

Informing EAP listening assessment: Students' processing and strategy needs during lecture listening

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English for Academic Purposes (EAP) lecture listening

EAP listening

- The EAP listening construct shares many characteristics with the general listening construct;
- BUT there are also (proportional) differences (Goh & Aryadoust, 2014)

Lecture listening

- Lectures are a vital language event to learn the subject matter at university (Crawford-Camiciottoli, 2007; Lynch, 2011)
- BUT lecture listening is cognitively demanding, with reduced context (Taylor & Geranpayeh, 2011)

Lecture listening

Why research EAP lecture listening?

1. Limited insights into the construct

So far, EAP listening research has:

- a) focused primarily on identifying broad academic listening skills
- b) only to a limited extent examined what specific cognitive processes might be involved in L2 academic lecture listening
(Field, 2011; Goh, 2013)

Lecture listening

Why research lecture-listening?

2. Methodological shortcomings of needs analysis studies on EAP listening

a) Limited in their needs analysis methodologies

E.g., questionnaires only (Ferris & Tag, 1996a/b, Ferris, 1998; Powers, 1986; Kim, 2006)

b) Yield conflicting results

E.g.,

	Ferris (1998)	Kim (2006)
Engaging in discussions	✗	✓
Note-taking	✓	✗
Raising questions	✗	✓

c) Not informed by theoretical listening processing models

This study

Overall aim

- To gain more insights into EAP lecture listening
- Specifically, the cognitive processes and strategies involved

Methodology

- Sequential mixed-methods design; qualitative → quantitative
(Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011)
- Informed by a review of the literature on second language/
academic listening

Lecture-listening comprehension processing models

Five language comprehension processing models are used to characterise listening processes, sub-skills and strategies:

Field (2013)
**Cognitive
processing
listening
model**

**Khalifa and
Weir (2009)**
**Cognitive
processing
reading model**

**Aryadoust,
Goh and Kim
(2012)**
**L2 academic
listening
model**

Young (1994)
**Lecture
structure
model**

**Vandergrift and
Goh (2012)**
**L2 listening
comprehension
cognitive model**

Research design

Phase 1: Lecture discourse analysis

Target situation analysis

5 lectures

Research design

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Phase 2: Stimulated recall interviews

Present situation analysis

7 students

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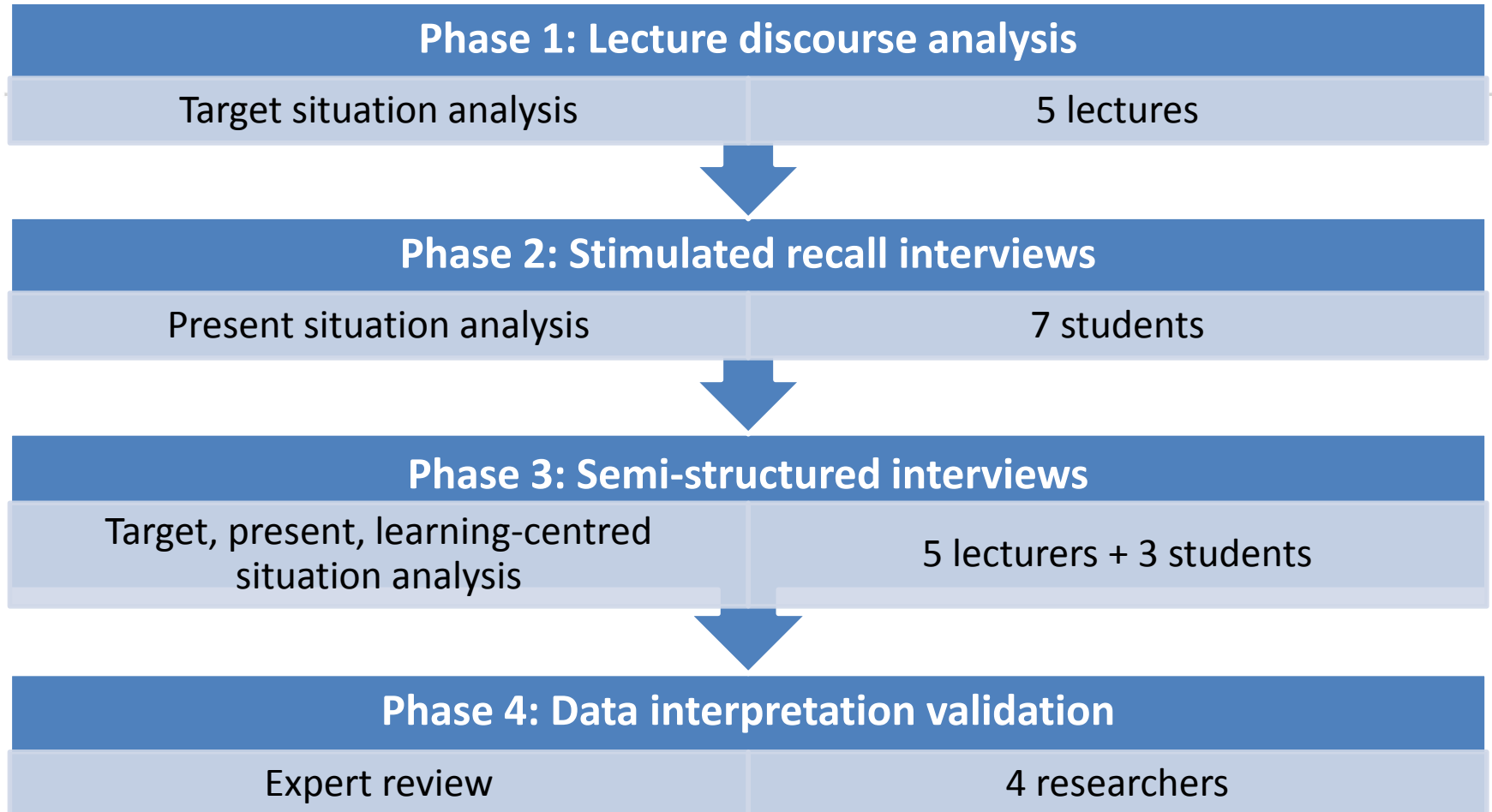


