interactive orientation (N=196). It shows that the markers with secondary participant orientation

Table 1: Primary interactive orientation of importance markers (N = 782)^a

Primary orientation	Examples	N	%
Content orientation	The point is by chance these two structures are similar (lslct011)	363	46.4
Participant orientation		419	53.6
Listener orientation	Remember Rawls criticizes utilitarianism (sslct023)	304	38.9
Speaker orientation	I ought to stress that i'm talking about vectors here (pslct031)	79	10.1
Joint orientation	I ask you to bear in mind that these people are fairly intelligent (lslct022)	36	4.6

^aThere are a few minor differences between the frequencies reported here and in (Deroey and Taverniers 2012). These reflect slight corrections due to ongoing research.

Table 2: Secondary participant orientation of importance markers (N = 196)

Secondary orientation	Examples	N	%
Listener orientation	There are two main ideas that you need to keep in mind (ahlct024)	100	51
Speaker orientation	That in many ways is is kind of the key question for this whole course i think (ahlct022)	70	35.7
Joint orientation	The question we need to ask is how is the illusion of the subject or the self generated (ahlct039)	26	13.3

Table 3: Importance markers with secondary participant orientation (N = 196) relative to their primary interactive orientation

Secondary orientation	Listener N (%)	Speaker N (%)	Joint N (%)	Total N (%)
Primary orientation (N = 782)				
Content (N = 363)	88 (24.2)	65 (17.9)	26 (7.2)	179 (49.3)
Listener (N = 304)	1 (0.3)	2 (0.7)	0 (—)	3 (1)
Speaker (N = 79)	10 (12.6)	1 (1.3)	0 (—)	11 (13.9)
Joint (N = 36)	1 (2.8)	2 (5.5)	0 (—)	3 (8.3)
Total (N = 782)	100 (12.8)	70 (9)	26 (3.3)	196 (25.1)

Table 4: Importance marker patterns with primary content orientation
($N = 363$)^a

Patterns	Examples	N	%
Adjective patterns			
deic v-link ADJ	This is absolutely crucial (lslct038)	14	3.9
mn v-link ADJ	This thing here is important (pslct011)	2	0.6
<i>it</i> v-link ADJ clause	It's worth remembering that Italy has a huge history (ahlct015)	35	9.6
<i>what</i> v-link ADJ v-link n/clause	What's interesting to think about is how exactly is this Italianness constructed (ahlct015)	4	1.1
Noun patterns		285	78.5
deic v-link MN	That's the message (pslct006)	23	6.3
deic v-link adj MN	This is an essential point (sslct019)	25	6.9
MN v-link	But the point is these viruses can survive (lslct035)	162	44.6
adj MN v-link	The important thing to note is that nothing happens to the internal price levels in the Caribbean (sslct009)	64	17.6
<i>there</i> v-link MN	There's one other point that i would like to make (sslct040)	8	2.2
<i>there</i> v-link adj MN	There's a big question there about how far you can get if you're an empiricist philosopher of maths (ahlct037)	3	0.8
Adverb patterns	<i>Essentially</i> the two points to note are these (pslct006)	15	4.1
Assessment-related expressions	You might get an <i>exam</i> question on this (lslct014)	8	2.2

^aI have used Hunston and Francis' (2000) notation system for the patterns: the pattern focus is in upper case, other elements are in lower case and lexemes are in italics.

deic=deictic, ADJ=adjective, MN=metalinguistic noun, v-link=linking verb, n=nominal complement.

mostly have primary content orientation (ca. 49%), although some markers with primary speaker orientation additionally have secondary listener orientation (ca. 13%).

Content orientation

Adjective, noun, and adverb patterns as well as assessment-related expressions have primary content orientation (Table 4).

These markers foreground the evaluated discourse and background the participants. This blurs the distinction between the lecturer's opinions and those of the disciplinary community (s)he represents and can create the

impression that the evaluation is objective and indisputable (cf. Kaltenböck 2005).

However, content-oriented markers can be placed on a continuum of impersonality. The evaluation is presented most impersonally in instances without secondary participant orientation (7).

