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LEBANON

Error Correction and Feedback in the EFL Writing Classroom

Comparing Instructor and Student Preferences

How to respond to student writing is a controversial topic in second language writing instruction and theory. Several studies have investigated the effects of various types of teacher feedback on students' writing skills, but little research has explored instructors' and students' preferences for feedback and error correction. But preferences are important; if teachers and students both understand the purpose of certain correction techniques and agree on their use, feedback is more likely to be productive. Conversely, if teachers and students have mutually exclusive ideas regarding correction techniques, the result will most likely be feedback that is ineffective and, in the worst case, discouraging for students who are learning to write in their second language. This article will compare the preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques of EFL university instructors with the preferences of their students. In addition, some implications for classroom teaching will be discussed.

Background

Even though the research evidence on the effects of error correction on students' writing skills is far from conclusive (Ferris 1999, 2004; Huntley 1992; Leki 1990), several research studies investigating the effects of different types of feedback on second language students' writing have suggested that explicit error correction of surface-level errors (spelling, punctuation, grammar) seems to be generally ineffective (Huntley; 1992; Truscott, 1996). Truscott goes even farther to conclude that this type of correction should be abandoned in second language writing classes because it can have harmful effects.

On the other hand, the research generally does advocate feedback on the student writer's handling of content and organization. There is evidence that such feedback is necessary and does result in improved student writing (Fathman and Whalley 1990; Huntley 1992; Kepner 1991). Huntley (1992) maintains that feedback on content and organization should be provided to students while feedback on form should be avoided, and she recommends that second language teachers incorporate peer reviews and student-teacher conferences in their

teaching as two valuable alternative feedback methods to traditional error correction.

Teacher preferences for error correction and feedback

In spite of the research evidence pointing to the futility of surface-level error correction, the relatively few studies that have investigated second language instructors' and students' preferences for feedback to writing suggest that surface-level correction is often what students want and expect from their teachers. For instance, based on a survey of 59 ESL students' attitudes towards feedback on their written work, Radecki and Swales (1988) concluded that if ESL teachers do not correct all surface errors they might lose credibility with their students. In a similar survey of 100 ESL students' preferences for error correction, Leki (1991) found that students equate good writing in English with error-free writing and that they expect and want all errors in their papers to be corrected. Additionally, in a survey of 47 EFL students' attitudes towards classroom feedback procedures, Enginarlar (1993) reported that students perceive surface-level error correction as effective teacher feedback. Saito (1994) and Ferris (1995) also reached similar conclusions based on their respective surveys of students' attitudes towards feedback in an ESL context.

Regarding teachers' preferences, Kern (1995) compared Foreign Language (FL) students' beliefs about language learning with those of their teachers and found that students held beliefs about pronunciation, error correction, and the importance of learning grammar and vocabulary that were different from their instructors' beliefs. Moreover, in a study investigating 824 FL students' and 92 FL teachers' beliefs about error correction and the benefit of a focus on form in language learning, Schulz (1996) reported some discrepancies among teachers as well as between teachers and students. Specifically, students were generally more receptive to receiving corrective feedback in both written and spoken language than were teachers. A follow-up study that compared the 1996 data with responses elicited from 607 FL students and 122 teachers in Colombia revealed relatively high agreement between students as a group and teachers as a group across cultures on most

questions (Schulz 2001). However, several differences were again evident between student and teacher beliefs within each culture. Such discrepancies about corrective feedback between students and teachers may obviously cause miscommunication and result in unsuccessful teaching and learning; therefore, it is especially important to continue to explore this area of research in ESL and EFL writing.

Examining instructor and student preferences

This section will discuss the results of a study exploring EFL university instructors' preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques and their beliefs about what constitutes effective feedback to writing; instructors' preferences and beliefs will be compared to those of their students.

Participants

The participants in the study were 14 female EFL instructors at the American University of Beirut (AUB) in Lebanon. AUB offers an intensive English course, English 100, in addition to a series of three courses in English language skills: English 102 (Enrichment Course in English), English 203 (Academic English), and English 204 (Advanced Academic English). These courses provide training in both oral and written communication, with an emphasis on the reading, writing, and research skills required of university students.

Twelve teachers stated that their native language is Arabic, while the remaining two specified English as their native language. Ten of the instructors have taught EFL for more than ten years, one for six years, and the remaining three for less than five years. In addition, 12 of the instructors stated that they regularly attend teacher-training workshops. Finally, all instructors hold an M.A. degree in Teaching of English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) or a related field; two are currently studying for a Ph.D., and one has already obtained a Ph.D. in TEFL.

