FAQ: Referring a Student to the English Lecturer

When should you refer a student to me?

(1) First, the student must attend the ESP classes run in the first half of each semester and explore the materials found on the FLO English language assistance site. I find that students can often get the help they need through these avenues. The FLO site, in particular, has information on editing, essays, all types of vocabulary, pronunciation, listening, medical terms, clinical communication, useful books in the library, and so on.

(2) Second, the student needs to do all the “Self-Test Quizzes” on the FLO English Help site to identify their own language deficits. This prepares them for the inevitable bad news found in point (3).

(3) Third, the student must work through the entirety of the book “English Grammar in Use: Intermediate”. It teaches the very basic minimum level of grammar needed to write essays at an academic level and a student who has internalised this book will only just attain the grammatical knowledge needed to achieve an IELTS 7 score. This book is listed under “Useful Books in the Sturt Library” on the FLO English Help site.

Generally speaking, students are referred to me through the clinical coach. Most students who are in the first half of their degree will not need to see me. However, there are rarer cases where the communication skills are so poor that the student will clearly fail in their overall course. In these cases, intervention is needed. Read on for information about what does and does not happen in a referral (main points highlighted in bold/capitals).

What does NOT happen in a referral?

I do not edit.
The student needs to pay for their own editor. Even then, an editor should only be used while the student is undertaking a plan to improve their English skills.

I do not teach referencing.

I do not teach formatting.

I do not set English tests.
Nor will I set a re-test to see if students are following advice. A language test is limited in its capacity to ascertain a student’s communicative competence, language environment, and study skills. Furthermore, there is no formal mechanism which allows me to penalise or reward a student. Indeed, if the student does not follow advice, they risk their own academic failure, ability to pass the nmbSA’s IELTS 7 requirement, and their later professional opportunities. These consequences are made clear to every student at every referral.

I do not practice pronunciation on a one-on-one basis.
However, in a referral I ascertain a student’s particular difficulties and set homework. There are books in the library that deal with pronunciation (listed on FLO English Help) and a section devoted to pronunciation resources (also on FLO English Help). Furthermore, I address pronunciation issues in ‘Essential Communication & Speaking Skills’ workshops on Mondays (the timetable is listed on FLO English Help).
What DOES happen in a referral?

In a referral, I ask questions and make observations about a student’s communication skills. I also listen carefully to the type of language produced by the student on the day. The sort of issues that I might investigate and focus upon are:

**Nonverbal Factors**
- Gestures
- Eye contact
- Facial expressions
- Body language and positioning
- Interpersonal communication style

**Verbal Factors**
- Speaking volume
- Speaking tone
- Use of time
- Fluency of speech production
- Pronunciation of vowels
- Pronunciation of consonants
- Spoken stress patterns

**Linguistic and Extra-Linguistic Factors**
- Interference from the first language
- Interference from outside factors
- Interference from internal factors
- Strategies a student uses for language acquisition
- Strategies a student uses for language repair
- Strategies a student uses for giving feedback when listening
- Knowledge and range of vocabulary
- Knowledge of turn-taking practices
- Knowledge of linguistic conventions
- Knowledge of cultural practices

What happens AFTER a referral?

I will email a report to the referee and the student and set a ‘Plan of Action’ which specifically addresses the student’s needs. This plan may recommend self-study on particular aspects of communication and language. The student may be asked to use internet and library resources, advised to change their language practices, or be given hints on how to improve their academic skills.

Please note that some recurring advice is commonly given to students: they are often asked to revisit materials on the English Help FLO site and it is typical that they will be required to memorise, automatically and without fault, the contents of the book “English Grammar in Use: Intermediate”. This book contains the very basic minimum level of grammar needed to write essays at an academic level and a student who has internalised this book will only just attain the grammatical knowledge needed to achieve an IELTS 7 score.