

ASSESSMENT AND DIVERSITY

A COLLABORATIVE PROJECT BETWEEN
ACADEMIC STAFF AND LEARNING SUPPORT
STAFF

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Research issue

- University teachers are often unsure how to provide EAL students with useful feedback on English language issues.
- University teachers often think students have a 'grammar' or 'language' problem but LA perspective is different.

Current research in this area

- Error correction studies
- Written feedback studies
- International student studies

Error correction studies

- Does feedback help or harm EAL students' English acquisition.
- No consensus (Truscott , Ellis et al., Bitchener, Ferris).
- Direct v. indirect error correction
- Focussed v. unfocussed error correction
- Based on ESOL, EFL, EAP teaching not disciplinary teaching.

Written feedback studies

- Feedback needs to be transferable and transformative.
- It often falls short of these goals.
- “What makes ... student writing ‘appropriate’ has more to do with issues of epistemology than with the surface issues of form to which staff often have recourse when describing their students’ writing.” (Lea & Street, 1998, p.162)

Criterion referenced or matrix marking

- Not clear how helpful a marking matrix or code is in EAL marking.
- Criterion referenced assessment for university marking is not, in itself, a panacea.

International student studies

- Wide ranging literature
- Some indication that students don't find markers' feedback especially helpful (Johnson 2008)

What was discussed

- What approach to marking should be taken
- What to avoid
- Focus on one feature
- Give feedback on only one or two para.s
- System for incomprehensible sections
- Clarity about what had been marked/corrected
- Consistency across programme
- Marking code
- Writing guide

Three month follow up

- EAL students have different skills for analysing English
- Marking code was good
- Writing guide will be rewritten
- Students should do the correction work not the lecturer
- No need to mark a particular error more than once
- About a page and a half should be marked intensively
- SLSS will be asked back to speak to tutors

For the future

- Extend to working with programme on marking in general
- Disciplinary teachers may be able to use the metalanguage of grammar
 - Only options may be underlining or direct correction
- Comments on content and clarity as a way forward



References

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