Survey instrument

After background information was obtained from the instructors, they were administered a four-part questionnaire based on Leki's *Survey of ESL Students' Preferences for Error Correction* (1991), which was adapted to obtain the preferences of EFL teachers. According to Leki (1991), the original survey would have been

more effective if it had specified which draft of a piece of writing was being referred to; therefore, an effort was made in this study to include questionnaire items referring to both first and final drafts. The instrument aims to explore attitudes towards feedback of various features of students' writing, such as content, organization, grammar, vocabulary choice, and writing style, as well as preferences for various teacher paper-marking techniques.

Data collection

A questionnaire (see Appendix 1) was sent to 34 instructors by mail during the second half of the 2003-2004 Fall Semester, and 14 instructors returned completed questionnaires. A matching student version of the questionnaire was administered at the same time to 156 students enrolled in English language classes at AUB; results of the student survey appear in Diab (2005) and are compared to the instructors' responses discussed in this article.

Results and discussion

The comparison of teacher preferences with those of their students are presented and discussed according to the following three categories:

1. Degree of preference for accuracy in students' writing (responses to Part I, items 1 and 2)
2. Beliefs about the relative importance of various writing features (responses to Part I, items 3a-g and 4a-g; and to Part II, items 4 and 5)
3. Degree of preference for paper-marking techniques (responses to Part I, items 3h-i and 4h-i; to Part II, items 1-3; and to Part III)

The response frequencies for Parts I, II, and III of the questionnaire appear in Appendix 1. In addition, Part IV of the questionnaire gave teachers the opportunity to make additional comments, and these appear in Appendix 2.

Teachers' preferences for accuracy in students' writing

According to the responses to items 1 and 2 in Part I, twelve of the 14 EFL instructors agree that it is important that their students have as few errors as possible in their written work, and ten feel that error-free writing is also important to their students. Since 90% of the EFL students in Diab's (2005) student survey state that it is important to have as few errors as possible in their written work, and 77% indicate that fewer errors are important to their English teachers as well, the instructors and students seem to be in agreement regarding accuracy in student writing.

Teachers' beliefs about the relative importance of various writing features

The instructors' responses to items 3a-g and 4a-g in Part I reveal that they are divided in their beliefs about the relative importance of grammar, spelling, and punctuation when responding to a first draft. Concerning the remaining features, most instructors agree that it is important to respond to vocabulary choice, organization, writing style, and ideas on a first draft.

Instructors' responses regarding a final draft are similar to those regarding a first draft, except for the surface-level features; interestingly, most instructors agree that the teacher should correct spelling, punctuation, and grammar errors when responding to a final draft. In general, these teachers respond to more errors on a final draft than on a first draft and, in particular, they respond to more surface-level errors on a final draft than on a first one. It seems that these instructors believe such errors are not worth attending to when responding to a student's first draft, while in response to a final draft, which the student will not presumably revise further, the student may as well know the correct structure.

In their responses to the same questionnaire items, a slight majority of students feel that correction of grammar errors is more important than correction of other features. There is minimal variation in the students' responses regarding first and final drafts, and in both cases they generally agree that the teacher should respond to surface-level errors. The teachers, however, either disagree or are neutral about responding to such errors in a first draft. Thus, there is obviously some discrepancy between instructors' and students' views regarding what writing features should be responded to and how to offer feedback to a first draft as opposed to a final draft.

Moreover, as shown in the responses to item 4 in Part II, only one instructor states that students read every teacher mark or comment on their writing carefully and six believe

that students look at some comments more carefully than at others; in contrast, 63% of the students state that they read every mark/comment carefully, while only 19% stated that they look at some comments more carefully than others (Diab 2005).

In addition, the instructors' responses to item 5 in Part II reveal that these EFL writing teachers believe that their students treat various writing features such as grammar, vocabulary choice, content, and style equally, while the students' responses to the same item exhibit a different belief regarding the importance of various features in their writing. More specifically, most students regard comments on the writing style and on the ideas expressed in the paper as the most important teacher marks they look at; slightly fewer students regard organization, vocabulary choice, and grammar as most important, and a few students regard comments on spelling and punctuation as important, indicating some discrepancy between students' and teachers' beliefs and expectations about feedback to writing.