Phase 3: Semi-structured interviews

Target, present, learning-centred
situation analysis

5 lecturers + 3 students

Research design



Research design

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Phase 4: Data interpretation validation

Expert review

4 researchers



Phase 5: Questionnaires & IELTS listening test

Target, present, learning-centred
situation analysis

205 students

Research questions

RQ1: What **real-time processing problems** do EFL **undergraduates** experience when listening to lectures in their degree programme? (*Phase 2*)

RQ2: What do **lecturers** perceive to be the academic listening **needs** of EFL undergraduates? (*Phase 3*)

Methodology

Method

- Stimulated recall interviews with students
- Semi-structured interviews with lecturers

Participants

- 7 female students
 - BA English Language and Literature at a Saudi Arabian university
 - Levels of study: two Y1, three Y2, two Y4
 - IELTS listening scores: 15-35 out of 40 (M=22.57, SD=8.46)
- 5 female lecturers
 - Three literature lecturers, two linguistics lecturers
 - Teaching at various levels of study

Methodology

Recall procedure

- Listen to recorded lectures; provided with all original lecture written materials (e.g., ppt, poem, handbook); allowed to take notes
- Give an oral or written summary after listening
- Re-listen to a lecture segment
- Recall of comprehension and thought processes after each segment

Interview

- Interview guide with questions based on the findings from Phases 1 & 2 of the study

Methodology

Data analysis

- Transcriptions of the recorded recalls & interviews
- Coding framework: Comprehension processing model based on the literature
- Two coders with inter-coder agreement:
 - 82% (recalls)
 - 93% (interviews)

Findings

- **Recalls:**

- 7 different cognitive processes

- 22 different processing sub-skills

- 5 strategies

- **Interviews:**

- 7 different cognitive processes

- 41 different processing sub-skills

- 8 strategies

Findings

E.g.,

Lower-level cognitive listening problems/needs

- **Input decoding process**

- a. Recognising a known word in a speech stream

When she [the lecturer] personified it with a human being who was running, but in fact that is not so. **But the first time I did not understand [recognise] the word, and then I remembered it ... It's personification ... because I forgot this word. (P1/Literature)**

- b. Recognising words' pronunciation in a speech stream

It is very important ... to understand every single word that we're saying and **to recognise it [word] and pick up on the sounds. (L3)**

Findings

- **Lexical search process**

a. Linking an aural word to its written form (spelling)

Textbook

girl walking forth one morning hand-in-hand with her still smaller brother, to go and seek martyrdom in the country of the

