Feedback & Cross-Cultural Sensitivity in Academic Writing

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Introductions

- Who are you?
- What do you teach?
- How many international students do you have in your classes?
- What languages do you speak?
- What languages do your students speak?
Quick Quiz

Working with a partner, share your response:

• What does this mean to you?
Contrastive rhetoric, circa 1966


- English – Semitic – “Oriental” – Romance - Russian
The 5-paragraph essay

Collaborate with a partner on your answer. You don’t need to agree.

The classic 5-paragraph essay is

a) For geeks who don’t have a creative bone in their body

b) The quintessential writing style, especially in high school

c) An easy model to explain, which explains its popularity

d) What’s a 5-paragraph essay?
Students and writing

- True/False: International students should be held to exactly the same standard as domestic students in terms of spelling, grammar, word choice, and organization of writing.
- True/False: Between 17 and 25, most students improve their writing.
- True/False: If an international student’s writing seems disorganized, it’s a cultural difference.
  - (What about if it’s an 18-year old international student?)
Student views of writing

- Writing Across Borders clips ([cwl.oregonstate.edu/writing-across-borders](cwl.oregonstate.edu/writing-across-borders))
- Japan: Does what she describes really seem circular? Readers are supposed to participate!
- Ecuador: Background is key; the point is near the end
- Turkey: Poetic language and punctuation to match
- Jordan: Exaggeration is normal and good.
- China: Sharing is part of the culture (What problems have we seen coming from this attitude? It’s not just Chinese students who feel this way, either; we see it a lot in our Middle Easterners)
Strategies

- More from Writing Across Borders – different approaches, but the key is flexibility
- What do you do?
Feedback

- First approach: reduce the need for feedback
  - Set baseline expectations
  - Use rubrics (give them to students ahead of time)
  - Provide resources – Online Writing Lab, tutoring center on campus
Research

- What do we know?
- 20 years of studies and we have:

  Feedback helps

  Feedback makes no difference
Your thoughts...

- Do you give feedback on writing?
- What do you comment on, and when?
- How long do you spend commenting?
- How much do you think students use your feedback?
- Do you use a process writing approach?
“For students to improve their writing, we assume that, among other things, they have to be provided with appropriate feedback, given at the right time and in the proper context. They have to notice the feedback and be given ample opportunities to apply the corrections. However, when everything is said and done, unfortunately, if the students are not committed to improving their writing skills, they will not improve, no matter what type of corrective feedback is provided.”
Technology tools

- Markin
- Word tools
  - AutoCorrect
  - Track Changes
  - Macros
  - Insert Comments
- The bottom line: What’s the cost (teacher time) - benefit (student learning) ratio?
Change the look of the paper

- Markin (commercial product) – RTF output can be edited, but changes the look of the paper
- AutoCorrect – set it up to work the way you want
  - grm => [Check your grammar!]
  - spl => [Check your spelling!]
  - awk => [Awkward - rephrase this]
  - orgz => [Organization needs work]
- Track Changes – very visible editing; different editors will show up in different colors, so it’s useful for peer correction
Don’t change the look of the paper

- Markin – HTML format has hyperlinks to show feedback, and also offers a statistical option
- Insert Comment – a feature in Word. Comments can be balloons along the side or at the bottom. Students can respond in the inserted comment box, as well.
- Insert Audio Comment (worked most easily in Word 2003; doesn’t work well in Mac Word 2008) – see the handout for tips on how to set this up in Word 2007.
Compare documents

- Two versions of a document – are they the same?
  - Good for process writing, to see what was changed
  - Output looks like Track Changes
  - Good for aging brain cells, with our own documents
AutoSummarize

While we’re at it...

- This option in Word will create a summary of the size you choose.
- Easiest to find in Word 2003; see the links on the handout to add it in Word 2007
- Teach students how to use it – check for accuracy, then paraphrase the automated summary and add transitions
My experience

- Insert Comments – I use this the most
  - Audio comments – good for aural learners and certain tasks
  - Dialogues – very handy in process writing
- Track Changes
  - On request for students, mostly
  - For myself – especially Compare Documents
- AutoCorrect
  - Focused correction – I don’t use this much myself
- Ask students what kind of correction they want
Your turn – what do you think?

- What tools have you used?
- What has worked for you?
- How much correction do students want, and how do you know?
Thanks for listening and sharing!

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