(7) *that's the message* there (pslct006)

Instances with secondary participant orientation seem least personal when the listener or speaker agent is implied (8, 9), more personal with explicit participant agents (10), and most personal when they additionally contain deontic modals or volitional verbs conveying the speaker's perspective (11, 12).

(8) it's important *to realize* that at this stage in the lect-, infection that is not due to a drop in C-D-four cells (lslct037)

(9) it's quite important *to make the point* that we're now at a stage where signs matter (pslct031)

(10) the point *i'm* making there is that you can get what might appear to be complex behaviour from simple rules (pslct035)

(11) the one thing *you have to* remember in the kidney is that it's arranged like this (lslct026)

(12) that was actually the point that *i wanted* to make (pslct029)

Table 4 reveals that noun markers predominate (ca. 78%) because of the prevalence of **MN v-link** (ca. 45%), while adjective markers are not as common as may be expected (ca. 15%), and adverb markers and assessment-related expressions are rare (respectively ca. 4 and 2%). In what follows, I will focus on the interactive orientation of the most frequent markers. However, Tables 4–7 provide examples of all marker types and a detailed account of all patterns and attested nouns, adjectives, adverbs, and verbs can be found in (Deroey and Taverniers 2012).

Noun patterns

In noun patterns (see Table 4), the Head of the noun phrase is a metalinguistic noun (MN) (e.g. *point, thing, question, message*). In about a third of these markers, the discourse encapsulating noun is explicitly evaluated in terms of importance by a premodifying adjective: **adj MN v-link, deic v-link adj MN**, and **there v-link adj MN**. However, **MN v-link**, without an explicit evaluative element, is the most frequent noun pattern by far (ca. 45%) and the second most common importance marker overall (ca. 20%) after **V n/clause** (ca. 34%) (see below). **MN v-link** has a complex pragmatic profile (cf. Simpson 2004) but can essentially be viewed as a focus formula (Tuggy 1996) signalling noteworthy information. *The thing is* is also a common lexical bundle in other corpora of university teaching (Swales 2001; Simpson 2004). Some of the popularity of this 'semi-fixed' construction (Miller and Weinert 1998, as cited in Keizer 2013) may derive from the lecturer's reliance on

Table 5: Importance marker patterns with primary listener orientation (N = 304)

Patterns	Examples	N	%
V n/clause	Notice that (ahlct009) Remember each row is a an observation (sslct002)	263	86.5
2 pers pron V n/clause	You have to remember that (lslct026) You should also note that significance depends on the sample size (lslct015)	41	13.5

Table 6: Importance marker patterns with primary speaker orientation (N = 79)

Patterns	Examples	N	%
1s pers pron V n/clause	I want to emphasise that (lslct036) I just want to point out here that it's not just your arterioles that constrict (lslct005)	70	88.6
1p pers pron V n/clause	We will emphasize this later on (pslct002) We emphasize again we're not saying that the consumer goes into the supermarket with indifference curves (pslct013)	3	3.8
TO-INF n/clause	Now just to reinforce again this idea of what H-nought is (pslct036) I've written in the zero formally just to stress that that's a wall that doesn't move (pslct022)	6	7.6

Table 7: Importance marker patterns with primary joint orientation (N = 36)

Patterns	Examples	N	%
1p pers pron V n/clause	What we're interested in is this part (lslct001) We need to remember we're talking about proper names (ahlct033)	27	75
1s pers pron v + 2 pers pron TO-INF n/clause	I'll just ask you to remember this (sslct007) What i'm wanting you to remember out of that transparency is that a scene can be analysed in spatial frequencies (pslct034)	9	25

prefabricated chunks when presenting a complex message in real time (Biber Conrad and Cortes 2004). Indeed, the repeated use by many lecturers of **MN v-link** is a key factor in its frequency and ca. 61% are unmodified, as in (13).

(13) but *the point is* by the end the political elite have given up on the belief (ahlct028)

The multifunctionality of unmodified instances may make this popular marker less easily recognizable as marking importance than the premodified **adj MN v-link** (14), which is the second most frequent and arguably more prototypical noun marker (ca. 18%), or postmodified instances with pronouns, deontic modals, and verbs expressing the lecturer's intent to emphasize the message (10) or direct attention to it (11).

(14) *the key point is* they do not give up those natural rights (sslct017)

Interestingly, postmodification is fairly common in noun patterns with importance adjectives (**adj MN v-link**, **deic v-link adj MN**, **there v-link adj MN**), although it contributes little to the highlighting effect (15) or merely supports an importance reading (16). By contrast, in **deic v-link MN**, it generally completes the marker (17) or suggests an importance reading (18).

(15) the key question *to ask* is whether there are such things as geometrical objects which apply which apply to concrete empirically identifiable bodies (ahlct039)

(16) there are two main ideas *that you need to keep in mind* (ahlct024)

(17) so these are the things *to take home* (lslct027)

(18) that was actually the point *that i wanted to make* (pslct029)

It is worth noting that interactivity is not only established by postmodification introducing secondary participant orientation (see below). Colloquial adjectives and nouns (e.g. *big, whole, bit, bottom line*) add a conversational flavour to the monologue (19, 20), as does the predominance of **MN v-link**, a casual alternative to **adj MN v-link** (Crawford Camiciottoli 2004). The sense of interactivity is also enhanced by adverbs establishing a shared context (*here, there*) (20) and content-oriented questions (cf. Crawford Camiciottoli 2007) (21).

(19) but the *bottom line* of this is from what impression is this pretended this supposed idea derived (ahlct037)

(20) there's a *big* question *there* about how far you can get if you're an empiricist philosopher of maths (ahlct037)

(21) that's the critical point *what's the baseline for comparisons* (sslct023)

Adjective patterns

In adjective patterns (ca. 15%) the main element is a predicatively used importance adjective (ADJ) (e.g. *important, key, worth*) linked by a verb (v-link) to a deictic (deic) (**deic v-link ADJ**), metalinguistic noun (mn) (**mn v-link ADJ**), anticipatory *it* (**it v-link ADJ clause**), or *what* (**what v-link ADJ v-link n/clause**). Although adjectives are prototypical realizations of evaluation

(Swales and Burke 2003; Hunston 2011), in these lectures they are not usually the chief constituents of importance markers.

In the predominant **it v-link ADJ clause** (ca. 10%) (22, 23), the highlighted information appears as the object of the verb in the typically non-finite extraposed clause. This seems a relatively clear importance marker due to the explicit evaluation by an importance adjective and the mental or communication verb in the extraposed clause. About half the instances of **deic v-link ADJ** contain clausal postmodification, with the mental verb clarifying the discourse highlighting function (24).

- (22) it's important to bear in mind that not all directors and not all playwrights dealt with language in the same way (ahlct017)
 (23) it's worth mentioning that in spite of this huge numbers of landscapes were produced (ahlct032)
 (24) he was very largely influenced by his religious upbringing and that's important to know (ahlct024)

The rareness of **what v-link ADJ v-link n/clause** may seem surprising, but a previous study of this corpus (Deroey and Taverniers 2012) showed that basic *wh*-clefts tend to have a verb rather than adjective focus.

Adverb patterns

The adverbs *essentially*, *importantly* and *significantly* express the lecturer's assessment regarding the importance of the following proposition. The Adverbial 'objectif[ies] the speaker's evaluation' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 150).

- (25) and *significantly* they aren't punished for this (ahlct009)

Although adverbs seem prime candidates for expressing attitudinal evaluation (Bondi 2008), they are rare as importance markers (ca. 4%). Moreover, even with a conservative approach to inclusion (see Deroey and Taverniers 2012), some attestations (26) remain somewhat ambiguous as to whether they convey the lecturer's attitude towards the discourse or, for instance, the importance of an action.

- (26) and *very very importantly* we've mentioned it before this afternoon we'll be looking at it in a lot more detail your measures we said if you've got a strategy how do you know it's working because you measure it (sslct035)

However, stance Adverbials in university classroom teaching have been found to express epistemic rather than attitudinal stance (Biber 2006b).

