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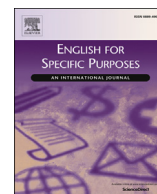
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# English for Specific Purposes

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## 'Teaching the writer to fish so they can fish for the rest of their lives': Lecturer, English language tutor, and student views on the educative role of proofreading



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### ABSTRACT

This qualitative study draws upon questionnaire and interview-based data collected from 32 disciplinary lecturers, 34 English language tutors, and 56 students (24 undergraduates, 32 postgraduates; 29 L1, 27 L2) to explore participants' beliefs about the educative value of the proofreading of student writing. No consensus emerged between or within parties, with a range of pro- and anti-educative views. Those who spoke of the educative value of proofreading claimed it was able to provide individualized learning opportunities, drawing learners' attention to knowledge gaps and recurrent errors, arming writers with learning strategies, raising their awareness of genre conventions, and pointing them to useful instructional materials. However, those espousing anti-educative views claimed that, unlike writing centre tutoring, proofreading was not a pedagogic experience, and that student writers had little desire to learn from a proofreader, simply accepting all the changes the proofreader had made to their text and quickly submitting for assessment. Such a variety of views points to the difficulties of introducing an in-house educative proofreading policy. The article concludes by exploring how educative proofreading could be embedded into university support services and its *raison d'être* effectively disseminated to all stakeholders.

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## 1. Introduction

Before they submit work for assessment, student writers may decide to solicit the help of a third party—most commonly known in my UK context as a 'proofreader'—to correct and comment on their text. Harwood et al. (2009, p. 166) define proofreading in rather broad terms ('third-party interventions (entailing written alteration) on assessed work in progress') because they found that proofreaders of student writing engage in very different degrees of intervention, some focusing more narrowly upon grammar and syntax while others intervened in writers' argumentation and content, and they wished their definition to capture the various forms of proofreading of student writing being undertaken. More recent research into proofreading has borne these findings out (e.g., Harwood, under review; Harwood, 2018, 2019; Kruger & Bevan-Dye, 2010), providing further evidence of the many forms of intervention carried out under the name of proofreading. I adopt the same broad conceptualization of proofreading as Harwood et al. in this article, adopting a social constructivist approach to explore

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its perceived value when defined more narrowly (i.e., when the proofreader confines themselves to correcting grammar and syntax only) and more widely (i.e., when the proofreader is willing to help enhance the text's content).

The merits and demerits of proofreading have been debated by academics, proofreaders, author editors<sup>1</sup>, university policymakers (particularly those concerned with questions of academic integrity), and by the higher education press, and this article explores the perceptions of three stakeholder groups in particular: lecturers (i.e., disciplinary faculty), English language tutors (who work in university English language units, study skills support centres, or writing centres), and students (both undergraduate and postgraduate). Specifically, I focus on one of the issues most commonly addressed in these discussions, viz. the educative value of proofreading: to what extent does proofreading lead to students' development of academic literacy skills in general, and of writing skills specifically? Those associated with anti-proofreading views often deny proofreading has much educative value: proofreading is said to mask students' inadequate writing abilities and writers supposedly learn nothing from the process of having their work proofread (arguments often found in the higher education press: see [Baty, 2006](#); [McKie, 2019](#); [Scurr, 2006](#)). The proofreader will clean up the text and if the proofreading has been done using Microsoft Word's Track changes, the writer can simply accept all changes with no reflection or effort on their part. Indeed, some of the proofreaders in [Harwood, Austin, and Macaulay's \(2012\)](#) study claimed that students are not looking for the proofreader to take an educative approach when they solicit help, wishing instead to be presented with a flawless text; and [Corcoran, Gagné, and McIntosh \(2018\)](#) also speak of students resisting attempts to make proofreading educative in university writing centres. At its most uneducative, then, students are apparently using proofreaders to create the illusion of academic literacy and failing to develop their abilities as a result; as [Conrad \(2019\)](#) puts it, writers may

... evade the responsibility to develop their own writing or language skills [...] may relinquish authorial ownership to the proofreader [...] may not understand why certain changes have been made [by the proofreader] ..., may accept changes without reflection, or they may benefit from the proofreader's own thought process and vocabulary... p. 176).<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, [Corcoran et al. \(2018\)](#) and [Harwood et al. \(2012\)](#) have argued that proofreading can be educatively focused. One of the metaphors [Harwood et al.'s](#) 16 proofreaders used when describing their roles was that of *teacher*: just as a writing centre tutor can provide students with input on language, grammar, vocabulary, and academic writing conventions, a proofreader can do the same in a dialogic manner. Indeed, even if the writer never meets the proofreader, writer and proofreader can dialogue using Microsoft Word comments or via other electronic means of communication:

Proofreading as part of a collaborative process can reveal gaps and weaknesses in the writer's grammar and syntax, and offer "teachable moments" and learning opportunities that provide valuable individualised feedback. ([McNally & Kooymann, 2017](#), p. A-149)

As we shall see below, similar to writing centre tutors, proofreaders can use various techniques which stop short of providing corrections, thereby requiring the writer to do much of the work themselves to revise their text, hopefully learning something in the process.

Exploring lecturers', English language tutors', and students' views on proofreading in general and on the educative value of proofreading in particular will benefit university policymakers seeking to determine whether to permit or proscribe proofreading; and, if proofreading is to be permitted, will help determine what form it should take. Although [Harwood \(2019\)](#) reported that more and more UK universities were introducing proofreading policies, some UK universities are vague about what they mean by 'proofreading' and about what is permitted. For instance, my own institution (see <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/academic-skills/study-skills-online/proofreading>) doesn't proscribe proofreading, but fails to define the types of intervention that are permitted, and warns students that 'All writing submitted for assessment **must be your own work** [original emphasis].' So on the one hand, proofreading is not banned, but on the other, it is unclear how far proofreaders can go. Furthermore, in a recent survey of undergraduate and postgraduate students at my own institution, I found that just 10% of students claimed to be wholly or somewhat familiar with the University's proofreading policies ([Harwood, under review](#)). It would seem, then, that there are issues both with the wording of current proofreading policies and with the effectiveness of their dissemination. Other institutions have been similarly criticised for policy vacuums, or for their vague or inconsistent guidance, not just in the UK, but internationally (particularly by some author editors: see [Baumeister, 2014](#) on the South African context; and [Burrough-Boenisch, 2014](#) on the UK and Australian contexts).

