



The proof of the pudding ... analysing student written texts for evidence of a successful literacy intervention.

Key Words

academic literacy; in-discipline; first year; text analysis

Abstract

The proof of the pudding ... analysing student written texts for evidence of a successful literacy intervention. In recent decades, the contextualisation of academic literacy practices through in-discipline initiatives has become more common in Australian universities (Harris & Ashton, 2011), and such approaches are encouraged by the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Good Practice Principles for English Language (DEEWR, 2009). Although this approach makes sense to those of us who work in academic language and literacy (ALL) contexts, it can be difficult to demonstrate the effectiveness of the interventions in ways that make sense to others, and studies so far have tended to rely on student satisfaction surveys and/or analyses of course pass rates. This paper reports on a study which took a different approach. In addition to student satisfaction surveys, we analysed students' written texts for evidence of the effectiveness of an in-discipline literacy intervention in a first year, first semester introductory management course. Nine student essays, chosen at random and de-identified, were examined for evidence of how effectively students applied the academic writing skills and conventions highlighted through an in-discipline intervention. Each of the essays was qualitatively analysed using a discourse analysis framework which reflected the intended learning outcomes of the ALL intervention. This framework included: essay structure, task fulfilment, use of citations and referencing, sentence structure choices, and vocabulary choices. Although the student essays bear the hallmarks of novice writers, and in particular we found that the students struggled to use complex management theory effectively to build an argument, the students all demonstrated their ability to emulate the genre required in a management essay. Our analysis suggests that the students in this study did indeed benefit from the intervention. In this session we will share some of the insights gleaned through our efforts to broaden the range of tools which could be used to demonstrate the effectiveness of ALL in-discipline interventions.

References

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