

4. Should the teacher respond to grammatical errors?

Research indicates that even the most intensive and systematic feedback on grammar produces hardly any improvement in subsequent writing. But grammatical errors that cause irritation to the teacher (such as frequent errors in subject-verb agreement, tenses, prepositions) could be dealt with in marginal comments.

5. Should the teacher address all the problems in a paper or focus on some?

Because many students make a large number of errors and may need special guidance with unfamiliar rhetorical patterns (of proposals, abstracts, research papers, etc.), feedback can easily become overwhelming. Thus, it is advisable to give feedback using a limited approach, addressing only some aspects of content (organization/ topic sentences/ cohesion) and grammar (tenses/ subject-verb agreement) in each paper.

6. How can a teacher provide feedback on content?**Write personalized comments**

"I like this example."

"You have really cleared up this point since your last draft!"

Provide guidance, direction, suggestions

"Can you summarize Barna's essay a bit more in your introduction?"

"An example might help here."

Make text-specific comments

"This is convincing evidence."

"You need more statistics on Hong Kong's economic problems."

Balance positive and negative comments

"Your language is generally fluent and you express your ideas quite well. However, you might want to pay attention to your use of tenses and prepositions."

7. Should red ink be used in providing feedback?

No. A paper full of the teacher's comments in red 'bleeds' and is discouraging to the student. With a pencil, it's easier to change if the teacher has second thoughts.

References

- Ferris, D. & Hedgcock, J. (1998). *Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Leki, I. (1992). *Understanding ESL Writers*. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton Cook.
- Reid, J. M. (1993). *Teaching ESL Writing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Regents/Prentice Hall.