A number of different actors can play the role of proofreader, and so this proofreading debate is not only relevant for freelance proofreaders or agencies: as [Conrad \(2020\)](#), [Harwood et al. \(2009\)](#), [Harwood \(2019\)](#), and [Turner \(2011, 2018\)](#) have demonstrated, proofreading can be delivered by students' friends, family, and romantic partners, as well as by freelance proofreaders. Furthermore, writing centre tutors can also act as proofreaders, even when the centre nominally operates a no-proofreading policy (see [Eckstein, 2013](#); [Liu & Harwood, 2022](#); [Thonus, 2001](#) for evidence of this). Writing centre no-proofreading policies normally originate from classic writing centre literature like [North \(1984\)](#), who argued that tutors should seek to enhance the writer rather than the writing; that is, to focus on developing the writer's rhetorical knowledge

<sup>1</sup> Rather than working on student writing, author editors normally work on texts to be submitted for publication (see for instance [Burrough-Boenisch & Matarese, 2013](#)).

<sup>2</sup> However, as explained later, [Conrad \(2020\)](#) found that in fact some of the students in her research claimed that they *had* received educative benefits from proofreading. But proofreading may be seen as uneducative as far as some students are concerned.

and academic writing skill set, rather than on fixing grammar while the student sits passively by, learning nothing. In North's terms, then, the writing centre experience should be educative. Understanding the extent to which proofreading can also be educative will likely influence writing centre directors' views as to whether the tutor's remit should include that of proofreader. Indeed, establishing stakeholders' views on the educative value of proofreading is pertinent for all those involved directly and indirectly in teaching, learning, and assessing academic writing, and in upholding academic integrity.

The present article therefore investigates the following research questions:

To what extent do university content lecturers, English language tutors, and students feel the proofreading of student writing is educative? Why/Why not?

## 2. Literature review

In this section, I review discussions of the educative value of proofreading by drawing on a number of different sources: empirical studies of proofreading, discussions of proofreading in the literature on writing centres, and author editing. I also look at university guidelines and policies on proofreading.

### 2.1. Educative university proofreading regulations

In defining permissible and impermissible forms of help, some UK university proofreading policies, such as [Oxford Brookes' \(2015\)](#), reference educative practices. Proofreaders are permitted to merely “*identify*” rather than “*correct*” issues in a writer's text like “poor grammar,” and to “highlight a sentence or paragraph that is overly complex, long, or where the intended meaning is not clear”. However, proofreaders “*must not*”:

Rewrite passages of text to clarify the meaning and/or develop the ideas and arguments

Change any words or figures, except to correct spelling [...]

Reduce the length of the work so that it falls within the specified word limit

So although the proofreader can *highlight* errors, they cannot correct them (spelling excepted); they can only draw attention to inelegant, lengthy, or unclear passages, rather than amend them. Under these regulations, then, the writer cannot have their text corrected with no effort (or learning) on their part; the onus is on the writer to improve their knowledge and then enhance their text.

### 2.2. Educative proofreading guidelines

Professional bodies such as the Chartered Institute for Editing and Proofreading (CIEP), the Society of English-language Professionals in the Netherlands (SENSE), and Editors Canada have issued guidelines to their members on how to proofread student work, and educative approaches are encouraged. In the Editors Canada guidelines for proofreading student texts, for instance, proofreaders are advised to only flag, not fix, errors. Under a subheading titled ‘Editing texts from students whose first language is not English,’ the guidelines explicitly refer to an educative philosophy when proofreading for ‘style and diction’:

“The cat roared by the fire” is probably an error in diction but could be exactly what the student intended. Rather than changing it to “The cat roamed by the fire,” the editor can query along the lines of “Please check ‘roared’ in your dictionary.” [...] The editor should...encourage the student to view the experience as an opportunity to learn. ([Editors Canada, 2018](#), p. 4)

As with the Oxford Brookes guidelines, the emphasis is on ensuring the writer plays a maximal part in the revising process, retaining ownership of their text, and enhancing their knowledge.

### 2.3. Educative student proofreading

Some studies of the proofreading of student writing have described its educative potential. [Buell and Park \(2008\)](#) describes how the first author, an American doctoral student, proofread the PhD thesis of her L2 co-author. Although she changed minor grammatical errors, Buell used a suggestion/commentary style of intervention for more substantial issues. That is, Buell suggested a correction or rewrite and provided an accompanying explanation rather than directly correcting Park's text. There followed ‘interactive conversations’ between writer and proofreader, Park then reflecting on and learning from these conversations and interventions:

... [Buell] usually asked me what I meant by this or that sentence, and we would also often discuss broader aspects of my writing. While involved in these interactive conversations over the text, I often found myself thinking more about the clarity of the writing itself and not just about small errors in language or usage. (p. 210)

Conrad (2020) provides further evidence that proofreading can be educative. Collecting data at a Canadian university via questionnaires and interviews, a large majority of both L1 and L2 students reported that they found the proofreading educative (85.3% of L1 and 83.7% of L2 students), L2 students reporting learning ‘new vocabulary’, ‘how to organize sentences and paragraphs’, and grammar and punctuation rules (p. 9).

Three potentially educative proofreading intervention techniques are described in Harwood et al. (2012). The first technique is to provide writers with comments (as opposed to merely correcting the text) requiring the writer to reflect upon and address these comments themselves. One of the proofreaders, Emma, explained how some of her comments were designed to help writers enhance not just their text, but their writing in the long term by making ‘three points that are ongoing issues that they might be able to solve if they sat down with a grammar book ....’ (p. 578). Emma hopes the writer’s text will ‘hopefully not need proofreading for that particular issue next time’ (p. 578). A second strategy Harwood et al.’s (2012) proofreaders make use of is indirect correction: rather than simply amending the text, the proofreader signals there is a problem (e.g., via underlining, a question mark, or a correction symbol) and leaves the writer to resolve it. A final educative strategy is the post-proofreading meeting, giving writers the opportunity to ask proofreaders questions or clear up uncertainties about the comments/corrections provided.

In sum, then, it would seem proofreading can be educative, but proofreaders have to make skilful use of techniques to maximize its educative potential, while students have to accept that proofreading can occupy a formative role and be willing to invest the time and effort required.

#### 2.4. *Educative author editing*

Author editors work with writers seeking to publish in English (as opposed to working on pre-assessed student texts, the context in focus in this article). However, many freelance proofreaders work with students’ texts as well as working with authors seeking publication (e.g., Harwood et al., 2009), and discussions of the role of the author editor also speak of an educative function.

For instance, Shaw & Voss (2017) describe how some of their comments are ‘intended to educate the author about language, the genre of the research article, or other issues related to academic literacy’ (p. 75), and they include hyperlinks to online searches or to published texts for authors to consult for alternative phrasings in ‘more appropriate language’ (p. 80). Shaw and Voss also invite authors to self-edit, ‘creating the opportunity for them to identify their own weaknesses and act on them.’ (p. 80).

