"When it comes to giving feedback some staff stop at nothing!"

Effective Written Feedback?

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Effective Feedback?

I am returning this otherwise good typing paper to you because someone has printed gibberish all over it and put your name at the top.

English Professor (Name Unknown), Ohio University
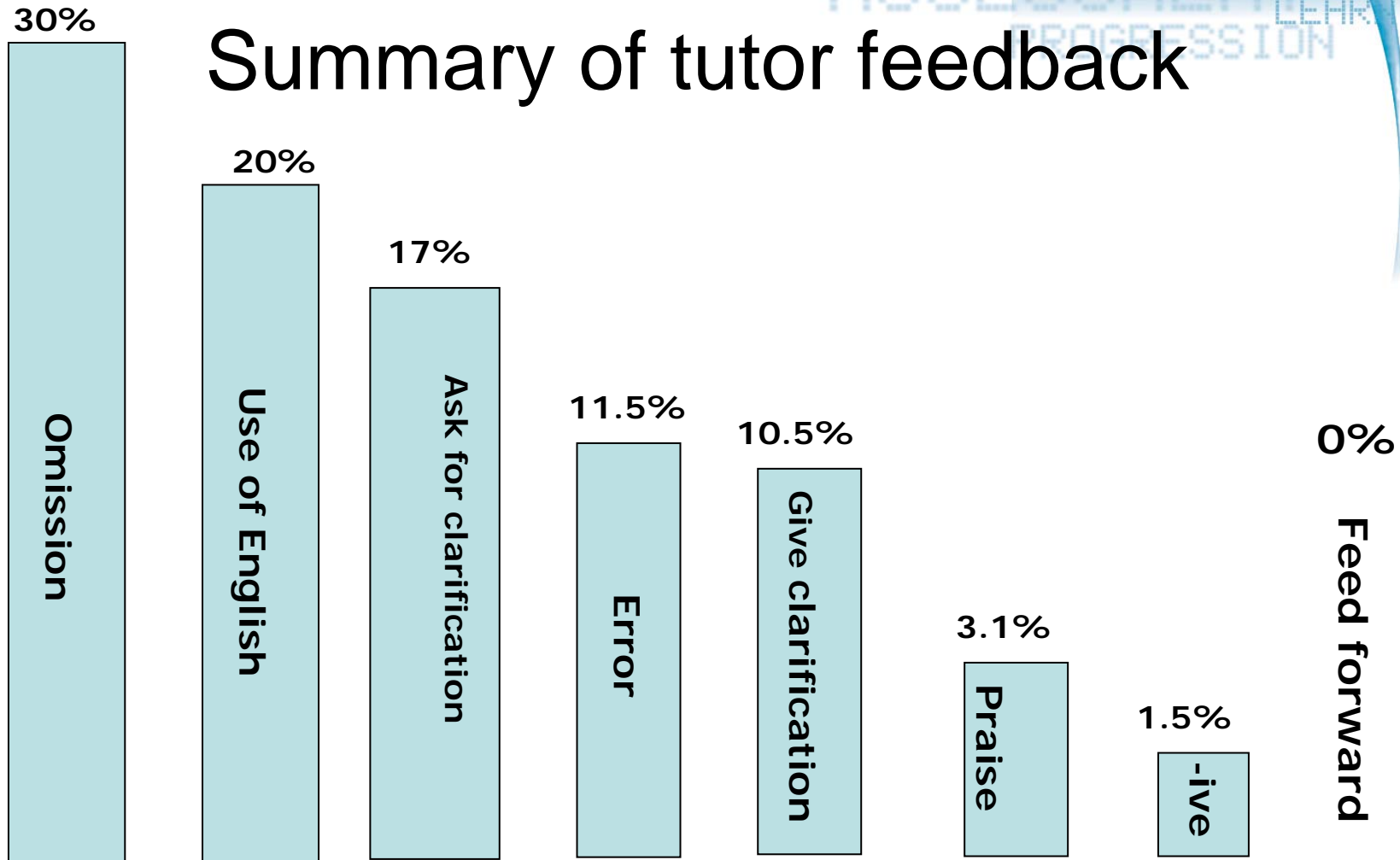
What feedback are *we* giving?

Analysis of feedback type

- **112 assignments at OU, 35 at SHU**
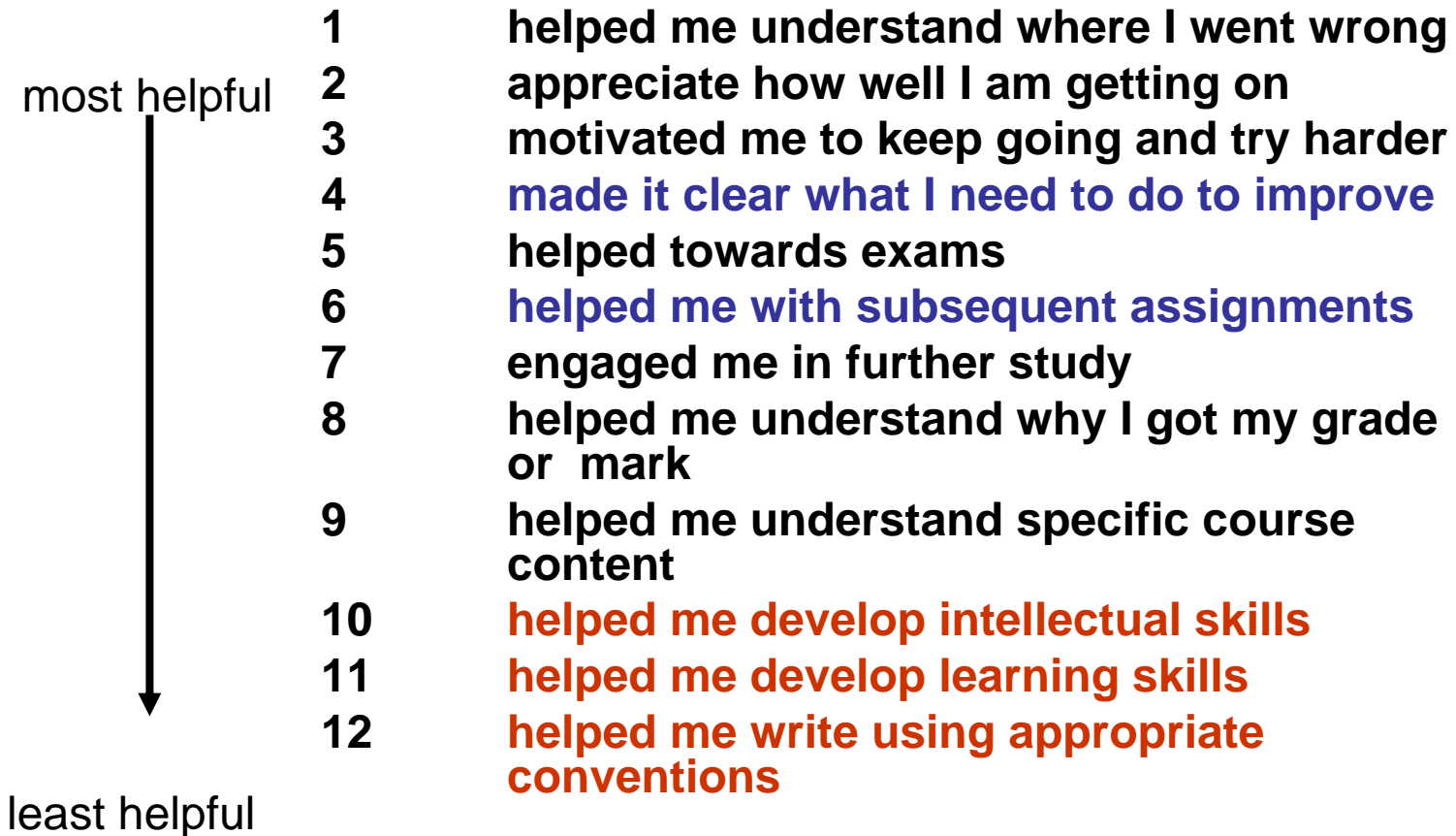
Tutor comments grouped by type:

- **Feedback on science content**

- **Feedback that feeds forward (skills + reference to future assessment tasks)**

- **Further learning encouraged**

- **Feedback that motivates**

- **Feedback that de-motivates**

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Summary of tutor feedback

30%
Omission

20%
Use of English

17%
Ask for clarification

11.5%
Error

10.5%
Give clarification

3.1%
Praise

1.5%
-ive

0%
Feed forward

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- Maths   2.1%
- Dialogue   1.7%
- Irrelevance   1.2%
- Graphs/diagrams   1.0%
- Reference to resources   0.7%
- Rhetorical   0.5%
- Communication   0.5%
- Summary   0.3%
- Judgemental   0.3%

In which ways did feedback offer the most help?

most helpful

least helpful

1   **helped me understand where I went wrong**

2   **appreciate how well I am getting on**

3   **motivated me to keep going and try harder**

4   **made it clear what I need to do to improve**

5   **helped towards exams**

6   **helped me with subsequent assignments**

7   **engaged me in further study**

8   **helped me understand why I got my grade or mark**

9   **helped me understand specific course content**

10   **helped me develop intellectual skills**

11   **helped me develop learning skills**

12   **helped me write using appropriate conventions**

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Analysis of feedback level

Comments also coded by depth of explanation

- **Issue acknowledged**

  (e.g. 'wrong number significant figures')

  (e.g. omissions signalled by ^)

- **Correct response provided**

  (e.g. '2 significant figures, not 3')

  (e.g. 'you should have discussed x & y')

- **Weakness/correction explained**

  (e.g. '2 significant figures, not 3 because…')

  (e.g. 'you should have discussed x & y because…')