Assessment-related expressions

A few cues of important points do not fit any pattern. These convey the likelihood of being assessed on particular content and have *exam* (27) or *examine*

(28) as their main element. All instances but one also contain participant pronouns adding a layer of secondary participant orientation.

(27) okay the first one is the consultation procedure and this one encapsulates the the the *exam* question which you often get (sslct025)

(28) it is something that you can be *examined* on (lslct014)

Listener orientation

The markers with primary listener orientation are **V n/clause** (ca. 86%) and **2 pers pron V n/clause** (ca. 13%) (Table 5). These are essentially ‘cognitive directives’ (Hyland 2002: 217) as the speaker highlights information by directing the listener to perform the cognitive act denoted by the mental verb (e.g. *bear in mind, know, note, remember*).

Primary listener orientation (ca. 39%) is almost as frequent as content orientation (ca. 46%) (Table 1). Both background the evaluation source but listener-oriented markers foreground the listener since the lecturer engages the audience by capturing and directing their attention. These directives can hence be viewed as ‘interpersonal features that contribute to the dialogic dimension’ of lectures (Hyland 2002: 227). They help ensure students share the lecturer’s assessment of importance and establish a sense of interactivity by involving listeners in the intellectual discovery of the information and thus the active ‘construction of mental representations’ of the subject (Van Dijk and Jochems 2002: 275). In the imperative **V n/clause**, the listener agent is clear but implied, making it an impersonal alternative to **2 pers pron V n/clause** with *you* (Hyland 2002).³ Although the potentially generic reference of *you* may make the latter less obviously listener-oriented (Ädel 2012), the context of the markers suggests *you* refers specifically to the listeners.

V n/clause is the most common of all importance markers (ca. 34%). This seems due to several factors. Like unmodified instances of **MN v-link**, imperatives are an economical (Swales *et al.* 1998) and formulaic way of marking importance and some lecturers use them repeatedly. Moreover, the potential imposition of cognitive directives (cf. Hyland 2002) is unlikely to be a major consideration given the institutionalized inequality between the discourse participants and the expectation that the lecturer as an examiner and disciplinary expert should guide the students in recognizing important information. In fact, mitigating devices such as *just, please, and let’s* are infrequent and in **2 pers pron V n/clause** the coercive modal *have (got) to/ got to* (ca. 50%) is preferred over *should* denoting advisability (ca. 25%). Instances of **V n/clause** with the prevalent *remember* are potentially multifunctional (cf. Tao 2001) and require contextual disambiguation to determine whether they highlight, check recollection or establish a link with previous information.⁴ It could thus be argued that **2 pers pron V n/clause**, with its explicit Subject pronoun and deontic modals, is more readily recognizable as an importance marker.

Secondary listener orientation (51%, Table 2) is mostly caused by mental verbs in non-finite extraposed (29) and postmodifying clauses (30).

- (29) it's significant *to remember* that at the time nuclear power was seen as one of the major potential motors for development (sslct020)
 (30) the key thing *to note* is that it's much nicer to write down than the other solution (pslct010)

I have classified such instances as having secondary listener orientation because their mental verbs often occur in the imperative **V n/clause** or in finite clauses with *you* and are likely to be considered directives (cf. Siepmann 2005; Biber 2006a). However, depending on the specific verb and cotext alternative interpretations are possible. For example, in (29) the agent of 'remember' could be understood as the listener or as all members of the disciplinary community (joint orientation), while in (30) *note* could mean 'pay attention to' (listener orientation) or 'say' (speaker orientation).

Other means of introducing secondary listener orientation are *you* in finite clauses (31), *your* in expressions with *attention* (32), premodifying adjectives (33), and the discourse markers *you know* and *you see* (34).