Notes

** little girl
* divorce ∴
* walk with her brother.
* Martyr → person who sacrifice himself.*

I feel there was something that wasn't clear ... **Surprisingly, they jumped to discuss 'martyr', and she asked, 'Who is a martyr'? What does 'martyr' mean?** They explained its meaning, a person who sacrifices himself ... **I understood the meaning, but is this martyr are there with them?** ... I do not know what the relationship of this [martyr] is with Theresa and her brother. (P2/Literature)

Findings

b. Accessing word meanings (non-technical words)

So sometimes I **use very sophisticated words**, but it's what the occasion necessitates.' (L4)

Findings

Higher-level cognitive listening problems/needs

- **Creating a text level representation process**
 - a. Ending up with a coherent meaningful construction of what has been heard

Aural
summary

Based on the general story of the poem, the teacher was talking about a black person, and in that time they were suffering from racism. I think that the whites were controlling, or dominating them. I think he was a worker, and he was working really hard, and his hands were hurting him, and even he got pimples on his hands. He was planning to do something, and his dreams were something like he is not going to achieve them. His dreams were destroyed. Based on the poem, I expect the dream to be something related to him, and people around him, too. There is a main question in the poem, and everything relates to this question. Also, there is a simile that honey has changed and became like sugar, or something hard like glass, something bad because of its old nature, which has changed. There is also a dash used in a sentence. The dash used between the question and a sentence to complete it as they do in poetry. Because I think it is a simile. Such as in this stanza: Like a raisin in the sun? Or fester like a sore-- .

I feel the poem [analysis] is confusing, it moves from one thing to another, **I feel it is disconnected.** (P1/*Literature*)

Findings

- b. Following overall lecture structure and recognising speech transitions

They are expected to know **that this is an introduction, this is a body and this is the conclusion** of our lecture. (L4)

When I'm explaining ... **I notice that I do transition** ... I think it helps them stay with me as I'm moving from one point to another. (L1)

Findings

- **Creating an intertextual representation process**
 - a. Linking aural input to written material (e.g. slides)

Lecturer: “Let’s take it one by one”

Powerpoint slide

2- Minimal Responses

- **Minimal responses:** They are **monosyllabic utterances** such as “**yeah**” and “**huh**” associated with **cooperative** language use.

Initially, she [the lecturer] stated the first type [of minimal responses], one syllable and then talked about it, **then what is the second type [that] deals with two syllables? She did not discuss it or give examples on it. (P3/Sociolinguistics)**

Findings

b. Making connections between aural input and written materials (e.g., slides)

If I have PowerPoint, ... then I have my main points. Then ... those will be our focal points for discussion... .' (L1)