Expounding on ‘didactic editing,’ Burrough-Boenisch (2013) claims that comments and explanations which point out errors or gloss interventions will likely be more educative for the writer than those which do not:

... the author must know what [an amendment] means, or why it has been made, or both. The editor can... tactfully [teach] the author how to become a better writer of English. [...] [For example:] if an editor has end-focused a sentence (moved the new information it contains from beginning to end), she could add a comment explaining that this re-ordering has strengthened the impact of the sentence and improved the flow of the argument. ... this can...equip the author with a new writing strategy .... (pp. 208–9)

A didactic editing approach therefore ‘blurs the boundary between editing and the teaching of English-language proficiency and academic writing’ (p. 209). Didactic editing can feature ‘personalized mini-lessons’ for the writer, and the editor can use colour coding to alert writers to the persistence of a particular type of error (e.g., an overly formal style) (Burrough-Boenisch & Matarese, 2013).

#### 2.5. *Educative writing centre writer-tutor interactions*

Classic writing centre pedagogy (e.g., Brooks, 1991; Harris, 1995; North, 1984) disassociates the writing centre from a place where writers passively hand over their text to be ‘fixed’. In addition, for educative reasons, the writing centre literature emphasizes the importance of less direct forms of intervention than we may associate with proofreading. Rather than correcting the writer’s errors, tutors will often try to elicit the correction (e.g., Cogie, Strain, and Lorinskas, 1999). If the writer cannot self-correct, writing centre tutors may decide to correct one or two of the errors, then have the writer correct the remaining errors of the same type. Alternatively, the tutor may hold an impromptu mini-lesson, or direct the writer to online instructional resources (e.g., Liu & Harwood, 2022).

#### 2.6. *Proofreading as uneducative*

However, various arguments support the view that proofreading is uneducative. There are concerns that a proofread text is in effect a co-authored text, leaving the marker unable to fairly assess the student’s ability. This is why the University of Leeds bans proofreading:

... it is the policy of the University of Leeds that third-parties must NOT act as proof-readers of any academic work submitted for assessment [...] The integrity of University awards rests upon the principle that work submitted for

assessment represents the student's own effort and reflects their own abilities and understanding. (University of Leeds, 2015)

Other arguments that proofreading is uneducative relate to the potential failure of student writers to learn anything from proofreading, and to the reluctance of writers to view proofreading as educative. Indeed, some of Harwood et al.'s (2012) proofreaders spoke of student writers looking for a 'fix-it' service from the proofreader because of pressing submission deadlines. While some of Harwood et al.'s (2012) proofreaders claimed that acting as a teacher is a legitimate proofreader role, other participants explicitly denied this. Jerry, for instance, claimed proofreading was not educative because writers did not view proofreaders as teachers or expect to become better writers as a result of proofreading. As another proofreader, Stella, put it: 'people pay a proofreader to make mistakes go away, not necessarily to learn from them' (p. 577).

More evidence that students can take an uneducative perspective towards proofreading is found in Kim's (2014) study of a US writing centre. The writing centre had an orthodox no-proofreading policy, but some students expected a quick grammatical fix of their texts with little work required on their part:

For them, the Writing Center was not perceived as a place of learning; it was only about repairing what was wrong at the sentence level. (Kim, 2014, p. 94)

Similar 'fix-it' expectations on the part of students are reported in Turner (2018, p. 160).

In sum, then, we see there are arguments made for and against educative proofreading, and below I set out to explore the views of the three stakeholder groups in focus in this study: lecturers, English language tutors, and students.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1. Participants

I recruited three different stakeholder groups for this study: disciplinary lecturers, English language tutors, and students. The educative value of proofreading is a potentially important issue for all three groups. Some lecturers may welcome any educative gains in students' knowledge which are brought about by proofreading, but others may wish to assess a text authored by the writer alone, without the help of a third party, in order to assess the writer's true abilities. English language tutors operating out of academic literacy support units and writing centres may or may not feel that their educative role is in conflict with the role of proofreader. And students' views are solicited to learn more about whether they see a proofreader as an educator who can help them develop their writing abilities, or whether they see a proofreader as a fixer, as someone who can take the responsibility for getting a text up to submission standards out of their hands.

Respondents were recruited by circulating details of the project on the research volunteer list of a research-intensive UK university, as well as on the British Association of Lecturers of English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) mailing list. The dataset comprised 122 useable questionnaires (32 lecturers, 34 language tutors, and 56 students, of whom 24 were undergraduates and 32 postgraduates; and 29 were L1, 27 L2) and 87 interviews (24 lecturers, 25 language tutors, 38 students). I decided to recruit both L1 and L2 as well as both undergraduate and postgraduate writers because of research such as Conrad's (2020) which highlights that it is not just postgraduate L2 writers who may decide to avail themselves of proofreading. Indeed, many of the L1 students I recruited in particular spoke of how they proofread on an informal basis and free of charge for friends, romantic partners, or coursemates on the same degree programme, in line with earlier reports in the literature (e.g., Conrad, 2020; Turner, 2011, 2018). And sometimes students were encouraged to peer proofread by lecturers. Some English language tutors also proofread on a freelance basis to supplement their income.

Data was collected from all three stakeholder groups via a questionnaire and an interview. I adopted a social constructivist approach (see Creswell, 2007), in that I sought to draw out the participants' views on educative proofreading by means of induction, participants drawing upon their own experiences as they shared their thoughts.

#### 3.2. Questionnaire

I constructed the questionnaire by drawing upon four sources: Harwood (2018, 2019) and Kruger and Bevan-Dye (2010, 2013). Harwood and Kruger and Bevan-Dye present differing proofreading intervention taxonomies and by drawing upon both taxonomies, I ensured I asked respondents about minor and major intervention types, as well as more and less direct styles of help. For instance, Harwood (2018) included interventions classed as *Consultation/Teaching Points* (where proofreaders 'address questions, comments, or suggestions to the writer of the text,' p. 518). Clearly, *Consultation/Teaching Points* could be educative, motivated by the pedagogic purposes Burrough-Boenisch (2013) speaks of, as discussed earlier; whereas wholesale, direct rewriting by the proofreader may be viewed in far less educative terms. I felt a lack of examples of each intervention type would lead to validity concerns, since different respondents could have interpreted the intervention categories differently. For this reason, I added example interventions from Harwood's (2018, 2019) authentic proofreaders' interventions on a poorly written L2 master's student essay.

The questionnaire presented participants with 20 examples of different types of interventions. The interventions represented a range of light-touch (e.g., correction of an apostrophe) to heavier-touch interventions (e.g., making suggestions to enhance the writer's content and argumentation). Previous research has demonstrated that a wide range of interventions can

be carried out under the name of proofreading; and the second output from this research project, Harwood (under review), explores respondents' views on how far it is ethical for proofreaders to intervene in a student text. For our present purposes, the questionnaire featured potentially more and less educative styles of intervention. For instance, some interventions involved the proofreader directly correcting the error with no requirement on the writer's part to do anything further (see Figure 1 for several examples), while other interventions, as in Figure 2 below, show the proofreader taking a more indirect approach. Figure 2 reproduces the questionnaire item for this intervention in full. The Commentary part of the question explains the difference to the respondent between the original writer's text on the left and the proofread version on the right. A Likert-scale format then asks respondents to judge the ethical acceptability of the proofreader's intervention (in this case, the use of the 'Gr' correction symbol). Finally, an open question invites respondents to elaborate on their Likert-scale answer.

Writer's original sentence	Proofread version
However, teachers and students need time to familiar with these various and complex error codes.	However, teachers and students need time to <del>familiar</del> <b>familiarise themselves</b> with these various and complex error codes.
...error correction and feedback has become a more and more controversial issue.	...error correction and feedback has become <del>a more and more</del> <b>an increasingly</b> controversial issue.
...more students should be enrolled in the experiment.	...more students should be enrolled in the experiment <b>in order to test the hypothesis more effectively.</b>

Figure 1. Direct proofreader interventions.

Writer's original sentence	Proofread version
However, teachers and students need time to familiar with these various and complex error codes.	<p><i>However, teachers and students need time to <u>familiar</u><sup>1</sup> with these various and complex error codes.</i></p> <p><b>Proofreader's comments:</b>  <sup>1</sup>Gr [= Grammar]</p>

*Commentary:*

In this example, the proofreader uses the symbol 'Gr' [= Grammar] to signal the error to the writer. Rather than supplying the correction herself, the proofreader expects the writer to correct the text with the help of the symbol.

*Your views:*

*The proofreader's intervention is ethically acceptable in my opinion.*

- a. agree strongly
- b. agree
- c. unsure/it depends
- d. disagree
- e. disagree strongly

Please explain your answer briefly.

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Figure 2. An indirect proofreader intervention.

A longer version of the questionnaire was piloted with a lecturer and after a debriefing session, the questionnaire was shortened and problematic items were rewritten or removed. Full details of the instruments and how they were constructed can be found in Harwood (under review). I have included in Appendix A those interventions which interviewees refer to in my findings below.

### 3.3. Interview

A semi-structured face-to-face or Skype follow-up interview of about 50 minutes with willing respondents enabled interviewees to explain their views on proofreading in more detail. Interviewees were given their completed questionnaires at the start of the interview and invited to elaborate on the reasons they had judged each intervention to be ethically (un) acceptable. So, for instance, interviewees were able to explain their feelings towards the indirect style of correction seen in [Figure 2](#), and as we shall see, many respondents spoke of this intervention in educative terms. In the second part of the interview, respondents commented on a series of arguments for and against proofreading on prompt cards. Particularly relevant for the present article is prompt card 4, which presents interviewees with an edited quote from McNally and Kooyman (2017, p. A-149) and attaches an educative value to proofreading:

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statement?

“Second language speakers of English need writing support and proofreaders can provide this support. Proofreaders can help make writers aware of gaps and weaknesses in their grammar and syntax. Proofreading can therefore be educative, offering student writers individualised learning opportunities.”

### 3.4. Data analysis and coding

The overarching aim of the research project was to explore lecturer, English language tutor, and student views of the ethicality of different types of proofreading interventions, and the three parties' beliefs about the ethical acceptability of the 20 types of proofreader intervention in the questionnaire were categorized into overarching intervention types for statistical analysis, reported in full in [Harwood \(under review\)](#). As I designed the questionnaire, ensuring a range of different types of interventions featured in my instrument, I saw the value of including potentially educative interventions, not least because the literature shows us that some proofreaders and author editors see their role as partly educative (cf. [Burrough-Boenisch's \(2013\)](#) discussion of 'didactic' editing and some of [Harwood et al.'s \(2012\)](#) proofreaders acknowledging the role of proofreader as 'teacher'). Hence, the educative issue was built into both instruments, in that i) interventions which could be seen as potentially educative featured in the questionnaire, and ii) a prompt card with a quote on educative proofreading featured in the interview. Furthermore, the educative issue was fairly prominent in the dataset, as revealed by the frequency with which the EDUCATIVE code occurred, confirming the salience of this issue to research-led discussions of proofreading and motivating this article.

However, my focus in this article is a qualitative analysis of respondents' views on whether and to what extent proofreading is educative, and so I focus on the qualitative analytical process in what follows.

I constructed a draft interview codebook in NVivo on the basis of nine interviews, three from each stakeholder group, using techniques from [Coffey and Atkinson \(1996\)](#) and [Saldaña \(2009\)](#). After this draft codebook had been refined twice as I tested it out on additional interviews, an intra-rater reliability test was conducted, using six new interviews, two from each stakeholder group, resulting in an agreement rate of 93.16%. The final version of the codebook included an EDUCATIVE code, defined as follows:

Where the interviewee talks about an educative style of proofreading (either with approval or disapproval).

This article duly draws on EDUCATIVE data.

## 4. Results

Participants took various stances on whether and to what extent proofreading could (or should) be educative. I present participants' views according to themes, including participants' profile information where appropriate.

### 4.1. Proofreading is educative

#### 4.1.1. Proofreading encourages reflection and learning

Rosie<sup>3</sup>, a student, spoke about the educative rewards engaged students could reap from studying proofreaders' amendments. Proofreaders' interventions could enable writers to build up a 'bank' or 'list' of useful words and phrases for future writing. Rosie elaborated upon her thinking when discussing intervention A11 ('more and more' → 'increasingly'):

It's something you can learn from. ... it shows you really clearly what you can substitute here [for 'more and more']. And they can just take that forward for future essays [...] [Y]ou would have to go over your errors, and perhaps just do some extra practice. So this way, [proofreading] can function very much like language tuition .... (Rosie, student, L1, PG)

Indeed, Rosie claims that proofreading may ultimately have such an educative effect that it fosters writer independence:

<sup>3</sup> All respondents' names are pseudonyms.

I think if the proofreading can be done in a way that encourages reflection and they're actually looking at their errors and learning from them ..., they won't necessarily need [proofreading] every time.

For his part, Scott believes that if lecturers encourage students to peer proofread, as he does, the reflection it entails will likely have an educative effect:

I think collaboration helps all of us. It helps the reader as well as the writer, cos the reader is given an opportunity to reflect on someone else's writing and critically engage with it .... And when [the peer proofreader] go[es] back to rereading their own work...before submission, they might be more skilled at doing that in their own work. (Scott, lecturer)

In the three sections which follow, respondents speak about the various aspects of academic English in general and academic writing in particular which could be enhanced by proofreading.