- (31) the thing *you* have to remember is there's no such thing as the heritability (lslct001)
 (32) i want you to focus *your* attention on this column here (lslct008)
 (33) that's a sort of *take home* message (lslct003)
 (34) that's *you see* the interesting thing (pslct018)

Speaker orientation

Markers with primary speaker orientation (Table 6) mostly have a first person singular Subject pronoun (**Is pers pron V n/clause**) (ca. 89%); less commonly, *we* refers to the speaker (**Ip pers pron V n/clause**) (ca. 4%), or the speaker Subject is implied (**TO-INF n/clause**) (ca. 8%). The main verb usually denotes the speaker's act of highlighting a verbally presented point (e.g. *emphasize, point out, stress*), while the verbal idioms *draw/focus attention to/on* and *be interested in* highlight visually presented information (e.g. (32)).

Speaker-oriented markers are essentially instances of 'speech act labeling' (Ädel 2010: 88). As opposed to markers with primary listener orientation, the directive is implicit, as they essentially mean 'I emphasize this because it is important so you need to pay attention to it'. Speaker-oriented markers foreground the speaker as evaluator and text constructor, while the explicit signaling of lecturer intention reveals the 'instructor-controlled' (Biber 2006a: 199) nature of this genre. This is especially the case with **Is pers pron V n/clause**, where the first person pronoun clearly attributes the highlighting to the lecturer and the frequent *want* and *should* convey the wish to highlight information or an awareness of the need to do so. Interestingly, the highlighted information brings to the fore different lecturer personas. For example, in

(35) we see a pedagogue trying to ensure clarity, in (36) an expert with an informed opinion, in (37) an experienced practitioner, and in (38) a representative of the disciplinary community.

(35) i ought to stress that i'm talking about vectors here (pslct031)

(36) there's another reason for the deception theory to be rejected it's simply as i've put here the wrong sort of explanation and i want to emphasize this the wrong sort of explanation (ahlct034)

(37) i just want to make a point here that actually it's something which i find i'm working against all the time in working working on a working on a nursery (lslct039)

(38) it's no longer easy to use ideas as an explanation of history although ideas as i've been stressing have a role in history (ahlct026)

It should be noted that the emphatic force of communication verbs/verbal idioms and thus potentially the clarity of the markers' function varies. Considering their meaning only, a cline can be proposed ranging from the clearly emphatic *emphasize*, *stress*, and *place emphasis on*, over the increasingly less emphatic *impress on*, *reinforce*, and *point out*, to *make a/the point*. Although *point out* and *make a point* are similar in meaning to *say*, their cotext often supports a highlighting interpretation (see Hunston 2002 for *make a point*) and replacing them by *say* would result in a loss of emphasis.⁵

Secondary speaker orientation (ca. 36%, Table 2) is mainly due to a speaker Subject in postmodifying clauses, and especially results from the collocation of *I* with *make a/the point* (10, 12). Less commonly it is introduced by discourse markers (*I think*, *I mean*, *I suppose*) (39), extraposed and postmodifying clauses containing communication verbs (40), or determiners (41).

(39) that in many ways is is kind of the key question for this whole course *i think* (ahlct022)

(40) that's worth *commenting* on (ahlct034)

(41) *my* point here is that if you try to be too scientific then you will get lost (sslct004)

Joint orientation

Markers with primary joint orientation (Table 7) are infrequent. The main marker **Ip pers pron V n/clause** (75%) was classified as having joint orientation where *we* could be interpreted as including the speaker in the cognitive action expressed by the mental verb (42). Using *we* instead of *you* engages listeners by creating a sense of joint cognitive endeavour and helps establish a sense of equality and disciplinary in-group affiliation that contributes to a 'convivial interpersonal tenor' (Hyland 2002: 219). The 'invitational' imperative with *let us* (Swales *et al.* 1998: 107) is, however, rare. By contrast, **Is pers pron v + 2 pers pron TO-INF n/clause** (25%) (43) explicitly imposes the lecturer's demands (see also Biber Conrad and Cortes 2004): the main clause

with a speaker Subject and *want/would like* or *ask* presents the lecturer's desire or request for the audience to perform the cognitive act expressed in the subclause.