Teachers' preferences for paper-marking techniques

As shown by the responses to items 3h-i and 4h-i in Part I, the instructors' preferences for such paper-marking techniques as proofreading symbols and a red-colored pen are fairly divided, with nearly half of the teachers having no opinion on either marking technique. Only two instructors agree that using a red-colored pen is necessary in responding to either a first or a final draft, which contrasts with students' preferences: around half of them state that the teacher should always use a red pen when responding to either a first or a final draft.

Moreover, as revealed by the responses to item 1 in Part II, none of the EFL instructors prefer "crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure" as the best technique to mark errors in a first draft, while 11 prefer "showing where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it" as the best technique. In comparison, nearly half of the students surveyed also prefer the technique of providing clues to errors in response to a first draft.

However, regarding preferences for pointing out errors in a final draft, there is somewhat more discrepancy among instructors' views, as revealed by the responses to item 2 in Part II;

here instructors did not generally choose one technique from among those listed, and some of them added various techniques they use when correcting a final draft, such as providing comments on general strengths and weaknesses, using a checklist, and commenting on the improvement made since the first draft. In comparison, 57% of the students prefer "crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure" as the best technique for responding to a final draft. Additionally, in response to either a first or final draft, very few students think that simply marking the error, or ignoring errors completely while focusing on ideas are the best teacher feedback techniques. Thus, there seems to be considerable discrepancy between instructors' and students' preferences for feedback techniques to point out errors on a final draft.

Regarding instructors' preferences for feedback/marks provided on a first draft with many errors, only one instructor feels that all errors should be corrected while eight instructors prefer to correct only errors that might interfere with communication, as shown by the responses to item 3 in Part II. In addition, some instructors add that writing clear comments and holding conferences with students are important techniques when responding to a first draft with many errors. As for responding to a final draft, instructors are fairly divided in their opinions on how much feedback to provide; only three instructors agree that all errors should be corrected, and five state that they correct only errors that might interfere with communication. In contrast, only 10% of the students want teachers to focus exclusively on errors that interfere with communication in the first or final draft; indeed, many of the students prefer that teachers correct all errors when responding to both first and final drafts (33% and 45%, respectively). Again, this indicates a discrepancy between instructors' and students' expectations regarding teacher feedback to students' writing.

Part III of the questionnaire presents alternate ways that an error can be corrected and asks instructors to evaluate each one on a scale of 1 (Very Good) to 5 (Very Bad). Item 6, where the error is underlined with a clue for correction, received the most positive evaluation from the instructors. The two items receiving the most negative evaluations

were item 5, where the error is underlined and a personal comment relevant to the content is included, and item 7, where the error is completely ignored. Item 4, where the error is crossed out and replaced by the correct structure, also received a somewhat negative evaluation from the instructors, in contrast to the students, who rated it most positively. However, instructors and students were in agreement with their negative ratings for sample corrections 5 and 7 (Diab 2005).

Finally, it is worth noting that instructors are fairly divided in their evaluation of several sample corrections in Part III (for example, items 1 and 3), indicating some discrepancy in their preferences for error correction. As mentioned earlier, the instructors are also divided in their beliefs regarding the relative importance of grammar, spelling, and punctuation in students' writing, especially in response to a first draft. Obviously, such discrepancies among EFL instructors, particularly those teaching various sections of the same course at the same institution, show a lack of consistency that may be deleterious to writing instruction.

Implications for classroom teaching

Obviously, the comparative analysis of 14 EFL instructors' beliefs about error correction and paper-marking techniques with those of students at the same institution cannot be generalized to all EFL instructors and students across different learning and teaching contexts, and the shortcomings of the self-report measures used in this study, such as the ability and willingness of the participants to respond accurately and conscientiously to the survey questions, are important to mention; nevertheless, two main implications for the EFL classroom can be made based on observations made in this study.

First, similar to Kern (1995) and Schulz (1996, 2001), this study reveals various discrepancies between instructors' and students' views regarding their beliefs about various aspects of feedback to writing, such as what writing features a teacher should respond to, how a teacher should respond to a final draft as opposed to a first draft, how many errors a teacher should respond to, and finally, how a teacher should correct or mark errors. Such discrepancies between student and teacher expectations regarding feedback may obviously be a cause of miscommunication and unsuccessful teaching and learning; therefore, as is recommended by Ashwell (2000) and Ferris et al. (1997), teachers should help their students understand how feedback is intended to affect their writing and why it is given the way it is.