marks v quality of comment

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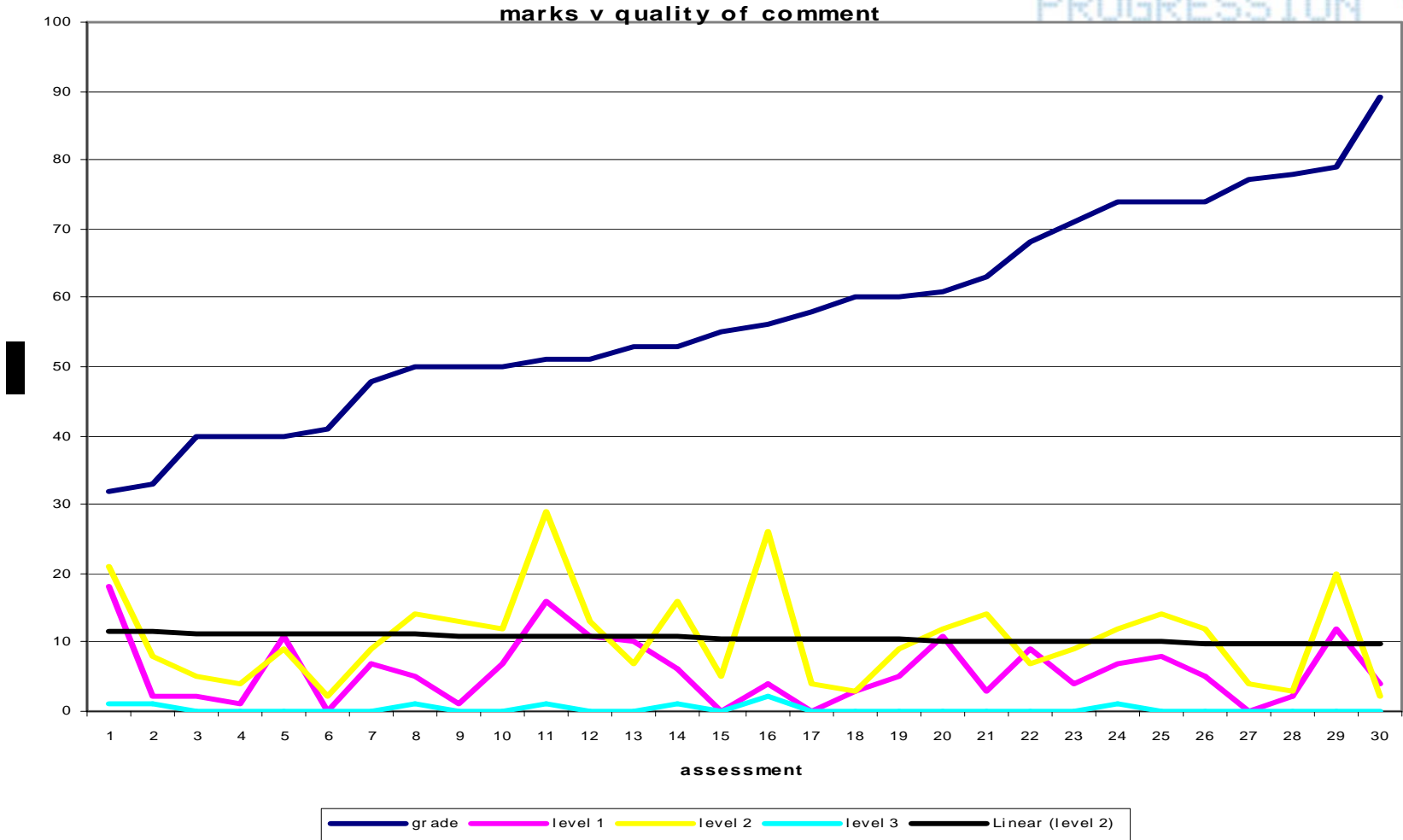
Assessment criteria or justification for mark?

GRADE	PRESENTATION	INTERPRETATION
FAIL 0-39%	Poor presentation. Poor use of English	Descriptive – little analysis
D 40-49%	Some attention has been made to presentation and reasonable level of English demonstrated	Some use of critical comments
C 50-59%	Work clearly presented and generally well articulated	Evidence of ability to interpret and analyse

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Hypothesis

- We spend too much time and effort giving feedback that is unnecessary and/or incomprehensible

- This feedback may well be aligned to assessment criteria, but these are too vague, and open to too much interpretation