(42) now in terms of what *we need to know* here there is something called the O-N-B (ahlct004)

(43) *i ask you to bear in mind* that these people are fairly intelligent (lslct022)

Secondary joint orientation (ca. 13%, Table 2) is introduced by postmodifying clauses containing *we* and a mental verb (44), an (implied) speaker Subject combined with *you* (45), or prepositional phrase postmodification (46). Non-finite clauses with verbs meaning 'consider' (*ask, look at, think about*) (47) have been included here, as they arguably indicate it is important to talk about something (speaker orientation) so that it is remembered or understood (listener orientation).

(44) one thing *we should remember* here that Locke is talking about legitimate government (sslct017)

(45) okay so these are the things *i want you* to go home with (lslct026)

(46) just an important thing *for some of us* here is that they were had more enthusiastic teachers (lslct020)

(47) and it's interesting *to look at* what some of those previous models or analogies (ahlct035)

Textual orientation

Three types of textual orientation could be distinguished. Prospectively oriented markers (85%) precede the highlighted point; the popular **MN v-link** and **V n/clause** belong to this type and most other patterns are also (largely) prospectively oriented. Retrospectively oriented markers (8%) follow the point and are mainly **deic v-link ADJ**, **deic v-link MN**, and **deic v-link adj MN**. Combined orientation (7%) combines retrospective marking with a renewed presentation of the point and is only common in **deic v-link adj MN** and **Is pers pron V n/clause**.

It is worth noting that half the markers occur with discourse markers such as *and, but, now, so, and okay* (e.g. (45), (47)). These reflect the position of many importance markers at transition points and may also have an attention-focusing effect (cf. Brinton 1996).

Prospective orientation

In prospective markers, the highlighted discourse, which follows the evaluative frame, is generally part of the same sentence (48). When it is not, the marker sometimes contains a deictic with cataphoric reference to the point (49).

(48) but it's important to remember *its correct units have a surface area attached to them* (lslct026)

(49) and essentially the two points to note are *these* you've got within the crystal because it's a semiconductor you've got a valence band and a conduction band (pslct006)

In the adjective patterns **it v-link ADJ clause** (48) and **what v-link ADJ v-link n/clause**, the matrix clause forms the evaluative frame; in noun patterns, this function is performed by a discourse encapsulating noun (49). In these adjective and noun patterns, the informational value of the frame is typically low, giving the speaker 'an extended opportunity to formulate the message' (Collins 1991: 214) and the hearer 'breathing space which facilitates processing' (Kaltenböck 2005: 146). Moreover, the important information receives additional emphasis from being in end position.

Verb patterns generally mark importance prospectively because verbs take clausal (50) and nominal complements presenting key points. Nominal complements are usually noun phrases referring to visual points (51), otherwise they are metalinguistic nouns or deictics (52).

(50) i should stress *that i don't lecture out of Grant* (sslct032)

(51) i should have drawn your attention to *the time scale on this one* (lslct002)

(52) so if you forget everything i say this morning just remember *this* that the blood on a urinary dipstick is not due to blood cells it's due to haemoglobin (lslct028)

The main verb phrase in **Is pers pron V n/clause** is in a tense other than the simple present if it does not contain a modal or catenative. The present perfect (38) and simple past (53) connect new with previous information, while the present progressive appears in topic conclusions or with a justification of importance (54). Future reference is mainly encoded by *be going to* (55) and denotes an intention to highlight a point. Although tense selection makes these instances resemble pure discourse organization, they were included because listeners would probably perceive them as marking importance.

(53) i *emphasized* how the ideas of the Enlightenment circular circulate among social groups (ahlct020)

(54) now i *am stressing* all this because many of my colleagues construction economists disagree with this proposition (sslct006)

(55) and i'm *going to* stress this point that the immune system is an organized tissue system (lslct036)

In addition to the factors proposed above, the popularity of **V n/clause** is perhaps also due to its function as 'a pausal or braking device' (Swales *et al.* 1998: 110). This adds saliency to a point and may help listeners process the long and dense text by momentarily slowing down its presentation. It should be noted that imperatives with *remember*, *bear/keep in mind*, and *not forget* represent a grey area as regards textual orientation. Although instances that

apparently mean ‘do you remember’ were excluded (see Deroey and Taverniers 2012), the inherent meaning of these verbs is backward looking. It could therefore be argued that such instances combine prospective with retrospective orientation. However, most seem to highlight information that should be taken into account rather than previously taught content, and the highlighted information clearly follows (56).

- (56) there’s a nice little simile here of the tapestry which we find decorating the the chamber of Busyrane for round about the wals yclothed were with goodly arras and *remember* goodly here just means beautiful it doesn’t imply any sort of moral worth (ahlct010)

Finally, adverb markers occur clause-initially and evaluate the proposition that follows.

- (57) significantly they aren’t punished for this (ahlct009)

In larger stretches of discourse, prospective markers occur in various positions. For instance, they introduce new topics, are interjected in the middle of an exposition (often as clarification), summarize previous information, or conclude topics. The prevalence of prospective marking arguably reflects the planned nature of lecture discourse in that it suggests some awareness of upcoming points that need to be highlighted. Prospective marking appears more listener friendly than retrospective marking, as it flags up upcoming important information, thus facilitating its processing and note-taking (cf. also Martinez Adolphs and Carter 2013).

Retrospective orientation

Retrospective markers usually contain a deictic (mostly *that*), which encapsulates prior discourse and makes it available for evaluation (Gray 2010). These deictics reflect the speaker’s reliance on the shared context (Csomay 2005) in that (s)he assumes that the referents can be inferred. The chief markers are **deic v-link ADJ** (58), **deic v-link MN** (59), and **deic v-link adj MN**.

- (58) he was very largely influenced by his religious upbringing and that’s important to know (ahlct024)
 (59) it doesn’t tell you how much light you’re actually going to see on any given day that was actually the point that i wanted to make (pslct029)

In larger discourse stretches, retrospective marking occurs with topic or lecture conclusions (e.g. (59)) but also with topic introductions (60).

- (60) this bobbin going to roll to the right or is it going to roll to the left to the left well that’s you see the interesting thing ‘cause seeing that you

think it's going to unwind so the bobbin's going to have to go to the left in fact that's impossible (pslct018)

Retrospective importance marking seems less listener-friendly and effective than prospective marking since listeners have to determine what point is being evaluated while also attending to the continuing talk (cf. also Martinez Adolphs and Carter 2013). Moreover, they may assign a different referent to the one intended.

Combined orientation

There are two types of combined orientation. Some instances of **deic v-link MN** and, more commonly, **deic v-link adj MN** contain a deictic encapsulating a previous point, which is subsequently restated (61); verbatim repetition has an especially strong highlighting effect (62).⁶

(61) most of the calcium isn't within a cell and the calcium that is in a cell is complexed to calmodulin and you must keep it very low so *that's* just something to bear in mind that calcium normally is not in cells (lslct027)

(62) such action as it deems necessary now *this* is an essential point *such action as it deems necessary* (sslct019)

With some other markers, mainly instances of **Is pers pron V n/clause**, explicit tense, and adverbial indications suggest that a point has been made previously (63).

(63) as i pointed out *earlier* Thompson never thought the revolution was round the corner (ahlct023)

This explicit linking between prior and new information is said to increase lecturing effectiveness (e.g. McKeachie 1994; Saroyan and Snell 1997; Björkman 2011).

CONCLUSION

This paper has proposed a classification of importance markers in terms of their interactive and textual orientation with a view to revealing how realizations of this metadiscursive feature reflect key characteristics of the lecture and may vary in their efficacy. Interactively, the main markers with content, listener, speaker, or joint orientation are, respectively, **MN v-link**, **V n/clause**, **Is pers pron V n/clause**, and **Ip pers pron V n/clause**. Textually, the main markers with prospective, retrospective, or combined orientation are, respectively, **V n/clause** and **MN v-link**; **deic v-link ADJ**, **deic v-link MN**, and **deic v-link adj MN**; and **Is pers pron V n/clause** and **deic v-link adj MN**.

