The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning™
2018 Volume 8/Issue 1 Article 5

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Recommended Citations:

APA
Kelly, A. (2018). A place for teaching grammar? Analysing challenges in developing grammatical knowledge for ESL and non-traditional students at university. *The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning*, 8(1), 71-85.

MLA
Andrew Kelly. "A place for teaching grammar? Analysing challenges in developing grammatical knowledge for ESL and non-traditional students at university." The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning 8.1 (2018): 71-85.

www.jltl.org

The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 2018(*1*), pp. 71-85

A place for teaching grammar? Analysing challenges in developing grammatical knowledge for ESL and non-traditional students at university

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received October 2, 2017
Revisions completed January 28, 2018
Published March, 2018

Key Words:
Grammar
Academic writing
Non-traditional students
ESL students
Higher education

ABSTRACT

In the wake of the massification of higher education in the 21st century, universities worldwide are under pressure to support the influx of non-native English-speaking students and students from non-traditional backgrounds; both of which can find it quite challenging to communicate effectively in an academic context. These students typically struggle with academic writing, due at least in part to limited opportunities to develop their grammatical awareness and written expression while studying at university. This article critically analyses why universities and respective teaching staff can be reluctant to offer more direct assistance with grammar problems to students, even though doing so can assist students' understanding of correct form, develop their communication skills, and, over time, increase their general confidence in participating in academic discourse. In addition to exploring time constraints for instructors and students, it suggests that teaching staff with low grammatical knowledge will not generally seek to develop grammatical knowledge directly in university classrooms and feedback practices. While university teachers should not be expected to dedicate significant amounts of time to correcting grammar and instead focus on meaning and understanding, this article presents two templates to help demonstrate how embedding discipline focused grammar-based activities into relevant sections of curricula and delivering relevant professional development seminars to university teaching staff can improve student communication, retention, and future employment prospects.

Across all disciplines and levels of study, academic writing is a critical skill for students to develop at university—a component of which includes developing students' grammatical knowledge for an academic context. Whether it is known implicitly or explicitly, high grammatical knowledge empowers students and academics to fully articulate their analysis and understanding of complex ideas. It can be used to develop convincing arguments through the use of well-structured sentences, paragraphs and essays. As Ondruesk (2012) shrewdly observed, fluency with basic writing skills is a prerequisite for academic writing, including how to select a topic, organise ideas, and employ the rules of writing

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 ISSN: 2146-1732

mechanics. In this regard, grammatical knowledge does not just pertain to simple sentence-level errors but also larger and more significant structural and expression issues.

Moreover, a lack of opportunities to develop writing skills will not only affect a student's chances to succeed academically; it will also have a sizeable impact on employability once they graduate. Employers across many disciplines—including engineering, accounting, nursing, and teaching—frequently report that the most important skill that they are looking for in graduates is strong written and oral communication skills (Devi et al., 2015; Nair & Mukherjee, 2014; Cone & Dover, 2012; Jones, 2011; Smagorinsky et al., 2011). Perhaps even more importantly, however, widening participation strategies—a term that refers to universities seeking to adjust their curricula, policies, resources, and infrastructure to support non-traditional and international students successfully completing their degree—requires greater language support for students without a strong literacy background. Many universities rely on these student cohorts for government funding and student fees, meaning that the continued growth and viability of some higher education institutions will rest upon their capacity to develop students' language skills. Framed in this light, universities aim for its students to be able to communicate effectively with correct punctuation and grammar, some even by the end of the first-year (Washer, 2007).