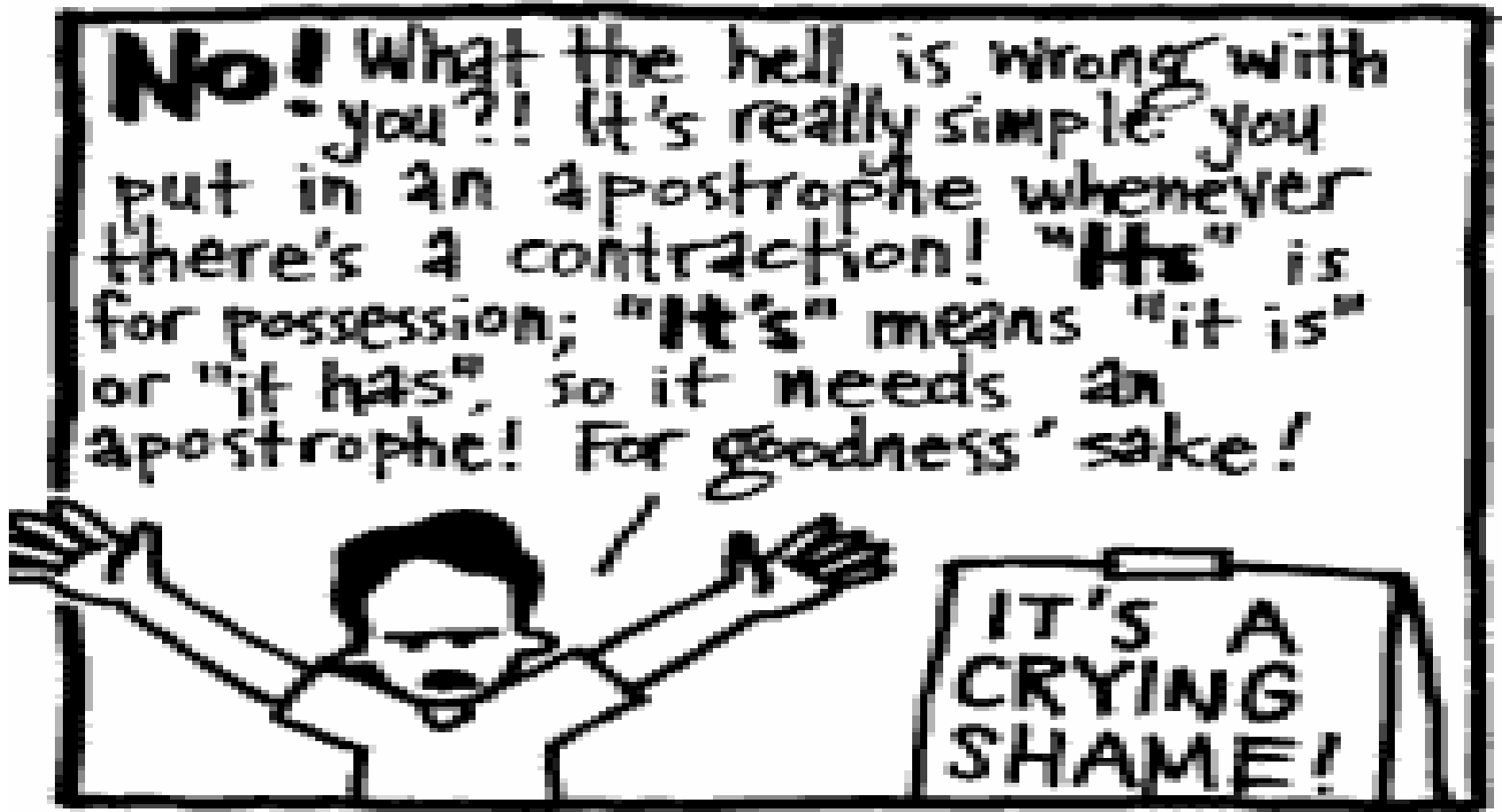   – *e.g. what IS good command of English?*

Student focus???

- When we put comments like e.g.

  - "Take care with apostrophes"

- - do the students have any idea at all what we mean?

