

Richard Nickalls

EAP Tutor & EISU Website/iVLE Coordinator

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About

I have worked at the University of Birmingham English for International Students Unit (EISU) since January 2008 where I am currently Website/iVLE coordinator in addition to my teaching responsibilities on a range of Preessional and Foundation programmes.

Qualifications

- MA in Applied Linguistics (University of Birmingham)
- BSc (Hons) in Business Administration (University of Cardiff)
- IOL Diploma in Modern Languages (University of York)
- PGCE (University of York)
- RSA CELTA

Biography

I have taught in Schools and Universities for 15 years in England, France, Switzerland and Germany. In Germany (2003-2007) I taught at the Leibniz University while also working as an IELTS examiner and setting up a small enterprise which trained private companies throughout the Hanover region.

Teaching

I usually teach on the following programmes:

- EAP1 Preessional
- Foundation English
- Open access classes and 1-2-1 tutorials for current University students

I am also a tutor on the University of Birmingham's EDACS distance learning programme.

Other activities

Research Interests

My research interests include learner corpora, the effects of L1 upon Second Language Acquisition, Cognitive Linguistics, e-Learning and the teaching of grammar. I began my PhD (part-time) in 2009.

Thesis title: How definite are we about the definite article?

Supervisors: Dr Jeannette Littlemore and Dr Nicholas Groom

The difficulty with which many international students use *a/the/Ø* articles is an interesting research area for both linguistic and pedagogical reasons. My research shows that learners of English, when writing academic English, are confronted with a choice of *a/the/Ø* articles in around 1 in every 5 words. This high frequency of use shows that improved pedagogy is important, but also makes them an ideal focus for any researcher interested in learner errors, since relatively small corpora can yield very rich insights.

With the assumption that first language transfer effects are one variable, even if only one among other more significant factors which impact upon learners' 'target-like use' of the article system, my thesis first investigates different L1 learners' use of the English article system in academic writing using error-tagged learner corpora. After comparing their patterns of use with L1 English teachers' writing, I speculate about how and why different L1 learners underuse and overuse English the definite articles using a testing approach to evaluate several possibilities.

Publications

- Academic Research Project Handbook - B1 – (2012), EISU, UoB
- Academic Research Project Handbook - B2 – (2012), EISU, UoB
- Nickalls, R. (2011) 'How definite are we about articles in English? A study of L2 learners' English article interlanguage during a university preessional English course'. *proceedings from the 2011 Corpus Linguistics Conference*, #92 available from the University of Birmingham [online] Centre for Corpus Research Website.
- Nickalls, R. (2013) *Accurate Articles* [online]. Available from: www.accurate-articles.com (<http://www.accurate-articles.com/>)

