

Investigating Solutions:

Finding Time for Grammar Instruction
in a College Composition Program

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Outline

1. Background & Context 45 mins total “Practice-oriented presentation”
2. Hannah: MyFoundationsLab – why not effective
3. Brendon:
 - ◆ Method
 - ◆ Quantitative Data – error code numbers, P&P survey
 - ◆ Qualitative data – student reflections in EN100, error logs – students who got gift cards

Context

- ◆ private, liberal arts college
- ◆ high population of international students coming from academic prep program
- ◆ high population of first-generation students of color from diverse linguistic backgrounds

Grammar Instruction in a College Composition Course

Challenges:

- ◆ Time constraints
- ◆ Focus on content over form
- ◆ Instructor confidence in teaching grammar
- ◆ Varying needs of students (some may be NSs)

Grammar Instruction in a Composition Course

Challenges:

Time constraints

Focus on content over form, grammar feedback may distract/demotivate

Instructor confidence in teaching grammar

Varying needs of students

MyFoundationsLab / In-class grammar instruction (“One size fits all modules”)

Possible Solutions:

Grammar workshops outside of class (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005)

Target feedback through error codes/logs and reflections (Conti & Sato, 2015)

Workshops for instructors on how to give grammar instruction/feedback

Individual workshops informed by student need (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Chuang & Nesi, 2006)

Individual learning paths / modules

Research Questions

1. Will students show any evidence of improving their grammar over the semester when the following strategies are used?
 - providing supplementary grammar workshops outside of class
 - encouraging students to use error logs and reflections when they receive corrective feedback
2. What are students perceptions of the grammar workshops?

Method

Fall 2018:

- “Pizza & Punctuation” grammar workshops:
 - Connecting sentences I
 - Connecting sentences II
 - Increasing sentence variety (adj. clauses & appositives)
 - Punctuation, Paraphrasing, & