Bio

Jonathon Ryan is a permanent academic staff member at Wintec (Hamilton) in the Centre for Languages, and has previously taught in Ireland and Mexico. He has recently completed a PhD thesis on reference and miscommunication in learner speech.

Abstract title

Recognizing digressions in academic lectures: What do second language learners need to know?

Abstract summary

In academic lectures, digressions from the main topic are likely to trigger confusion unless hearers immediately recognize that a topic shift has occurred. For this reason, the skills involved in identifying digressions are important for second language learners in tertiary study. Current teaching materials largely focus on discourse markers (e.g. incidentally), yet our analysis suggest that these mark fewer than half the digressions in academic lectures. We suggest that speakers signal the onset/closure of digressions through a change in footing, in which the most pervasive and important markers are phonological cues. Furthermore, we argue that speakers direct audience attention towards and away from topics through the use of deixis, gaze, and gesture. Despite the subtlety and complexity of these factors, we propose that such findings may usefully inform second language pedagogy. We conclude by demonstrating some instructional practices. This session is research-based, with some pedagogical implications and applications.

Topic (1st choice) Listening

Topic (2nd choice) Listening

Sector (1st Choice) Tertiary

Sector (2nd Choice) Tertiary

Do you have co-presenters? Yes

Co-presenters

Karen Kemsley is currently an academic staff member at Wintec, Centre for Languages, and previously worked in Africa and South America for seven years. She has experience in ESOL teaching, programme coordination, syllabus and materials design. Her particular interests are teaching listening and speaking skills to advanced level learners.