#### 4.1.2. *Proofreading helps make writers aware of recurring errors*

Proofreading is said to be potentially educative because proofreaders will enable writers to identify and reflect upon their most frequent errors. Indeed, as an L2 writer, Anita spoke about how having her errors pointed out helped her improve her English. Below she emphasizes the educative value of the proofreader picking up even minor errors, as in A1 (moving of an apostrophe):

... from these corrections, a student would end up learning from their mistakes. ... if I do such errors, I'd like to be corrected and if I'm not corrected, I keep doing the same mistakes over and over. (Anita, student, L2, UG)

In addition, proofreaders can educate writers about infelicities of style:

I've been marking first year essay exams and I see a lot of people using contractions. So saying 'we can't' or 'isn't', instead of 'cannot', 'is not'. ... had they gotten those essays proofread before submitting them, maybe someone could have pointed that out, and they could have corrected it. And from [then] on, they know...it's best not to use contractions. (Jacinta, student, L2, PG)

#### 4.1.3. *Proofreaders can teach writers language, language rules, and language learning strategies*

Speaking about A9 ('to familiar' → 'familiarise themselves'), Freddie criticised its lack of educative focus, arguing that both language tutors and proofreaders had a pedagogic role:

[The student] think[s] 'familiar' is a verb. Because they've got 'to' .... I would like to sit with the student and say, 'Why have you chosen 'to'? Is it because you think it's a verb? [...] Do you know what 'familiar' is? Look at a good dictionary. Can you see 'familiar' is an adjective? What's the verb form of 'familiar'? [...] Now that's going to take ages, isn't it? But the end result, they've learned something, hopefully. [...] Because whether it's a proofreader or an EAP practitioner, we should be encouraging or developing learner autonomy and encouraging students to use tools like dictionaries and translation software effectively. That's the job of someone like a proofreader or someone like me [as a writing tutor], to help students become more proficient in their writing, but more independent as well. (Freddie, language tutor)

As Giles (lecturer), puts it, when the proofreader teaches a writer language rules, s/he is 'teaching the writer to fish so they can fish for the rest of their lives'. Taking an educative approach to proofreading enables writers to benefit in the long term.

#### 4.1.4. *Proofreaders can teach students academic writing conventions*

Harry argued that proofreading can educate writers beyond the areas of grammar and syntax, viewing A5 ('How do you know?') and A10 ('Check reference list') as appropriate and educative because they alert writers to academic writing conventions (i.e., supporting claims with evidence and formatting a reference list consistently). Harry also spoke with approval of A13 ('You might want to add more detail about these limitations. For example, why is a random sample important and why should more students be enrolled in this experiment?'). This was a content intervention most respondents felt went too far ethically, but Harry felt it would teach the writer the importance of expanding on an unconvincing claim:

A13 ..., the proofreader just needs more details out of the student, since that could lead to a stronger claim and make the writing stand out academically. I think in high school you can get away with just explaining some things without really going into examples or citations. But in academic writing, you do have to provide that [...] So I think it's really helpful when the proofreader just says, 'Add more detail'. [...] it's going to teach them what to do. ... if this is an essay in January, then for the second semester it will really help them improve their writing .... (Harry, student, L2, PG)

#### 4.1.5. *Proofreaders can offer individualised learning opportunities, complementing other support provision*

Respondents claimed proofreaders could complement the educative instruction provided by disciplinary faculty and by in- or pre-sessional writing tutors:

... proofreading can help students to know where there are weaknesses in their grammar ..., to highlight particular types of errors and it can be individualised. [...] [Proofreaders] may be filling a gap where [students] are not getting this

sort of one-to-one individualised comment from their [lecturers]...about language related errors. (Janet, language tutor)

Proofreading can also provide an educative alternative to online resources like Grammarly. Comparing the two, Raj claimed that employing a proofreader made the process more 'interactive,' meaning he could ask questions/seek explanations leading to learning:

... when I got proofreading, I learned many things, actually. ... the nuance of the language or the style .... That's why I need...interactive proofreading-

Interviewer: Interaction with the proofreader?

Raj: That's right, because I can learn. When I use Grammarly, it just checks my grammar error, but I didn't get further information. 'Why is this? Why it is the correct one while this is the incorrect?' So by interactive I can [get] that information. (Raj, student, L2, PG)

#### 4.1.6. Proofreaders can utilize educative self-correction techniques

To close this pro-educative section, respondents spoke of three strategies proofreaders can use to enable writers to self-correct their texts and learn by doing so. Each strategy is itemised, described, and exemplified below.

##### i) Give students indirect correction

For some respondents, the educative potential of proofreading was enhanced when indirect corrective techniques like underlining errors or using correction symbols were used. It was claimed indirect techniques would more likely result in learning because of the work students needed to put into redrafting. Here is Jacqueline speaking with disapproval about the direct correction in A9 ('to familiar' → 'familiarise themselves'):

... it should have been highlighted [...] if you give [the correction] to [the writer], they're not thinking for themselves and probably use the same language next time. ... if we work hard for something, we're going to remember it. [...] by giving them the language, they're not going to learn by it. (Jacqueline, language tutor)

##### ii) Give students teaching input so they can self-correct

In her specific learning disability (SpLD) tutoring role, Tamasin's role is educative, in that she focuses on enhancing the writer's abilities rather than simply fixing their text. Tamasin explains how this process works, asserting that proofreaders should adopt a similarly educative approach:

... I'll read through [the writer's text] where I'll find an issue and I will teach to that issue. 'Right, you've got an issue with apostrophes, I'm now going to teach you how to do apostrophes' .... I know proofreaders who don't correct the work but they'll say what the error is and the student then has to correct it themselves. So they'll say something like 'word order' or 'wrong tense' .... And I think that's fine. (Tamasin, language tutor)

Because of Tamasin's emphasis on an educative approach, even very minor interventions like A1 (moving of an apostrophe) are seen as unethical and unhelpful, in that they teach the student writer nothing:

... the proofreader, they've made the decision, they've not said something like 'Look at apostrophes', which is something I would do. ... the student hasn't learned anything, the student will carry on making that mistake again.

Tamasin also said tutors and proofreaders should provide students with educative online links to resources which focus on the relevant language problems. For instance, commenting on A11 ('a more and more' → 'increasingly'), Tamasin identifies the writer's problem as a formality/register issue and explains how she would provide the writer with a link to the Academic Phrasebank (<https://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/>), 'so the student can see formal styles of writing.'

##### iii) Give an example correction, leaving student to self-correct remaining errors

Aileen feels supplying all necessary corrections is unhelpful, encouraging a passive 'Accept all changes' attitude on the part of the student. Commenting upon A14, where the proofreader changes the formatting of a bibliographical reference, Aileen says amending the whole reference list would be uneducative:

... it's acceptable to indicate changes need to be made, but not to do it for the student unless they're saying 'Here's a model of how you should do it. Now you do the rest yourself'. [...] [If the proofreader changes the whole reference list] there's no cognitive process there .... (Aileen, language tutor)

Indeed, Aileen felt proofreaders shouldn't be permitted to look at a complete text: they should only look at a portion, leaving the writer to self-edit the remainder, thereby reducing the potential for writer dependency on the proofreader.

