

Treating Error: Providing Corrective Feedback in the EAP Writing Classroom

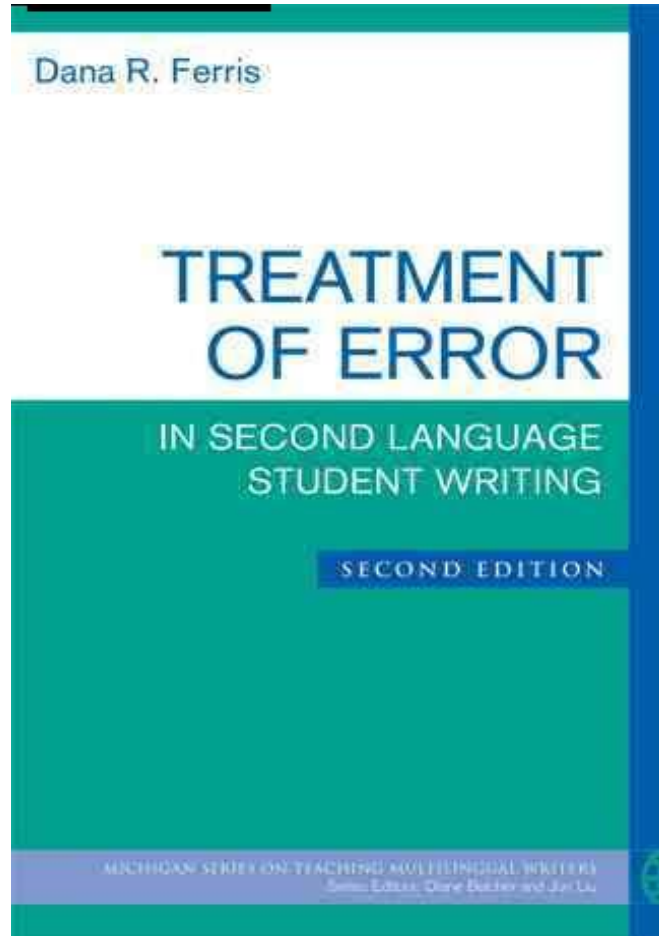
Research and Best Practices

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Overview

1. Corrective Feedback (CF)
 2. CF Basics & Insights from Research.
 3. CF Best Practices
 4. Teaching Self-Editing Strategies
 5. Grammar (in brief)
 6. Q & A
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Questions for Reflection

- What kind of feedback do you believe is most helpful? Unhelpful?
- When do you provide feedback?
- Can you, personally, recall a negative feedback experience? Positive?
- What are the major areas of concern that you see in your students' writing?



Core Elements

“While helping students build **fluency**, *lower anxiety*, and raise **confidence** and self-esteem about their writing are extremely important goals for EAP writing courses, it is also crucial to help students learn **transferable strategies** for *monitoring* and *self-editing* their written work and for making accurate and effective language choices in their writing”.

Ferris, D. (2016). Supporting multilingual writers through the challenges of academic literacy, p. 155-56.



CF Basics

- CF is the practice of providing written and/or oral responses to student writing with the purpose of improving student accuracy.
- It is an essential conversation between instructor and student.
- Not all feedback practices are helpful.



CF Basics

- Tone matters. A lot.
- CF is part of a complex student/teacher relationship.
- CF is not neutral. It is a practice that involves power dynamics.



CF Basics

- CF practices need to be tailored to help students survive in their future academic studies.
- Focus on transferable skills and building independence.
- Academically bound students face numerous and significant challenges—other than accuracy—in terms of writing proficiency.



Research Insights...

- Despite some controversy among academics, corrective feedback is generally a universal practice in the writing classroom.
- Multilingual writers often expect that the teacher will correct *all* of their errors *all of the time*.
- Numerous studies indicate that students are hostile towards CF approaches that do not mark errors at all.



Research Insights...

- “Error feedback on revisions of existing texts have consistently demonstrated that error feedback can help students to improve the accuracy of those texts” (Ferris, 2011).
- Red ink controversy: studies by Hedgcock and Leki indicate that students don’t really care.



CF Best Practices

- Have students write a diagnostic.
- Talk to students about what they know and their preferences.
- Decide: **Indirect** or **Indirect with Codes**?



CF Best Practices

When giving feedback:

- Read the text rapidly—no marking, just identify major issues.
- Are your comments clear and consistent?
Legible?
- Take care not to mislabel an error.



CF Best Practices

- Be selective. Limit your feedback to specific errors and/or assignments.
- Consider timing. Too much CF at the outset is detrimental.
- Marginal comments should be constructive and specific.
- “Your thesis makes no sense”! Versus “The thesis has a clear focus, but needs supporting points”.



CF Best Practices

- Correct global errors, but use restraint regarding stylistic choices.
- Allow students to develop their own voice.



CF Best Practices

- Manage your expectations. Expect progress, not perfection.
- As student self-editing is the goal, reward this work in your grading scheme.



CF Best Practices

- Praise student accomplishment whenever possible.
- Raising confidence and lowering anxiety are critical considerations.



CF Best Practices

After Feedback:

- Check if students understand your comments and strategies?
- Make time for questions and for self-correction/editing.



Teaching Self-Editing Strategies

- Teach students to identify and correct their errors.
- Errors are not “bad.”
- Gain awareness about their own error patterns.
- Awareness raising about the realities of NES writing process: it is NOT perfect!



Teaching Self-Editing Strategies

- Students need TIME to edit.
 - Editing workshops
 - One-on-one conferences
 - Peer-editing workshops
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Teaching Self-Editing Strategies

- Patience. Academic writing proficiency (vocabulary, grammar, register) develop slowly over time.
- Expect progress, not perfection.



Teaching Grammar

- Grammar instruction should focus on the fact that academic writing is built around “institutionalized” conventions (Hinkel, 2016).
 - Students who receive instruction in the genre’s dominant grammatical structures are at an advantage.
 - Academic writing is highly **formulaic**, so teaching vocabulary in the form of lexical phrases / chunks/ prefabs, in conjunction with grammar is highly efficient.
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Teaching Grammar

- “Prefab constructions are likely to be more grammatically and lexically accurate than those that have to be constructed based on a myriad of rules” (Hinkel, 2016, p. 178).
- Prefabs by specific language function can help students to become more proficient (grammar, vocabulary, register) more quickly.



Teaching Grammar

Ferris has her own list of recommendations:

1. Verb Tenses
2. Active and Passive Voice
3. Verb Types
4. Noun Types
5. Subject-Verb Agreement
6. Sentence Patterns / Clause Formation



Conclusion

- Student needs and knowledge must be assessed.
- Student expectations must be acknowledged in order to get “buy in”.
- CF approach must be clearly outlined and consistent.
- Indirect feedback techniques are best.



Conclusion

- Limit feedback to specific patterns.
- Tone matters.
- Encourage editing through grade scheme.



Conclusion

- Self-editing must be supported by grammar instruction.
- Self-editing is challenging, but students will gain confidence and more autonomy over time.
- Keep correction of error and accuracy concerns in balance with other aspects of writing.



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- Hinkel, E.** (2016). Practical grammar teaching. *Teaching English grammar to speakers of other languages*. E. Hinkel (Ed). New York: Routledge.



Additional Resources

Andrade, M.S. & Evans, N.W. (2012). *ESL & Applied Linguistics Professional Series : Principles and Practices for Response in Second Language Writing: Developing Self-Regulated Learners*. New York: Routledge.

Evans, N. W., Anderson, N.J. & Eggington, W.G. (Eds). 2015. *ESL readers and writers in higher education: Understanding challenges, providing support*. New York: Routledge.

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