While no educator would dispute the importance of developing communication skills, a growing problem for some university attrition and graduate employment rates is that students may not be developing their academic writing or receiving sufficient feedback on their use of language throughout their study (Bexley, 2013; Hyland, 2013; Birrell, 2006). This lack of language development is particularly problematic for non-traditional students, a cohort usually characterised by low-socioeconomic status (LSES), mature-age with family commitments, the first-in-family to study at university, or studying part-time externally while working full-time. It is also an issue for many international students that speak English as a second language (ESL), as this cohort does not have the same command of English as native speakers. These students face plenty of challenges in order to succeed at university, but in most cases, both groups of students have had little exposure to complex literature or academic writing before they begin tertiary studies. English language levels, then, become a cause of 'increasing frustration and anxiety' for these students as well as their respective teaching staff (Rolls, 2011, p. 27). ESL and non-traditional students are enrolling in record numbers worldwide, yet foundation pathways and university teaching practices are still in the process of evolving to accommodate the need for greater support during university study (Thomas & Heath, 2014). Without such support for developing grammatical knowledge and academic expression, students will struggle to meet the expectations of their degree and find it difficult to secure graduate employment opportunities in their field of expertise (Birrell, 2006; Murray 2010). While extracurricular learning skills and language support staff can provide piecemeal assistance, universities must develop discipline-specific strategies to support the influx of non-native English-speaking students and students from non-traditional backgrounds; both of which can find it quite challenging to communicate effectively in both academic and professional contexts.

To this end, current studies generally revolve around student issues rather than what teaching faculty can do to develop these skills. As Arkoudis and Tran (2010) pointed out, most of the research in this area involves identifying problems that students (particularly those originating from overseas) encounter with their academic writing rather than focusing on strategies that lecturers can adopt to support their students' learning. Providing one possible solution, Bean (2011) suggests that best practice when it comes to grammar should focus on allowing students to find and fix their own errors because most mistakes are a result of poor editing and proofreading rather than grammatical knowledge. This approach certainly addresses time constraint issues on the part of the lecturer and tutor, yet assumes that students (especially those in first-year or from non-English speaking backgrounds) have the skills to criticise their own work and identify poor written expression.

Shifting the focus, this article critically analyses why universities and respective teaching staff can be reluctant to offer more direct assistance with grammar to students, even though doing so can assist

student understanding of correct form, develop their communication skills, and, over time, increase their general confidence in participating in academic debate (Hyland, 2013). Through an analysis of the current scholarship on grammar teaching in university contexts, this article outlines that teaching staff with low grammatical knowledge will not generally seek to develop grammatical knowledge directly in university classrooms and feedback practices. It also explores the impact of time constraints for instructors and students as key barriers to developing grammar for university level study. While instructors should not be expected to dedicate significant amounts of time to correcting grammar and instead focus on meaning and understanding, this article offers two templates to help demonstrate how embedding discipline focused grammar-based activities into relevant sections of curricula and delivering relevant professional development sessions to university teaching staff can improve student communication, retention and future job prospects. At the very least, these templates will assist in raising student awareness about their own written expression and assist them in methods for improving it. It also discusses key limitations to implementing these strategies, including potential reluctance from discipline experts, funding allocation, and contestation over how grammar is developed in practice for discipline-specific contexts. Finally, while this article primarily focuses on the Australian higher education system, it seeks to provide more general commentary on these issues in order to apply to other university teaching contexts worldwide. After all, even though developing writing skills for ESL and non-traditional students has become a critical issue for institutions in Western countries, the problem also exists for institutions in developing regions such as Africa and Asia (Ayafor, 2015; Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012).

2. Literature Review: Why do universities overlook developing grammar?

Reasons as to why providing grammatical instruction tends to fall by the waysides in university teaching contexts are complex and multifaceted. It is also quite controversial to even focus on grammatical issues in higher education, as many studies suggest that it has little bearing on writing (Bean, 2011, p. 68). Nonetheless, concerned by an increasing number of graduates damaging the reputation of its universities due to poor communication skills, the Australian government has attempted to enforce English language standards in higher education. These standards include a need for institutions to develop students' English language proficiency during their studies. As Murray (2010) outlined, universities are being required to "up their game" with regards to developing English language proficiency. Irrespective of policy changes, however, a core driver of curriculum focus begins with university teaching staff and their views on what constitutes good practice in regards to developing academic writing. Indeed, a major part of the problem—and one that warrants deeper investigation—is that many university educators perceive providing detailed feedback on written expression and addressing grammatical issues as outside their realm of responsibility. In other words, even though almost all educators would agree that feedback is a critical component of learning, discipline experts seem to take a hands-off approach when it comes to developing grammatical knowledge during university study. In this regard, feedback on writing based assessments infrequently supports students towards writing effectively within disciplines, which can especially 'unsettle' first-year international students that come from an educational background that relies upon being told their errors explicitly (Hyland, 2013b). Similar problems exist for non-traditional students such as mature-age and LSES students, both of which require greater guidance in regards to the nuanced and idiosyncratic stylistic expectations of different academic genres because in most cases they have not encountered this style of writing before. Encapsulating this problem succinctly, renowned linguist Ken Hyland recently described this student experience as akin to an alien encounter or landing on Mars (Hyland, 2016).

Discipline experts tend to expect that students should possess satisfactory communication skills before studying in their particular unit or course. Some educators point to a lack of writing preparation in secondary schools, but also to first-year literacy building units that do not properly prepare students for studying within their respective discipline (Maguire, 2016). First-year academic literacy units are common

in Western undergraduate degrees and play a critical role in ESL and non-traditional students adjusting to the academic expectations of university, yet lecturers also criticise these programs as too focused on building literacy as opposed to developing content knowledge for particular disciplines in second and third years (Wingate, 2015). While focusing on content is undoubtedly important, it should not be at the expense of assisting students with their written expression; otherwise, students will forever be limited in their capacity to articulate their understanding and ideas. Unsurprisingly, educators who see one part of their role as developing students' language skills provide much more specific guidance for improving their writing, whereas those that do not consider it part of their job description tend to provide more indirect forms of support such as advising students to seek extracurricular assistance (Arkoudis et al. 2012). As a result, a lack of feedback on writing skills does not give students enough opportunities to understand their unique weak and strong points when it comes to their own discipline-based writing (Chokwe, 2015).

ESL or non-traditional students find themselves at an additional disadvantage because lecturers and tutors generally avoid providing extensive assistance with their academic expression. Non-traditional students, including those from LSES backgrounds, are typically time poor and have had little exposure to complex literature before studying at the tertiary level (Bexley, 2013). Similarly, ESL students confront many personal challenges when studying in a Western English-speaking university, yet they also face the burden of developing their English proficiency alongside learning the esoteric conventions and structures of academic writing. Put another way, ESL students are faced with two challenges: learning general English and learning the academic language of the field in which they are studying (Rolls, 2011, p. 27). Numerous studies suggest that additional extracurricular assistance is useful, yet better outcomes can be achieved through integrating discipline-specific grammar activities and feedback into the curriculum. This is best achieved through sufficient department support, adopting a discipline-specific needs analysis, liaising with highly qualified language specialists, continuous collaboration between stakeholders, and allocating sufficient resources to implementing grammar-based activities (Arkoudis et al. 2012; Devlin & O'Shea, 2012; Baik & Greig 2009). One of these key resources is providing teaching staff with professional development sessions on giving feedback for student grammar and writing expression, which this article will explore later.

In many cases, however, university teaching staff do not focus on grammar or general strategies for improving academic expression because they lack the knowledge or skill-set to do so (Arkoudis et al. 2012). In Australia and many other Western countries, students are not exposed to traditional grammar lessons at the primary, secondary or even tertiary level. As a result, it is common for an academic to graduate from university, even with a Ph.D., without being able to identify or explain the use of simple grammatical items such as subjects, verbs, prepositions, and articles. Even academic literacy specialists, most of whom assist students with writing structure and expression, do not possess formal qualifications in TESOL or related fields (Arkoudis and Starfield, 2007). To this end, university educators can be somewhat excused for not understanding the structures that make meaning in their writing; they had learnt how to do so implicitly through their own education. Their respective learning experience, however, will inform how they approach their own teaching practice. Self-perception about the importance or triviality of increasing students' grammatical knowledge in an academic context will influence how these educators respond to writing issues in student work (Sanchez, 2014).