Findings

Strategy use problems/needs

a. Late use of *directed attention* strategy

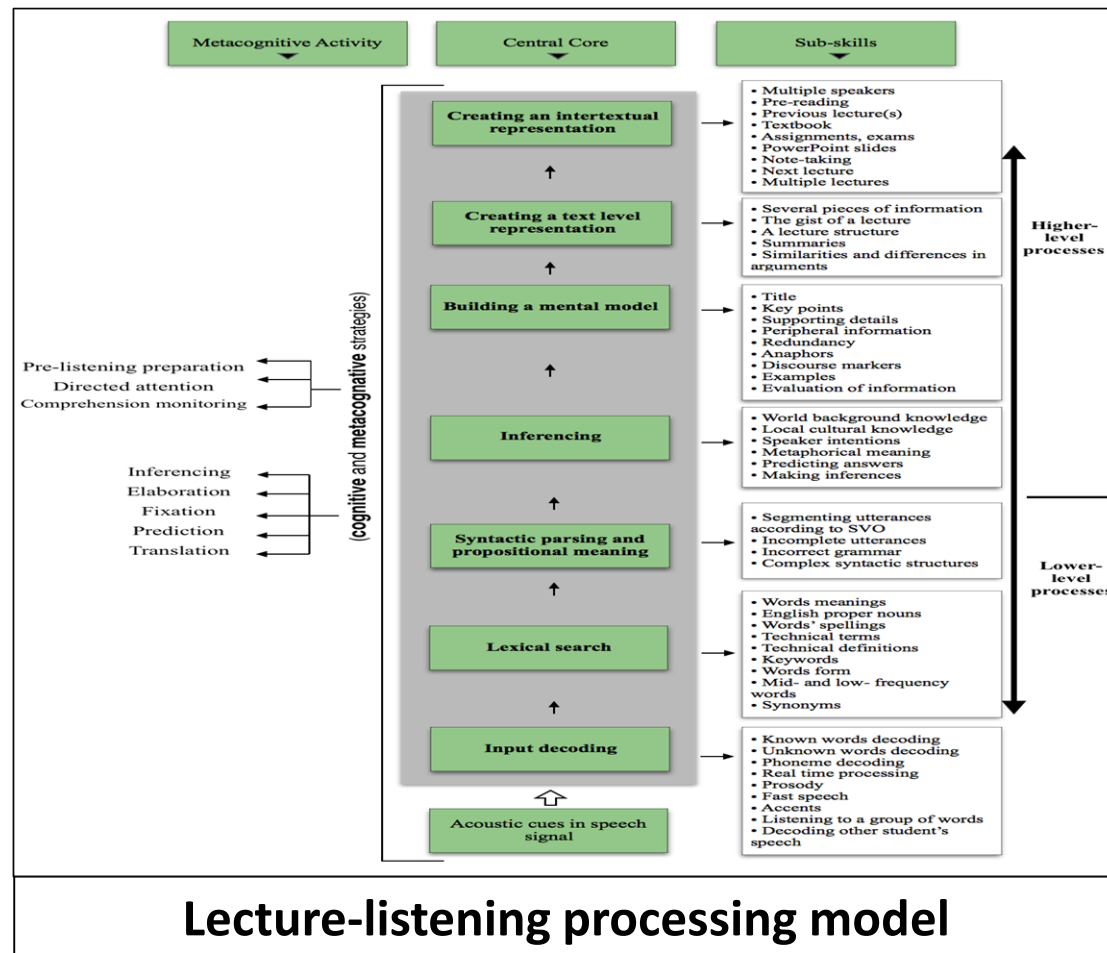
Yes [I lose concentration], **because of dwelling too much on certain areas, then you lose focus and when you pay attention again they've moved on from the point they were dwelling on ...** in terms of understanding? I understand fully. In terms of concentration I faced a very hard time trying to concentrate. (P7/*Literature*)

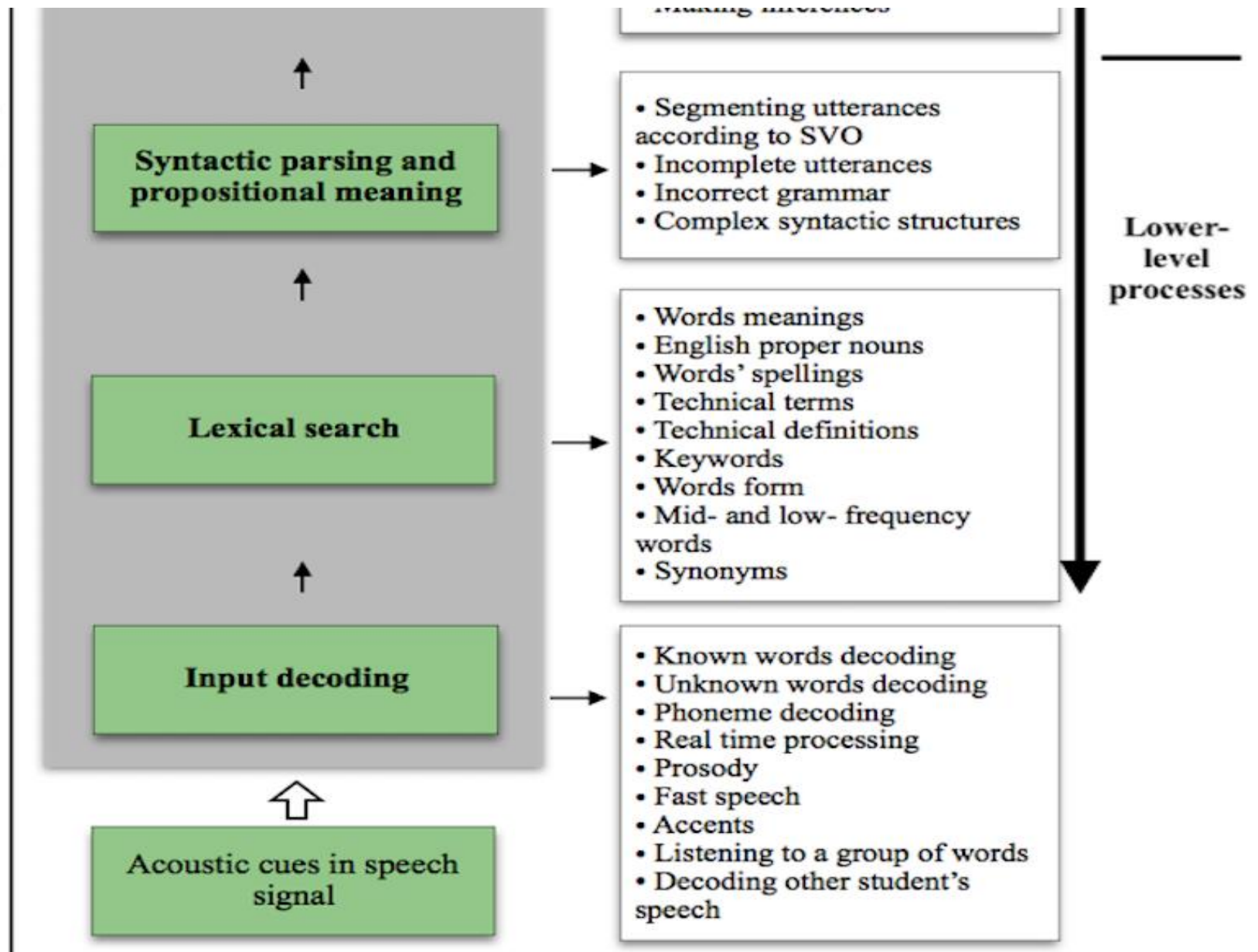
b. Listening to a 50- or 100-minute lecture and giving it undivided attention