  - *"If I'd have known that when I was doing the work I'd have put it. What am I supposed to do with this?"*
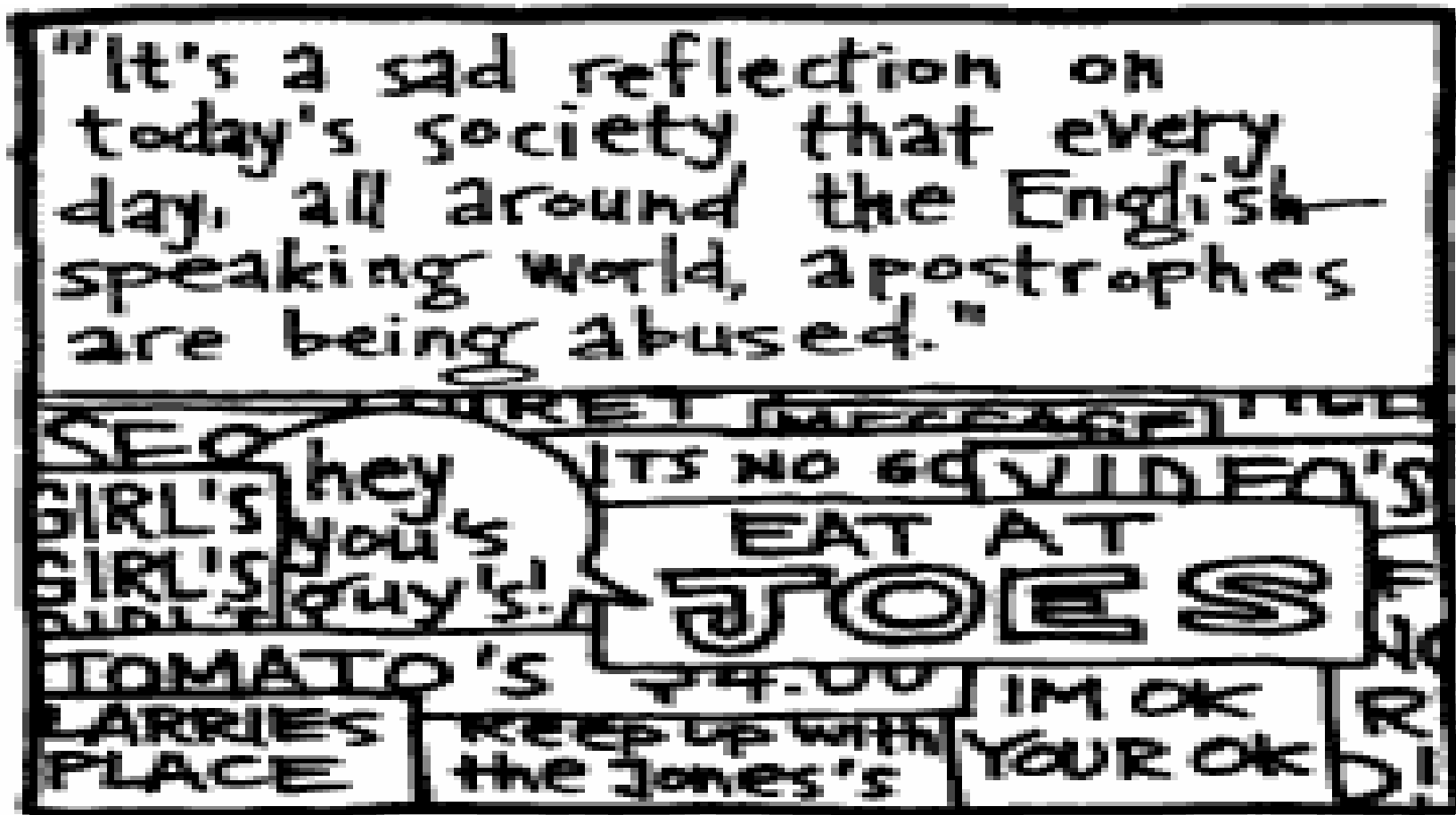
    » Student interviewed

- **Do we need to give all the feedback all the time?**

- **If we give too much, will the more important things be lost?**

- **Will students act on any of it?**

- **Students may *not* understand feedback and may *not* be able to act on it**

- **Do we REALLY expect them to?**

- **How much of the feedback we give is REALLY useful, or REALLY matters?**

To those who care about punctuation.......

- .... a sentence such as "Thank God its Friday" (without the apostrophe) rouses feelings not only of despair but of violence. The confusion of the possessive "its" (no apostrophe) with the contractive "it's" (with apostrophe) is an unequivocal signal of illiteracy and sets off a simple Pavlovian "kill" response in the average stickler.