ESL and non-traditional students simply need greater assistance developing these skills because they arrive at university with diverse literacy backgrounds and expectations. For ESL learners, grammar is a much larger focal point of language instruction in previous studies than it is for native speakers in most Western countries, but they require greater assistance to develop their proficiency at university (Schulz, 2001). Moreover, for non-traditional learners from a LSES background, there is a demonstrated relationship between socioeconomic status and language ability, meaning that those from LSES backgrounds will face greater struggles in writing academically and with correct grammar (Mueller

Gathercole et al., 2016). LSES students certainly have the capacity to succeed and perform just as competently as students from a high socioeconomic background, yet the former student group generally face personal and financial challenges that can hinder their academic development. In short, university educators need to understand the unique learning needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students insofar as it impacts their writing expression, particularly because a lack of understanding about the challenges that these students face has a direct effect on retention as well as language development (Moloney & Saltmarsh 2016). Simple yet helpful actions for ESL and non-traditional students to receive greater support include greater teacher availability, demonstrated enthusiasm and dedication in teaching practices, and effective communication with students particularly (but not exclusively) around assessment requirements (Devlin & O'Shea, 2012).

To be sure, many lecturers and tutors face heavy teaching workloads which consequently limit the time available to provide detailed feedback on students' writing. Time constraints are a common cause for concern amongst all university staff, yet those who are teaching hundreds of students per semester may not find themselves with enough time to provide enough detailed feedback on language skills when marking a high number of written assignments. Academics have frequently reported that while communication skills in students are undoubtedly important, large class sizes do not allow them to dedicate sufficient time to each student's language skills. In one study, an academic suggested that a significant number of students graduate with 'deplorable language' due to this problem (Arkoudis et al. 2012, p. 84). An additional concern is that feedback effectiveness is notoriously difficult to assess, which can lead staff to question its benefits and the extent to which students will engage with teacher comments (Price et al., 2010). Solutions to this problem are complex, yet the answers may lie in dedicating more time to educate students about the importance of reading their assignment feedback carefully and streamlining more general comments in class discussions to accompany more specific feedback to individual student work.

A common feedback practice, particularly amongst university educators with little capacity or interest in providing detailed comments to improve students' writing skills, is to direct students to seek extracurricular assistance with their writing skills. While this type of assistance can vary greatly, it can include attending academic writing workshops, arranging consultations with university learning skills staff, or seeking external tuition (Baik & Greig 2009). These forms of assistance can certainly assist students to develop their writing skills, but ESL and non-traditional students can be limited in their capacity to engage with these services. Numerous studies outline that one of the key limitations to international students succeeding at university is a lack of time to go beyond the demands of formal instruction to improve their grammar or academic skills (Nyland et al., 2009; Andrade, 2006; Brux & Fry, 2010). This is mainly caused by a need to work long hours to pay for their tuition and living expenses. In other cases, some students have reported that they work long hours in order to send money back to their families in their home country.

Similarly, non-traditional students often study part-time or online because they have other important commitments such as full-time work or children. According to Bowl (2001), non-traditional students can be stricken by financial and time poverty simply by attempting to study while managing other commitments. It can be near impossible, in other words, for these types of students to take the initiative outside of their formal study to improve their grammar or general writing skills. In order to address the needs of these students, teaching staff need to be trained and the curriculum needs to be designed in such a way that opportunities to develop writing skills are embedded into a course. With sufficient support and resources, discipline experts may be in the best position to develop students' grammatical knowledge as students value a highly discipline-specific approach to language and academic skills support. Baik & Greg (2009) suggested that there are positive longer-term benefits on academic outcomes when university teachers provide discipline-specific writing feedback. Put another way, while many academics resist the idea of providing detailed feedback on writing and academic expression,

discipline experts are in a strong position to guide students to improve their writing in relation to the conventions and expectations within their discipline.

It is unsurprising that students who receive detailed feedback on their grammar and general expression tend to exhibit greater signs of improvement in their writing throughout their study (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Bitchener, 2008). Detailed corrective feedback provides students with opportunities to develop the quality of their writing and focus specifically on individual issues rather than generalised mistakes. Providing detailed feedback is particularly important for ESL and non-traditional students, as these cohorts often have had minimal pre-tertiary assistance with writing complex analytical pieces of writing. Indeed, many linguistic studies—particularly those that focus on ESL university learners—have found that providing explicit feedback resulted in improved retention and understanding of grammatical issues (Shamiri & Farvardin, 2016; Evans et al., 2011; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ellis et al., 2006). Oral feedback can also be useful when responding to students in class or during presentations, such as nodding and hand gestures to indicate correct grammatical form (Wang & Loewen, 2016; Lee, 2016). While the effectiveness of oral feedback is more difficult to assess, positive responses to correct and compelling statements encourage students to communicate and participate in academic discourse.