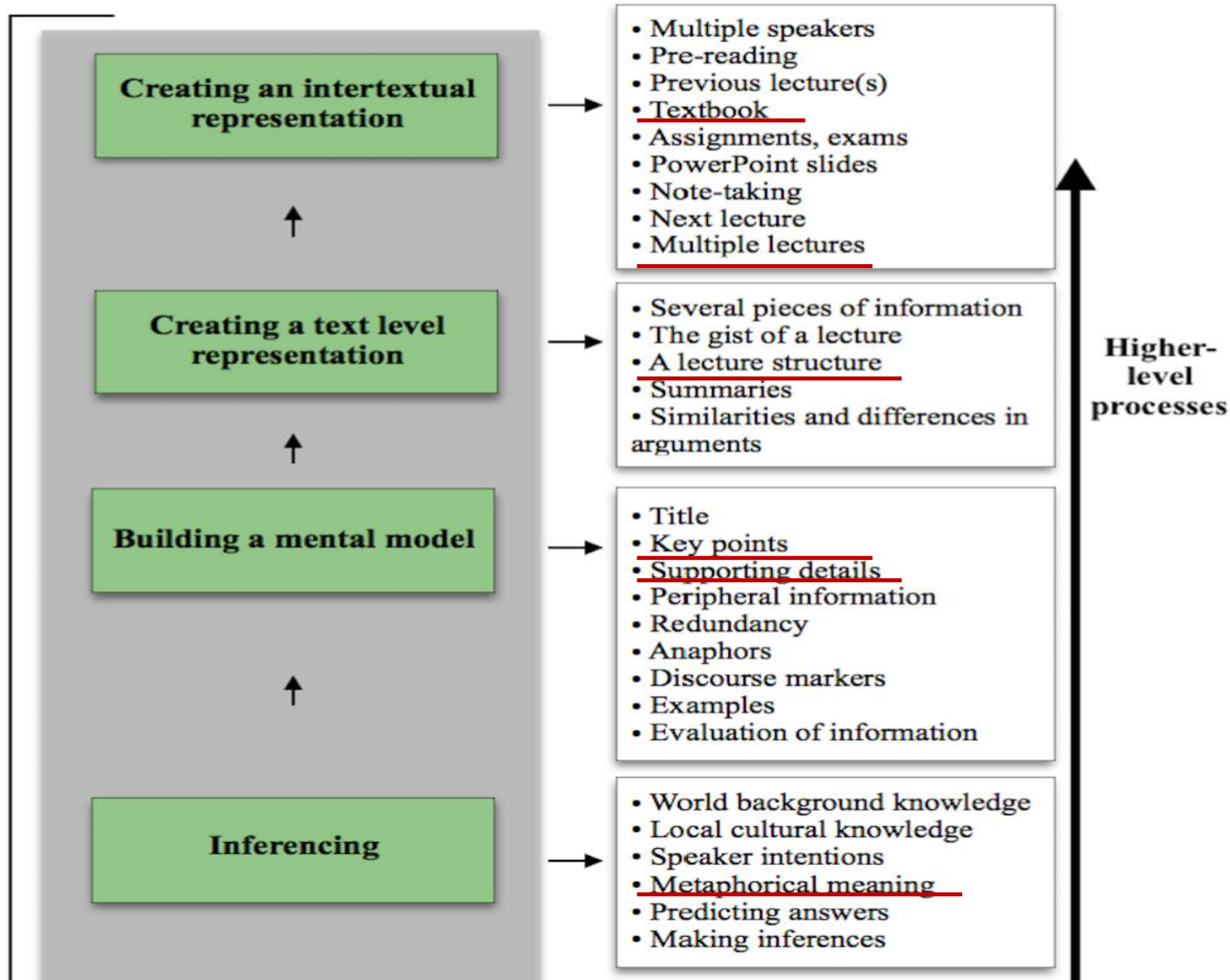
Sometimes in a lecture I need your attention for at least 50 minutes, like in one sitting. Then you can space out for like a couple of minutes, but I want you to come back to me for another 15 minutes and listen. (L3)