Regarding the lecture genre, the predominance of primary content and listener orientation indicates that the evaluation source is subordinate to

conveying subject information and guiding the audience in their understanding of it. Although secondary speaker evaluation sometimes introduces the lecturer as evaluator, most instances of importance marking appear fairly objective, with lecturers apparently voicing the assessments of their disciplinary community. Furthermore, the popularity of primary and secondary listener orientation reflects the face-to-face context and the lecturer's efforts to engage the audience and perhaps persuade them of the assessments. Interestingly, cognitive directives are rarely mitigated, suggesting lecturers expect their evaluations to be readily accepted. In addition, the prevalence of prospective textual orientation reveals some degree of discourse planning and an awareness of the need to help listeners assimilate the informationally dense message by preparing them for important information. The predominant formulaic prospective markers **MN v-link** and **V n/clause** may also help manage the cognitive effort involved in formulating this message in real time.

The potential efficacy of importance markers arguably largely depends on the ease with which they are recognized and the processing effort involved in their interpretation and the identification of the evaluated entity. In this regard, we have seen that the most frequent markers are also the most multifunctional. For example, unmodified **MN v-link** and the imperative **V n/clause** with *remember* likely require more interpretation than markers with importance adjectives (e.g. **adj MN v-link**) or listener orientation introduced through *you* and mental verbs (e.g. **2 pers pron V n/clause** and postmodified instances of **MN v-link**). Postmodifying clauses introducing secondary interactive orientation play a variable role in bringing out the intended highlighted effect: they can distinguish metadiscursive importance marking from pure discourse organization and the evaluation of real world entities, support an importance reading, or contribute little. I have further noted that the clarity of speaker-oriented markers may vary with the emphatic force of the communication verbs so that, for instance, those with *stress* are likely clearer than those with *make a point*. Finally, it stands to reason that prospective textual orientation, which predominates, is more effective than retrospective marking since it gives students time to prepare for the upcoming important information.

The results have several applications. First, they provide authentic markers for EAP lecture listening and note-taking books, which tend to include few and fairly prototypical importance markers, and allow EAP teachers to prioritize markers that are comparatively common and/or less immediately obvious (e.g. **MN v-link**). Second, lecturer trainers may be interested in issues pertaining to the clarity of marking. Third, research on lecture listening and note-taking and lecturing efficacy could explore the effects of these discourse organizational signals and their realizations, leading to recommendations for EAP and lecturer training. Fourth, the findings enrich generic descriptions of lecture discourse, which has received far less attention than written academic discourse. Finally, since the evaluation of importance/relevance remains relatively underexplored (cf. Hunston 2011; Partington in press), this account of importance

marking in one genre contributes information that can be used in studying importance evaluations in other genres.

This study opens up various worthwhile avenues for further research. An investigation into the role of prosody, non-verbal communication, and visuals would address a limitation of the present analysis, which is restricted to transcripts, and reveal further ways of marking importance. Additionally, it would be interesting to compare the attested markers with those in other lecture corpora, for instance, the American MICASE, which contains more interactive lectures, and lectures by non-native speakers. Finally, the insights into the lecture genre and importance marking enable comparisons with other related genres such as conference presentations, TED talks (see Partington in press), and textbooks.

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NOTES

- 1 The BASE 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. The corpus is available from the Oxford Text Archive <http://ota.ox.ac.uk/headers/2525.xml>.
- 2 I have not distinguished a category 'secondary content orientation', as there were no instances such as 'I want to stress this important point', where discourse is highlighted both by a marker with primary participant orientation (e.g. **Is pers pron V n/clause**) and secondary content-oriented evaluation (e.g. **adj MN**).
- 3 This includes two instances with *one*, which seem to function as substitutes for *you*. What *one* has to understand is this filtration of course is facilitated by cells being able to move across (lslct036)
- 4 I have only quantified instances with an apparent highlighting function (see Deroey and Taverniers 2012).
- 5 That is not to say that the use of deontic modals with *say* (e.g. *I should say*) could not have a highlighting effect. Nevertheless, to keep the study manageable, such instances were excluded.
- 6 As the lecture videos were not examined, some demonstrative pronouns may actually point at information on slides. However, the main consideration here is that the verbalization of those points follows.

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