Additionally, studies that investigate student views highlight a desire to develop their grammatical knowledge through their lecturers and tutors. In other words, students expect that university teaching staff will provide feedback on their writing to address their mistakes, with many students are already aware that teachers tend to focus on content correction rather than writing correction (Hyland, 2013a). Sik (2015), for example, found that learner groups exposed to explicit teaching methods became more proficient and that participants in the study preferred clear instruction on grammatical rules and forms. These students proposed that an explicit approach let them internalize the target framework easily, suggesting that the explicit teaching of grammar is a necessary step before an implicit approach will be effective. Other studies, such as those by Lin et al. (2012), argued more specifically that students wanted feedback with detailed explanations that contain clear examples, patterns or formulas for correct use of the structure and that correct a range of possible student misconceptions. While asking those lecturers and tutors to provide this level of feedback for every mistake and for every student probably goes beyond reasonable expectations, it is important to acknowledge the extent to which teacher support with grammar and academic writing will impact student satisfaction levels. Students want help beyond the content of their writing, even if tutors are reluctant to take on these responsibilities (Ngoc & Iwashita, 2012; Barnes & Lock, 2010).

3. Strategies for developing grammar in university curricula

There are no comprehensive solutions to ensure that all university students have sufficient opportunities to develop their grammatical knowledge for academic writing, nor is there a "one size fits all" method or exhaustive list that will effectively support students across all tertiary contexts. Simple actions—such as Bean's (2011) suggestions of asking students to read drafts aloud and holding them responsible for fixing their own sentence-level mistakes—can certainly begin to develop student awareness about their own writing issues, yet more wide-ranging initiatives need to be undertaken in order to support a larger array of students enrolling at university. Regardless of institution or study program, students come from a range of literacy backgrounds and there can be notable variations in writing expectations across disciplines. However, to address remedial issues that can surface in student work (especially from ESL and non-traditional learners), writing-based programs that embed academic literacy skills for specific disciplines can provide a meaningful method of developing students' grammar and writing skills. These programs, in short, develop academic writing via specific subject areas and topics (Bexley, 2013). These programs work well in practice across a range of universities already, yet it can become problematic when

students have to study across disciplines. In these cases, teaching effective academic communication in different disciplines could become quite overwhelming or confusing for undergraduate students studying a dual degree or a broad range of elective units (Miller, 2013).

A pragmatic middle ground is to incorporate (or maintain, in cases where universities already include such programs) foundation-style writing courses for undergraduate students, which cover introductory academic communication expectations across all disciplines. These units or programs should be in constant collaboration with other teaching faculties to ensure that the curriculum is structured in such a way that it will be relevant to prepare students for studying in all fields. One successful example is Charles Darwin University's Common Units Program, in which all undergraduate students study academic-literacy and writing-focused units through generalized topics such as culture studies and sustainability. The ideas explored in these units can then be applied to all professions and disciplines. Another model is for disciplines to develop their own programs relevant to the needs of their particular study program, such as Western Sydney University's unit 'Professional Communication' for nursing students which introduces key language and literacy concepts for both an academic and professional context. Interestingly, both of these institutions have a high number of ESL and non-traditional students enrolled in their programs.

Regardless of the model adopted, the subsequent necessity for discipline experts is to build upon these programs and incorporate grammar and writing activities into their content. Put another way, introductory literacy-based programs are not enough; students need opportunities to develop their communication skills through learning discipline-specific content for the entire duration of their study (Tran, 2010). In this regard, discipline experts are in the strongest position to teach key ideas alongside the specific communicative expectations in their field. While many grammar and writing based activities could provide practical benefits across a broad range of academic fields, Appendix A outlines some suggested introductory examples for activities that can be used for different disciplines. Over and above focusing on sentence-level errors, they aim to develop student awareness about writing expression and improving their academic voice. In short, students will reflect on common writing problems within their field of study and work towards addressing these errors in their own writing. Appendix A focuses particularly on exercises that can be used in Business, Medicine, Law and the Humanities.