- The rule is: the word "it's" (with apostrophe) stands for "it is" or "it has". If the word does not stand for "it is" or "it has" then what you require is "its". *This is extremely easy to grasp*.

- Getting your itses mixed up is the greatest solecism in the world of punctuation. No matter that you have a PhD and have read all of Henry James twice. If you still persist in writing, "Good food at it's best", you deserve to be struck by lightning, hacked up on the spot and buried in an unmarked grave.
    - Truss, L. (2003) *Eats, Shoots and Leaves. The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, London, Profile Books Ltd.

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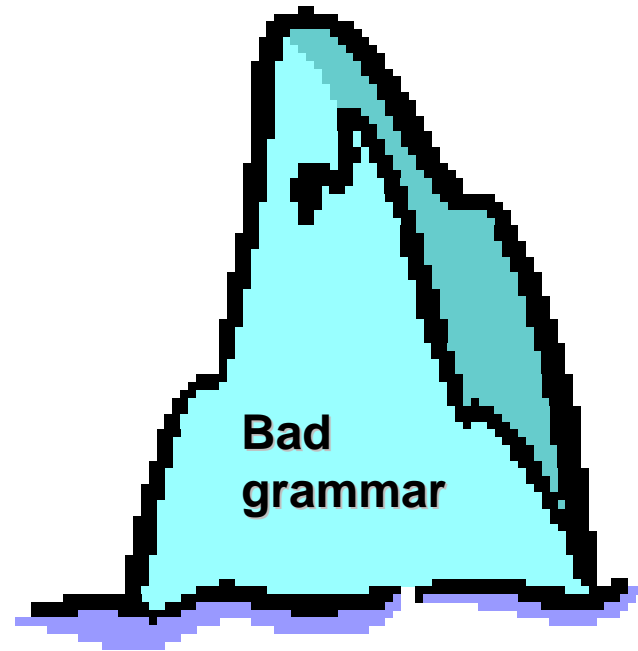this store will close its' doors 30th June 2005

university bookshop

To those who don't......

- It strikes me that the author knows everything about language and nothing about people. This book treats English like a computer language - rigid, unforgiving, and only truly understood by a tiny minority. I am sure it must be amusing to point intellectual fingers at those poor, sad individuals who still don't know whether and where to use an apostrophe for a possessive plural noun or not, but it's not something I want to engage in.

- I would rather take an interesting book, bad grammar or not, over this drivel. Sometimes it is the very ambiguity in English that makes our enjoyment of communication complete: language is not perfect, because it is a human construct.