I now turn to those who denied proofreading is (or should be) educative.

#### 4.2. Proofreading is not/should not be educative

##### 4.2.1. A proofreader is not a language tutor

Several respondents differentiated between what they saw as appropriate roles for a proofreader and for other academic literacy support providers like language tutors. Averil (lecturer), for instance, is very clear that proofreading should not be an educative role, claiming that although students should be provided with greater language/literacy support, this educative support should be provided by tutors embedded in subject departments, rather than by proofreaders. Guy was also sceptical of the educative value of proofreading, because writers tend to get their work proofread just before submission, too late in the process:

I would have thought that support should be much earlier. So although I accept that they will need that writing support, not from a proofreader. [...] at the point of proofreading, no, that's not the time. [...] Absolutely [too] late in the day! (Guy, lecturer)

Several language tutor participants also contrasted the roles of proofreader and language/writing centre tutor, seeing proofreading as less overtly educative. Aine and Audrey both had experience of freelance proofreading as well as tutoring:

A proofreader might make a change, but they won't necessarily explain every change that they do in detail, whereas the teacher would be able to sit down with a student, to see where is there an issue. (Aine, language tutor)

For her part, Audrey contrasts her pedagogic approach as tutor with her non-pedagogic approach when acting as paid proofreader:

When I do [writing centre tutoring], I [...] say to the student, 'Look, can you see these bits I've highlighted? Can you see what's wrong with them?' And very often, we use a [correction] code. ... so that they can do the work themselves with the idea of it being a learning experience for them. (Audrey, language tutor)

As a tutor, Audrey would only go through part of the writer's text in her writing tutor role, putting the onus on the writer to learn from what has been discussed and to self-correct the rest of the text themselves. But Audrey talks about her paid proofreader role very differently, denying the role is educative as she discusses intervention A14, in which the proofreader has formatted an entry in a reference list:

... this is exactly what a paid proofreader would do. ... you just make sure everything looks neat... But it's not teaching anything, so it's not pedagogical.

Some students also expressed scepticism that proofreading was educative. Andrew and Marcie felt that if writers wanted to learn how to improve their English and/or their writing, they should be enrolling on EAP courses, rather than receiving instruction from a proofreader.

In this section, then, it is apparent how some respondents described a sharp, clear division between the language tutor and proofreader roles, suggesting that tutors may be capable of educating the writer in a way proofreaders are not; and/or that this distinction between educative and non-educative roles was appropriate. Of course both tutor and proofreader may be capable of using the same intervention type effectively, and so it is not simply a question of determining whether an intervention is educative or non-educative *per se*; we must also consider which party is carrying out the intervention and their perceived legitimacy to do so, and at what stage of the writing process the intervention should take place. These issues are returned to later on, in the discussion.

##### 4.2.2. Proofreading may not be educative because of how it is delivered and how students respond to it

Julie claimed in her response to prompt card 4 that not all students are willing to invest the time and effort to reflect upon proofreaders' interventions:

4... I agree, but only for the good students! [laughs] Some weak students, they just [think] 'Oh, I just write whatever, and then the proofreader will sort everything out for me'. [...] 'Just need to do enough, and then I'll pay somebody to make it look better'. In that case, I don't think they learn anything, the proofreader just make the student lazy. (Julie, lecturer)

Like Julie, Marcus worries that some students would unreflectively accept the proofreader's suggestions, as in the heavy rewriting in A18 ('Do you mean...?'):

There would be a certain subgroup of students who would just take this [rewrite] verbatim, just incorporate it into the text and actually not learn anything from it .... (Marcus, lecturer)

In the same vein, a number of language tutors claim that students simply want a proofreader to correct their writing without obliging the writer to reflect and learn:

They would just be like, 'Thank you for correcting it. There's the money.' [laughs] ... they expect it just to be done for them...rather than thinking about, 'Oh, I make lots of mistakes with prepositions.' (Beth, language tutor)

Some students were of the same view:

Proofreading should be educative so that people can learn from their mistakes. But sometimes students just want their essay to be done with, so they just accept all the corrections and just hand it in and not look at it. (Tabitha, student, L2, PG)

Objections to educative proofreading were also raised because students may not understand how to fix the problems the proofreader has pointed out, as in A6:

... if I submit something to proofread, and they just tell me this is wrong, it's not quite helpful because probably I don't know how to write it correctly. (Sandra, student, L2, PG)

Finally, another issue which can minimize the educative potential of proofreading is when the style of intervention is unethical—where the proofreader assumes authorship of the text, rewriting it to ensure the writer achieves a passing mark:

... the problem comes when people use what purports to be proofreading as a way of...putting content in, or making significant changes to the way things are expressed. [...] [B]ecause that to me isn't about helping people to develop and learn, it's about saying, 'Well, let's get you through this, get you a mark. So write it like this'. (Hillary, lecturer)

## 5. Discussion

I begin this discussion section by summarizing pro- and anti-educative views of proofreading, before pinpointing what educative proofreading would look like, and how it may be implemented.

### 5.1. In defence of educative proofreading

Respondents highlighted a number of educative benefits associated with the proofreading of student writing. Provided the proofreading experience is suitably dialogic and pedagogic, proofreaders could potentially act as English language teachers (cf. Harwood et al., 2012), supplying students with selective and/or indirect correction, and access to educative resources to fill grammatical, lexical, and rhetorical gaps in writers' knowledge about English in general and academic discourse in particular, regardless of their profile (L1 vs. L2, undergraduate vs. postgraduate; see also Burrough-Boenisch, 2013; Conrad, 2020; Harwood et al., 2012; Shaw & Voss, 2017). In the words of Giles, the lecturer quoted in the title of this article, proofreaders in this educative role would be potentially 'teaching the writer to fish so they can fish for the rest of their lives,' rather than merely fixing a text with no long-term educative effects. The proofreader is striving to produce a better writer, rather than just a better text (cf. North, 1984).

### 5.2. Denying the educative role of proofreading

Regardless of the many potential benefits of educative proofreading described above, there was a lack of consensus that proofreading was, or should be, educative. In particular, some language tutors denied the proofreader the role of a language tutor, ascribing an educative role to the latter but not the former. Some respondents pointed out that indirect interventions which may have been intended by the proofreader to be educative (as in A6, 'Gr'), requiring the writer to make the correction themselves, may be pedagogically ineffective. This ineffectiveness could be because i) the intervention is too difficult for the writer to understand; or because ii) even if the writer understands the nature of the problem, s/he may still be unable to make the correction. All of this brings to mind the dangers of indirect and oblique messaging when proofreaders (or teachers) respond to writing, as pointed out in the literature on written corrective feedback (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2001). In addition, there was much talk about how some student writers wanted their texts to be fixed with no effort on their part, and of how proofreading could make students 'lazy' (see also Kim, 2014; Turner, 2018, for similar findings). In the style of proofreading envisaged, students would be permitted a passive role. But as the educative proofreading advocates make clear, there are forms of proofreading which would avoid this dynamic.