An additional aspect of providing meaningful grammatical assistance to students is through feedback in written assessments. It is well-established that university educators are limited in their time to provide meaningful feedback on student work, especially those that are teaching a large number of students (Arkoudis et al. 2012). However, faculty teaching staff are in the strongest position to guide students on how to communicate effectively within their discipline, and there should be greater focus on how this can be achieved. While this article already outlined that most university lecturers may not have a background in formal grammar training, a strategy that can be adopted is to provide introductory and on-going training sessions to all teaching staff on how to identify, explain and address grammatical issues in student work as well as how to communicate that information to students in a meaningful way. University staff are expected to undertake compulsory professional development relevant to their employment, and given the increasing need to address writing issues for ESL and non-traditional students, pragmatic feedback strategies for addressing grammatical issues should certainly be considered by universities across the world. Western universities in particular have already dedicated significant amounts of resources into extracurricular language and learning skills assistance for their students, many of which are experts in second language learning. In short, personnel to run these sessions are already available internally for many institutions, depending upon workload requirements. Appendix B outlines an example one-day professional development session for university teaching staff on providing grammatical feedback to ESL and non-traditional students. This sample may need to be adjusted to adapt to an institution's unique student cohort and their respective writing needs, available qualified staff to deliver the session, as well as other logistical considerations such as room bookings and multi-campus

arrangements. Finally, it is envisaged that this form of professional development session would be compulsory for all existing university teachers and included as part the mandatory orientation requirements for new teaching staff

4. Limitations

Implementing pedagogic change across large teaching institutions is not a straightforward process, particularly when views surrounding such a change are hotly contested. Efforts to develop discipline-focused grammar writing skills might be seen by some faculty staff as "dumbing down" the curriculum, largely at the expense of developing content knowledge. Birch (2014) even went as far to suggest that the mere mention of change to address student writing skills can evoke virulent opposition from some faculty members. To this end, one of the key limitations to developing grammatical knowledge is from university teaching staff that oppose the idea of implementing changes to meet the learning needs of ESL and non-traditional students. While individual views will always vary, the combined strength of opposing views will ultimately hinge upon the academic culture and student cohorts enrolled at a university. Contested views about implementing focused grammar and writing-based practices are complicated further because each faculty and teaching staff member will have different views about which grammar problems and writing skills are most important, how much time to dedicate to addressing these issues is reasonable, and the most effective method of addressing them. In short, it will take an extensive amount of discussion across disciplines as well as collaboration within disciplines to develop targeted strategies for addressing these learning needs in both teaching and feedback practices.

Much like almost all university initiatives, financial and time constraints are constant considerations. While many qualified staff members may already work within a university to design and deliver programs, implementing professional development sessions such as those proposed in this article will take time and resources to administer successfully. Similar conclusions can be drawn about re-designing curriculum to integrate discipline-focused writing activities, which would involve careful planning within teaching and discipline teams. Finally, the harsh reality of teaching a large number of students is that teaching staff will have a limited amount of time to spend providing meaningful feedback on student work. Pragmatic and time-efficient solutions need to be found regarding the most critical writing issues in consultation with relevant teaching teams, such as providing more generalised feedback discussions in-class and then targeting key writing issues in individual assignment feedback.

5. Conclusion

Making up an increasing portion of total enrolments, universities worldwide face major challenges in providing learning environments that cater towards ESL and non-traditional students. Strategies for building grammatical knowledge and academic writing skills—both of which are focus areas that require additional development for these student cohorts—should not compromise the academic standard of degree programs, but must be incorporated into discipline-focused classes and feedback practices so that all students have the opportunity to develop their academic and professional communication throughout their study. Foundation programs and extracurricular assistance provide some degree of preparation, yet further initiatives should be implemented to ensure that students continue to develop their understanding of how to communicate effectively in their disciplines. This article argued that a lack of interest in developing grammatical knowledge by teaching staff—or simply a lack or grammatical knowledge itself—creates a barrier for ESL and non-traditional students developing the communication skills expected of them to succeed in their discipline and even find employment in their field after graduation. Time constraints for both staff and students also hinder opportunities to focus on building writing skills. In an effort to address these issues, this article offered two templates for incorporating discipline-specific

grammar and writing activities into curricula as well as introducing targeted professional development sessions for teaching staff. If no other change is adapted, higher education programs should at least raise student consciousness about their own writing and the implications of poor expression or 'sloppy' mistakes. Implementing these types of pedagogic changes can improve attrition rates, graduate employability, and overall student satisfaction results.