Students' need for error correction is not necessarily indicative of the effectiveness of such feedback (Hedgcock and Lefkowitz 1994, 1996; Radecki and Swales 1988); some students may hold unrealistic beliefs about writing, usually based on limited knowledge or experience. Therefore, in addition to exploring student beliefs, teachers can try to modify students' unrealistic expectations about error correction and reinforce realistic ones (Leki 1991). Administering a student version of the questionnaire used in this study at the beginning of the language course, followed by a classroom discussion, is one way of achieving this goal.

The second observation is the somewhat disconcerting finding that instructors themselves are divided in their preferences for error correction and in their beliefs regarding the relative importance of various features in students' writing, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation, particularly in response to a first draft. Similarly, Schulz (1996) also found discrepancies in FL teacher beliefs about error correction and suggests that FL teaching is "far from a united profession" (348). It seems that the group of EFL instructors surveyed in this study also present a somewhat disjointed front. Since teachers' beliefs are likely shaped by preparation and in-service development and training, professional experience, as well as their own experience as language learners, it is not surprising that language teachers may hold different beliefs about language teaching and learning.

Therefore, in addition to holding informal discussions with students on error correction, feedback, and writing, language instructors should hold informal conversations on error correction and feedback with other instructors, preferably early in the semester. A formal questionnaire such as the one employed in this study, followed by a group discussion, may provide a valuable opportunity for instructors to become aware of different opinions and realize that some beliefs they have taken for granted may not be held by other teachers.

Teachers who themselves hold misconceptions or unrealistic beliefs about language learning can transmit these beliefs to their students, either explicitly or through their instructional practices (Horwitz 1988). Thus, it is also strongly recommended that teacher education programs and language teacher-training workshops include a session addressing teachers' beliefs about error correction and feedback to student writing. Indeed, such sessions are essential to inform prospective language teachers about learner preferences, equip them with strategies to modify any unrealistic opinions that may be a hindrance to successful learning, and, just as importantly, make them aware of the possible consequences and implications their own beliefs might have on the language learning and teaching situation.

Conclusion

The purpose of this article was to explore EFL university instructors' preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques and their beliefs about what constitutes effective feedback to writing and to compare

of their students. The analysis of teacher and student responses revealed various discrepancies between instructors' and students' preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques, as well as differences in beliefs among instructors themselves. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers incorporate classroom discussions on error correction, feedback, and writing in order to help their students understand how feedback is intended to affect their writing and why it is given in a particular way. And just as important, it is recommended that teachers become aware of their own beliefs about error correction and feedback to student writing.

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Directions to Part I: Below are some beliefs that some teachers have about feedback to student writing. Read each statement and then decide if you: (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Neither Agree nor Disagree, (4) Agree, or (5) Strongly Agree. Please write the number of your response in the space provided. There are no right or wrong answers. We are simply interested in your opinions.

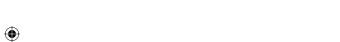| Items	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. In general, it is important to *me* that my students have as few errors as possible in their written work.	0	0	2	5	7
2. In general, it is important *to my students* that they have as few errors as possible in their written work.	0	0	4	6	4
3. When responding to a first draft, the teacher should always:					
a. point out errors in *grammar* (verb tenses, subject/verb agreement, article use, etc.)	0	6	4	2	2
b. point out errors in *spelling*	1	7	2	2	2
c. point out errors in *vocabulary choice*	0	2	3	6	3
d. point out errors in *punctuation*	2	4	5	1	2
e. make comments on the *organization of the paper*	0	1	1	2	10
f. make comments on the *writing style*	0	1	1	6	6
g. make comments on the *ideas expressed**	0	0	1	2	10
h. use a set of correction or proofreading symbols	1	2	4	4	3
i. use a red-colored pen	3	3	6	1	1
4. When responding to a final draft, the teacher should always:					
a. point out errors in *grammar* (verb tenses, subject/verb agreement, article use, etc.)	0	0	3	9	2
b. point out errors in *spelling*	0	1	3	8	2
c. point out errors in *vocabulary choice*	0	0	2	9	3
d. point out errors in *punctuation*	0	0	3	9	2
e. make comments on the *organization of the paper*	0	0	1	6	7
f. make comments on the *writing style*	0	0	1	7	6
g. make comments on the *ideas expressed*	0	0	1	6	7
h. use a set of correction or proofreading symbols	1	1	6	4	2
i. use a red-colored pen	3	3	6	1	1

*One instructor did not respond to this item.

