Enhancing MLL Feedback and Assessment Strategies

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Feedback and assessment is a common source for anxiety on the part of instructors and administrators alike. This uncertainty can be exponential when navigating how to be most effective in working with MLLs.

When commenting on early drafts of MLL work, **we value the principle of "reading through" light language interference** – i.e. instructors mark only those instances of language or grammar usage that interfere with meaning, especially those that repeat throughout the paper, with the aim of grasping a student's intended meaning. This practice ensures that we focus on "higher order" or "global" concerns such as argument, analysis, organization, and effective use of evidence rather than surface-level concerns. **This is not to suggest that we ignore "lower order" or "local" concerns like grammar or style**—particularly as we want to make note of linguistic patterns—but rather that **we prioritize for all students the most important ("higher order") skills taught in writing classes.** The goal should not be to ignore linguistic concerns or to be punitive in addressing them, but rather to empower all students to become effective self-editors of their own work and to research instances of language interference as a means to learn through self-editing. That means that, as instructors, **we provide them with the resources necessary for them to become efficient self-editors,** by marking errors in their drafts selectively, by including resources at our own universities directly in our syllabi, and by providing individual students with grammar resources online and in book format with which they can hone their own language skills.

Inclusive pedagogy should actively move away from punitive feedback and closer to rewards-based feedback. Consider these questions:
- What did they do well?
- What should they keep doing?
- What was unclear/confusing relative to what was clearly stated?

Rewards-based is more about collaboration with students (we have to partner with their writing to show relativity, as an example of how they could strengthen their writing) and punitive is more about proving authority (which is exclusive).

Instead of focusing on deficit, we can look at student differences in language and culture as an occasion for a thoughtful and productive discussion about the ways in which the culture we grew up in, as well as the language and writing conventions we are familiar with, shape our

ideas around authority, knowledge, intertextuality and individualism/originality. At the end, all students should learn that academic writing is based on conventions and audience expectations, and that different audiences (in different genres, contexts, cultures, or languages) expect that writers adhere to differing conventions. Thus, we should frame our feedback accordingly by highlighting audience expectations or academic conventions, and **we should not shy away from discussing different cultural attitudes toward writing explicitly with our students,** in part so that they can become more effective peer responders.

Feedback is a mechanism to support engagement with writerly voice and promote a dialogue between writer and reader. Our feedback helps support the writer in understanding what they are trying to convey to their audience. A question we should ask ourselves as instructors is how can we use feedback to help to bring that author's vision to life given the audience and their expectations? This framing supports a more inclusive approach to feedback.