Another concern of those who denied proofreading an educative role was its impact on assessment; there was the fear that, in the words of McNally and Kooyman (2017, p. A-147),

If a text has been proofread before submission for assessment, the marker, unaware of the nature and degree of the proofreader's interventions, will award a grade that does not accurately reflect the student writer's real ability.

Recall that some students wished proofreaders to go further than most respondents were comfortable with ethically because they felt the proofreader's actions would be educative. Harry claimed that the proofreader's content interventions in A5 ('How do you know?') and A13 ('You might want to add more detail about these limitations. For example, why is a random sample important and why should more students be enrolled in this experiment?') would educate the writer about the importance of citing sources and fully elaborating arguments. This may be so; but it is easy to see how such interventions

would lead to an unfairly favourable assessment by the marker because the proofreader had helped enhance the writer's claims and supporting evidence, and indeed, some lecturers and students made this point. For instance, Fiona (lecturer) wanted to assess a piece of writing that the student alone had authored; she felt that assessing proofread work would be unfairly giving credit to the writer for a co-authored text. Fiona acknowledged that a style of proofreading more akin to tutoring could be educative, but argued it would only be ethical to allow proofreading of non-assessed work. So while Fiona was in favour of providing students with language support, for assessed work she wished to see proofreading proscribed. This data reminds us on the one hand of the delicate balance educative writing tutors and proofreaders must strike (cf. [Shaw & Voss, 2017](#)), and on the other of how there is unlikely to be wholesale consensus about how far proofreaders in general and educative proofreaders in particular should be permitted to go.

### 5.3. *Educative proofreading—or writing centre tutoring?*

Early in this article, I made clear that the precise meaning and parameters of proofreading are contested. Nevertheless, the educative, dialogic kind of interventions I have been describing will not be what many readers (or many students) would ordinarily think of as 'proofreading.' For many, proofreading means correcting every error for the writer, akin to the definition of proofreading by the Chartered Institute of Editing and Proofreading (CIEP, 2020) as: "a process of identifying typographical, linguistic, coding or positional errors and omissions ..., and marking corrections" (section 2.2.2). Although some respondents claimed that student learning was possible even in response to traditional forms of proofreading, others warned of the dangers of students passively accepting all the proofreader's changes and immediately submitting their work for assessment, with no reflection, revising, or learning occurring post-proofreading. It would therefore seem that less conventional versions of proofreading, which require the writer to assume an active role, are more likely to be educative.

Some readers may feel that the type of educative 'proofreading' being described is in fact a form of writing centre tutoring in all but name. After all, like classic writing centre pedagogy, educative proofreading directs students to resources and puts the onus on the student doing much of the work rather than the proofreader/tutor ([Brooks, 1991](#); [North, 1984](#)). However, it should be borne in mind that [Brooks \(1991\)](#) and [North \(1984\)](#) discourage work on language accuracy, emphasizing higher-order concerns (e.g., structure, logic, and argumentation) rather than lower-order concerns (e.g., grammar and syntax). The emphasis is on enhancing the writer's composing process and rhetorical knowledge rather than on ensuring an error-free text. The educative type of proofreading being described in this article therefore resembles writing centre tutoring in many ways, but unlike orthodox writing centre tutoring it doesn't eschew or downgrade work on grammar, syntax, and accuracy. Indeed, a number of writing centre tutors (e.g., [Bonazza, 2016](#); [Clark & Healy, 2008](#); [Moussu & David, 2015](#); [Nan, 2012](#); [Voigt & Girsensohn, 2015](#)) have argued in recent years that classic writing centre tutoring pedagogy, having originated from working with L1 writers, requires adaptation when working with L2 writers, and their greater emphasis on accuracy looks similar to the approach I am describing here, although of course educative proofreading could be used when working with both L1 and L2 writers.

Taking a social constructivist approach, this article sought to explore stakeholders' views on educative proofreading and then to consider the concomitant policy implications. Assuming university policymakers wish to align their institution's proofreading practices with an educative model, I now turn to issues around introducing and embedding such a model.

### 5.4. *Introducing and embedding educative proofreading into the university*

It would be naive to assert that implementing an educative proofreading policy recommendation would be unproblematic. My findings show that not all respondents are in favour of permitting proofreading of work to be assessed—whether the proofreading takes an educative approach or not. And so a move to a policy permitting educative proofreading for all assessed work would likely meet resistance. Some lecturers balk at the notion that *any* form of proofreading is acceptable; in contrast, other lecturers encourage students to have their work proofread ([Harwood, under review](#); [Kim & LaBianca, 2018](#); [McNally & Kooyman, 2017](#)). But we should also acknowledge that students' views differ: on the one hand, students like Rosie spoke enthusiastically about the potential for proofreading to educate the writer; in contrast, other students denied proofreading was educative, and/or claimed that a substantial proportion of their peers have little interest in an educative approach. The latter claims are disheartening, but tally with some students' views reported in [Kim \(2014\)](#) and [Turner \(2018\)](#). In order for students' proofreading experiences to be educative, they need to be prepared to do substantial amounts of follow-up work well in advance of their assessment deadline, consulting resources and making extensive revisions. It is unfortunately all too easy to envisage that some students will refuse to comply, wishing instead for last-minute fixing.

One way to try to ensure an educative style of proofreading prevails in the university is to bring proofreading services in-house, enabling appropriate policing and standardization of practices. By means of a detailed set of educatively-focused proofreading regulations which could draw inspiration from policies drafted by other universities and by professional bodies (see Sections 2.1 and 2.2), this would help ensure that all proofreaders intervened to roughly the same degree, taking the same educative approach, and would help ensure that one student would not gain an unfair advantage over another whose proofreader intervened to a lesser degree. Yet writing centres are not always successful in their attempts to standardize practices (e.g., [Eckstein, 2013](#); [Kim, 2014](#); [Liu & Harwood, 2022](#); [Thonus, 2001](#)). For instance, [Liu and Harwood \(2022\)](#) describe how some tutors violated the orthodox no-proofreading policy of the UK writing centre they researched, proofreading line by line. So if a university wished to introduce in-house educative proofreading policies, an extensive pre- and in-

service training programme would need to be implemented. Liu and Harwood (2022) describe the form such a training/standardization programme could take, with both new and experienced tutor-proofreaders engaging in repeating cycles of peer observation and evaluation of videotaped tutoring sessions.

