‘How can I help?’ What impact does our language have on student perception, understanding and the development of academic skills?

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Why focus on language?

- Background in libraries – helping, supporting and finding information
- Learning development – what’s different? What’s the same?
- Critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010)
- The University context
- Our role
- Our language
- Authority
- What does this mean for us?
Do the right things, in the right way, with the right people, for the right reasons.
What is our role?

University of Northampton vision:
‘Super-supportive’: on your side and inclusive - encouraging and caring

ChANGe Framework of Graduate Attributes:
Self-direction, problem-solving

What does ‘super-supportive’ look like when developing independent learners?
The role of language(s)

Learning development / writing centre approach:

● Modes of language - direct instruction; motivational scaffolding, cognitive scaffolding (Thompson, 2009)
● Teaching through questions (Limberg et al., 2016)
● Use of pronouns (Pantelides and Bartesaghi, 2012)
● Importance of body language (Thompson, 2009; Beattie, 2013; McNeill, 2005)
You, me and authority

How do we position ourselves in relation to:

● The institution
● The faculties
● Other ‘third space’ colleagues (Whitchurch, 2012)
● The student?
Consultancy, collaboration and control?

What is the students’ understanding of our role and how does that affect their perceptions and expectations?

How do we know?
‘How can I help?’

Refocus on the student - what is their role in the interaction?

What would you like help with today?

Is there anything you need?

What are you working on?

What would you like to focus on?
Summary

- Think about the impact of your choice of words
  - Emotional impact
  - Pedagogical impact
  - What messages do they send about our role in their learning?

- Research: how can we find out more about the impact (or not) of our language?
References