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Appendix A

Discipline-specific grammar building activities

Discipline	Activity	Instructions	Examples	Outcomes
Business, Accounting, and Finance	Developing an understanding of academic stance through the use of hedging and boosting words	Students are given excerpts of a company's recent financial report and an academic article that comments on recent developments in this field. Students are instructed to highlight which particular words make each source sound more or less authoritative.	Financial report: 'Recent expansion into Asia has produced extremely positive results. Academic article: 'American companies might have to reconsider the viability of the Asian market.'	▪ Analyze financial documents and academic journal articles ▪ Compare and contrast different discipline-specific texts ▪ Understand how the use of hedging and boosting words can make an author appear authoritative or leave room for doubt
Medicine and Nursing	Rewriting patient complaints using academic/professional language	Students are given patient excerpts that contain poor language skills. In groups, they rewrite example sentences in an academic/professional style.	'Mum hurt leg' 'The patient's daughter reported soreness in her mother's left thigh (suspected hamstring strain).'	▪ Develop communication skills with non-English speaking patients ▪ Apply discipline specific terminology (e.g. patient, soreness) ▪ Identify and correct grammatical issues (e.g. syntax, use of singular-plural, lack of prepositions and articles)
Law/Legal Studies	Vocabulary building for legal practice through a case study	Students research the dictionary definition of legal terms (e.g. assault, terminate) and then examine the potential meaning of these words in a legal context. In groups, they will discuss the implications for these different meanings in a given case study.	Example dictionary definition of assault: make a physical attack. Example legal definition: Applying force of any kind to, the person of another without the other person's consent. Use a case study that includes at least one non-physical assault.	▪ Analyze different legal interpretations of key terminology ▪ Develop an understanding of the importance of context for law and grammar ▪ Apply relevant law to a given case study
Humanities and Social Sciences	Correct use of tense	Students are given a short reading (preferably a text commenting on the past or future), and must write a paraphrased sentence using correct tense about a) an event, and b) the author's position.	Obama was the first African-American U.S. President. The author predicts that Obama will be celebrated for his achievements in the future.	▪ Analyze a relevant academic reading ▪ Develop an understanding of the differences between facts and opinions ▪ Understand the correct use of tense in different contexts

Appendix B

Sample professional development session: Providing grammar and writing feedback for ESL and non-traditional students

Time	Session	Outline
8:30am-9am	*Welcome and introduction*	▪ Overview of daily session ▪ Ice-breaker group activity
9am-10am	*Grammar and academic writing: What are the problems in your discipline?*	▪ Small group discussion activity about common student issues ▪ Examining these issues using grammatical terminology
10am-11am	*ESL and non-traditional students: key student challenges*	▪ Presentation and discussion about unique challenges for these cohorts studying at university ▪ Implications for student success
11am-12pm	*Integrating grammar and writing activities into your curriculum*	▪ Review strategies for developing discipline specific grammar building activities (see Appendix A for examples) ▪ Models for curriculum design using the current literature ▪ Provide an overview of university-specific curriculum review procedures
12pm-1pm	*Lunch break*	N/A
1pm-2pm	*Best practice for giving meaningful writing feedback*	▪ Discuss general strategies for providing feedback to ESL and non-traditional students, including how to be both supportive and constructive ▪ Develop methods for prioritising the most concerning writing issues ▪ Discuss how to provide assessment feedback pragmatically when teaching a large number of students
2pm-3pm	*Common student mistakes across all disciplines and how to address them*	▪ Review of group conclusions from morning session about student writing issues ▪ Identify common issues across disciplines and discuss strategies for providing corrective feedback
3pm-4pm	*Practice-activity: Examining student samples and developing curriculum/feedback*	▪ Develop feedback for student samples based on session's discussion points ▪ Provide brief proposal to redesign curriculum or teaching plans to address key writing issues from sample
4pm-4:30pm	*Session Summary*	▪ Review of key session points ▪ Outline additional support options for teaching staff