Directions to Part II: Answer the following five questions by circling the number of the appropriate response. (Please circle ALL that apply.)

1. When responding to a first draft, how do you usually indicate errors in students' written work?	Responses
a. By crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure	0
b. By showing where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it	11
c. By only showing where the error is	2
d. By ignoring the errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc. and only paying attention to the ideas expressed	6
e. Other (please specify):	
• By commenting holistically on the organization, style, and content; making a summary list of comments; making general comments at the end of the draft	4
• I ask questions a lot; I ask questions, the answers to which help the students improve their drafts; I try to carry out a conversation with the students on the paper.	2
• My main focus is on the ideas, but if there are major errors otherwise, I point them out once and tell the students what's wrong so they can correct them.	1

2. When responding to a final draft, how do you usually indicate errors in students' written work?	Responses
a. By crossing out what is incorrect and writing the correct word or structure	4
b. By showing where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it	5
c. By only showing where the error is	5
d. By ignoring the errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation…etc. and only paying attention to the ideas expressed	3
e. Other (please specify):	
• Commenting on general strengths and weaknesses; making a summary list of comments on the cover page; general comments on content/style/organization and mechanics; providing suggestions	5
• By giving feedback on a checklist	1
• Commenting on the improvement made since draft one	1
• If it is still the same mistake, chances are that the student could not correct it, so I give the correct answer with the proper explanation and hope s/he remembers it.	1
• It depends on the type of error and the context.	1

3. If there are many errors in a student paper, what do you usually do?	Responses
On a first draft:	
a. Correct all errors, major and minor	1
b. Correct all errors I consider major, but not the minor ones	3
c. Correct most but not necessarily all of the major errors if there are many of them	0
d. Correct only a few of the major errors no matter how many there are	4
e. Correct all *repeated* errors whether major or minor	2
f. Correct only errors that might interfere with communicating ideas	8
g. Correct no errors and respond only to the ideas expressed	5
h. Other (please specify):	
• I write a note to have an individual conference to discuss the draft; I request a meeting; I ask the student to come to my office and we go over mainly only those errors that interfere with meaning.	3
• I comment more than I correct; I write clear comments; I write comments and clues to correct or revise; I write a general note at the end.	3
On a final draft:	
a. Correct all errors, major and minor	3
b. Correct all errors I consider major, but not the minor ones	3
c. Correct most but not necessarily all of the major errors if there are many of them	1
d. Correct only a few of the major errors no matter how many there are	1
e. Correct all repeated errors whether major or minor	3
f. Correct only errors that might interfere with communicating ideas	5
g. Correct no errors and respond only to the ideas expressed	1
h. Other (please specify):	
• I add general comments on content/organization/grammar at the end of the final draft; I also write comments on ideas, organization, and errors.	3
• I point out major errors and provide suggestions for minor grammatical mistakes.	1
• I signal a problem and comment at the end. I may tell students, for example, that a comma cannot be used to separate two complete sentences and circle the comma.	1
• It depends on the nature of the assignment. I usually use a checklist.	1

4. In general, how carefully do you think *your students* look at the teacher marks/comments on their papers?	Responses
a. They read every mark/comment carefully.	1
b. They look at some marks/comments more carefully than at others.	6
c. They mainly pay attention to comments on the ideas expressed in the paper.	2
d. Other (please specify):	
• Students are mostly concerned and motivated about the grade.	5
• This will vary as some students are more serious than others; it depends on the student and on the course.	2

5. In general, which of the following do you think *your students* consider most important to look at carefully?	Responses
a. Marks indicating errors in grammar	9
b. Marks indicating errors in vocabulary choice	8
c. Marks indicating errors in spelling	6
d. Marks indicating errors in punctuation	6
e. Comments on the ideas/content	10
f. Comments on the writing style	7
g. Comments on the organization of the paper	11
h. Other (please specify):	
• The grade is their top priority; students concentrate on the grade.	3
• I believe all apply, but students may not take punctuation mistakes seriously.	1
• Students feel mechanical errors are very important.	1

Directions to Part III: The following sentence has been responded to in various ways by different teachers. Look over the different possible responses and rate each one. If you think the mark/comment is a very good way to indicate an error on a paper, circle #1. If you think the mark/comment is a very bad way to indicate an error on a paper, circle #5. If you think it is somewhere in between, circle the number between #1 and #5 that best represents your opinion. (Frequencies appear in parentheses.)