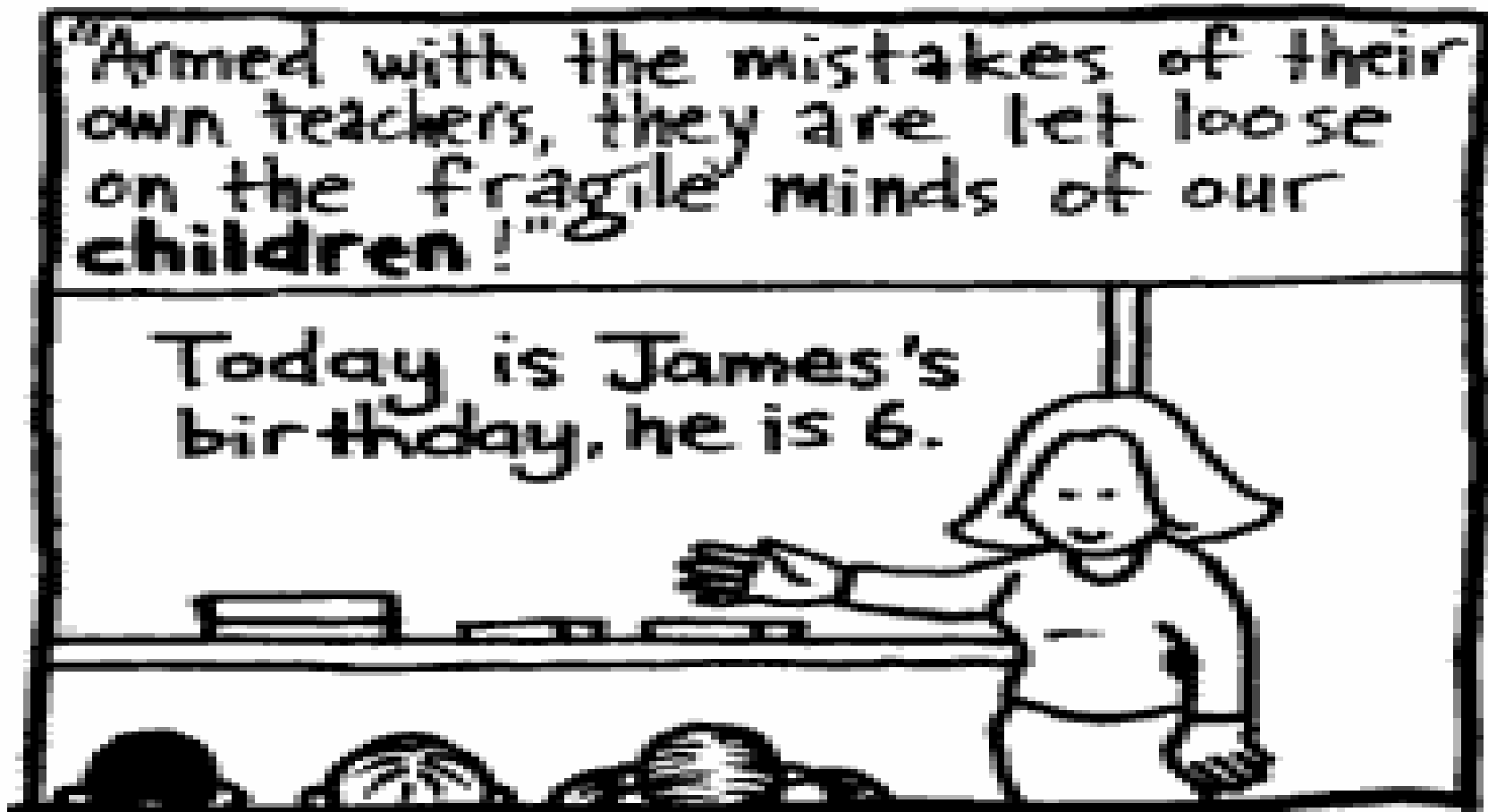 - Amazon (2003) 'Customer Reviews',

- Patti Stock, the incoming president of the National Council of Teachers of English, said ... that critical thinking is more vital than mechanics.

- "Spelling is important at a particular place and time,'' she said. "You do want your 'i's' dotted and your 't's' crossed. But you don't need to do it at once. We want students to think.''

  – **Rubenstein, S. (2003)**

HMS Creativity......

Bad grammar

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For tutors, a further question may be:

- **If the feedback given is to emphasise improvement in future assignments, will students benefit from reading hyperspecific corrections written by their instructors?**

- "Most college students have been reading such corrections for years; **if they were helpful, they would have helped by now.**"
  - » (Willingham, 1990 p12).

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References

- Kreibich, G. Grammar's Lost Generation Times Higher 4th October 1996

- Rubenstein, S. (2003) ' Teechurs say corect spelling iz no big deel', San Francisco Chronicle

- Truss, L. (2003) *Eats, Shoots and Leaves. The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation*, London, Profile Books Ltd.

- Willingham D. B. (1990). Effective Feedback on Written Assignments, *Teaching of Psychology*, 17 (1) 10-13.ref

- Cartoons courtesy of Matt Powell
  - http://homepages.paradise.net.nz/mattpowe/index.html

A final thought......

- *"Feedback is like fish: it goes off after a week!"*