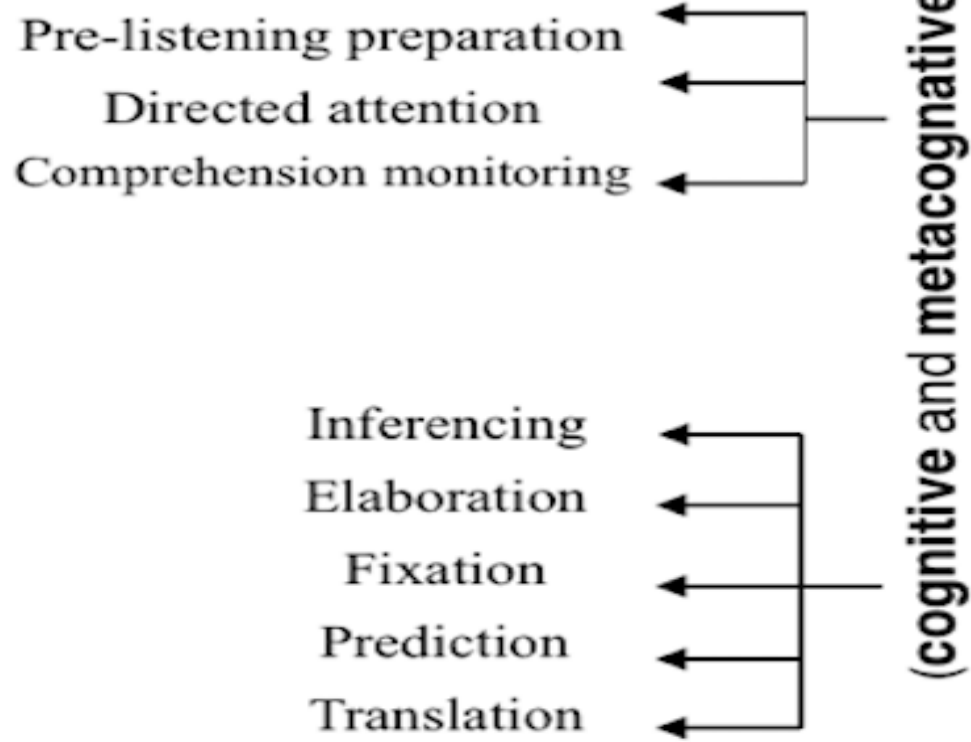
Conclusions

EAP lecture-listening construct:









Some implications for EAP assessment

1. Lower-level processing sub-skills needs

Recognising rhetorical questions, recognising key words, understanding technical terms, formulaic expressions, mid- and low- frequency words, and complex grammatical structures

2. Extensive higher-level processing needs in EAP lecture listening, esp. textual & intertextual representation

- length of input
- multiple inputs within one task
- integration with other skills
- metacognitive control

3. Diagnostic testing: target specific sub-skills

Thank you for your EAP listening!

Any questions?

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