Then there is the question of the differentiation between the roles of proofreader and writing centre tutor. As we saw earlier, some participants see the language tutor and the proofreader as occupying distinct roles. If proofreading were to be brought in-house, as proposed above, the roles of writing centre tutor and proofreader could be separated or merged; but regardless, the tutoring and proofreading interventions could both be educatively focused. So, for instance, during the earlier stages of the writing process, students could dialogue with writing centre tutors about their lecturers' essay rubric and the arguments they wished to make, tutors providing educative feedback about students' proposed essay structure and the relevance of this structure to the rubric's specifications. Then during the later stages of the writing process, the proofreader could take a more granular approach to the writer's text, highlighting problematic linguistic or rhetorical areas, and providing instructional resources (grammar exercises, links to websites, etc.) which the writer could consult to address the issues identified. Alternatively, the roles of tutor and proofreader could be merged, but with the same overarching educative remit, the tutor-proofreader providing educative input both earlier and later in the writing process, and at both macro and micro levels.

So far, I have sketched out in broad terms how educative proofreading would work, but policymakers would need to provide very specific guidelines to minimize potential ambiguities and misunderstandings: should proofreaders, for instance, limit themselves to discussing a portion of the writer's text only? Should the educative proofreader limit themselves to indirect correction? Should content-related aspects of the writing be strictly off-limits? Or should content interventions be permitted as long as problems are only flagged rather than resolved? I mentioned the issue of differentiating between the roles of proofreader and writing centre tutor above; but another problem for policymakers involving differentiation concerns the status of the student writer: should proofreaders be permitted to support students to a greater or lesser extent at different stages of their academic trajectories, or depending on the L1/L2 status of the writer? Should proofreaders be permitted to take a more heavily educative approach when working with undergraduate writers compared to doctoral students, or when working with L2 than L1 writers? These policy proposals may sound seductive; but Burrough-Boenisch (2013), Burrough-Boenisch and Matarese (2013), Shaw & Voss (2017), and other author editors make it clear that there is much to learn about the English language in general and academic writing in particular for all writers, even for doctoral students, and so a similarly educative emphasis whatever the undergraduate/postgraduate, L1/L2 status of the writer may be fitting. In any event, policymakers would not only be required to confront a number of knotty questions of this nature; they would also need to disseminate their policy effectively, ensuring that all stakeholders were clear as to what form educative proofreading would take, as well as somehow achieving an acceptable degree of consensus, particularly on the part of disciplinary faculty, that such an approach was ethically acceptable and pedagogically desirable.

In short, my research highlights how a discussion of the educative value of proofreading raises profound questions relating to ethics, academic integrity, teaching and learning, and assessment—profound questions all three stakeholder groups which feature in this article will wish to have their say on, in order to inform and enhance university policies.

## 6. Conclusion

In closing, then, there is the need for institutions who are reforming their proofreading and support services to research and document the process of implementation and dissemination in a robust manner. We need to know how policies are formulated, how particularly complex or sensitive issues are addressed, and with what success. For instance, how can policymakers reconcile the possible uplift in the quality of text which may result from educative proofreading, on the one hand, and the wish to assess students' abilities fairly, on the other? Some lecturers would no doubt claim this is a non-issue, that university is about education above all else, and that if the proofreader teaches the writer to produce better text, they will be happy to mark a superior product; but others may rather feel that writing should be single-authored, without any educative support. We also need to know how resistance to these policies is overcome (or accommodated), particularly resistance on the part of disciplinary faculty, and how all stakeholder groups respond to proofreading reforms. Moreover, in order to better understand the effectiveness of educative proofreading, longitudinal studies of writers' linguistic and rhetorical advances as a result of proofreading are needed. Then there are studies of the proofreaders themselves: to what extent do proofreaders or writing centre tutors who are required to change to an educative style of intervention accept or resist such a change? To what extent do these tutors/proofreaders come to believe in the pedagogical and ethical effectiveness of an educative approach? These and other studies will provide a rich, informative picture of whether and to what extent educative proofreading really can teach student writers 'to fish for the rest of their lives.'

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## Appendix A. Selected proofreader interventions from questionnaire

A1.

Writer's original sentence

... error correction has important and significant effects on second language student's writing.

Proofread version

... error correction has important and significant effects on second language **student's students'** writing.

A5.

Writer's original text

As a result, students in experimental group developed their 'grammatical and orthographic' abilities much more than students in control group.

Proofread version

As a result, students in experimental group developed their 'grammatical and orthographic' abilities much more than students in control group.<sup>1</sup>

**Proofreader's Comment:**<sup>1</sup> *how do you know?*

A6.

Writer's original sentence

However, teachers and students need time to familiar with these various and complex error codes.

Proofread version

However, teachers and students need time to **familiar**<sup>1</sup> with these various and complex error codes.

**Proofreader's comment:**<sup>1</sup> Gr [= Grammar]

A9.

Writer's original sentence

However, teachers and students need time to familiar with these various and complex error codes.

Proofread version

However, teachers and students need time to ~~familiar~~ **familiarise themselves** with these various and complex error codes.

A10.

Writer's original text

[Inconsistently formatted reference list, including problems with 'et al.']

Proofread version

Check reference list. Where there is more than one author, all authors' last names and initials should be included. Double check if papers with multiple authors have been cited as 'et al.' within the text.

A11.

Writer's original sentence

During the recent decades, the effort of error correction and feedback has become a more and more controversial issue.

Proofread version

During the recent decades, the effort of error correction and feedback has become ~~a more and more~~ **an increasingly** controversial issue.

A13.

Writer's original sentence

There are some limitation in this experiment: firstly, subjects may not been chosen that random; secondly, more students should be enrolled in the experiment.

Proofread version

**Proofreader's Comment:**

You might want to add more detail about these limitations. For example, why is a random sample important and why should more students have been enrolled in this experiment?

A14.

Writer's original sentence

[Writer's reference list]  
Ferris D.R & Hedgcock J.S. (2005). 'Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice' (2nd edition). *Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.*

Proofread version

Ferris D.R & Hedgcock J.S. (2005). '**Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice**' (2nd edition). **Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum.**

A18.

Writer's original sentence

A large number of short articles had been read by students in the control group and the teacher of the control group gave comprehensive corrections on students' article and demanded for 'incorporating' by same aspects.

Proofread version

A large number of short articles had been read by students in the control group and the teacher of the control group gave comprehensive corrections on students' article and demanded **for 'incorporating' by same aspects.**<sup>1</sup>

**Proofreader's Comment:**

<sup>1</sup> **Do you mean 'demanded the students incorporated such amendments in the same respects in further/other work'?**

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