	Very Good				Very Bad
See section in grammar handbook 1. Since I arrived here, I <u>am</u> very lonely.	1 **(1)**	2 **(2)**	3 **(4)**	4 **(4)**	5 **(3)**
2. Since I arrived here, I <u>am</u> very lonely.	1 **(1)**	2 **(4)**	3 **(7)**	4 **(1)**	5 **(1)**
3. Since I arrived here, I <u>am</u> very lonely.	1 **(5)**	2 **(2)**	3 **(4)**	4 **(2)**	5 **(1)**
have been 4. Since I arrived here, I <s>am</s> very lonely.	1 **(0)**	2 **(1)**	3 **(6)**	4 **(6)**	5 **(0)**
I'm sorry to hear that. Why don't you come and talk to me about it? 5. Since I arrived here, I <u>am</u> very lonely.	1 **(1)**	2 **(2)**	3 **(2)**	4 **(5)**	5 **(4)**
tense 6. Since I arrived here, I <u>am</u> very lonely.	1 **(6)**	2 **(5)**	3 **(2)**	4 **(1)**	5 **(0)**
7. Since I arrived here, I am very lonely.	1 **(0)**	2 **(0)**	3 **(1)**	4 **(3)**	5 **(9)**

Note: Only 13 instructors responded to items 4 and 7.

Directions to Part IV: In the space provided, please write your response to the following question: Do you have any other ideas about teacher feedback to student writing that are not included above? (Nine instructors responded to this open-ended question and provided several comments regarding error correction and teacher feedback to writing. These comments fell into the following three categories):

1. Preferences for alternative feedback techniques:

   • Three instructors emphasized the importance of the conference as an additional feedback technique to supplement traditional feedback methods. The strengths of the conference, according to the instructors, is a chance for the student to ask the teacher questions and to clarify any idea or structure that was vague, and the opportunity for the teacher to clarify his or her own comments on the draft. One drawback to the conference, according to the instructors, is a practical one: "Conferences are time-consuming, and when there are 25 to 30 students in class, it is impossible to hold individual conferences with each student."

   • A second alternative feedback method suggested by one instructor is general feedback in class on common problems or errors.

   • Two instructors recommended providing a checklist for students to go over as an effective way for students to be "more critical of their own writing before they submit their work" and have a chance to become "more involved in the evaluation process as a whole."

   • One instructor insisted on the importance of asking questions when responding to a first draft as an effective way of establishing a dialogue with the student, "where the teacher asks questions, about what is not understood instead of imposing his/her own correction on the student."

   • Finally, one instructor emphasized the importance of providing clues, since "students should work out what is wrong on their own," or simply highlighting errors, electronically if possible. According to this instructor, Microsoft Word's "reviewing options provide an optimal way for responding to student writing."

2. More beliefs about the relative importance of various features in students' writing:

   • Two instructors stressed that grammar/simple structural errors, mechanical errors, and "anything that a computer program can fix" are not worth responding to or "wasting much time and effort on" and "should not be the main issue, particularly when they do not interfere with meaning." On the other hand, the instructors emphasized development, coherence, quality of content, vocabulary/word choice, and style as "power issues" that should be clearly addressed, since "students will not own the language unless they can choose their words and structures effectively for different purposes."

   • One instructor stated that she would focus on different areas for different assignments: "One assignment could focus solely on word choice and another on organization."

   • One instructor mentioned that the number of drafts a student can write is a factor affecting what writing features a teacher should respond to.

3. Preferences for feedback on a first versus a final draft:

   Two instructors stated that the feedback on a second or final draft should be related to the feedback on an earlier draft and depend on how well the student was able to understand the teacher's earlier comments: "sometimes we discover that we have to give more detailed comments because the student didn't understand or was unable to improve his writing," as one instructor put it; and "if a student repeats the same errors on a second draft, the comments will point that out but they will not be corrected," as the second instructor put it. (This comment may reveal why students sometimes do not profit from teachers' comments. Giving more detailed comments on the final draft is an ineffective technique, since in these classes there are generally two drafts per essay; therefore, if a student does not understand teacher comments on a first draft, clarifying them on the final draft or simply pointing out that errors have not been addressed is unlikely to produce any improvement in students' writing skills.)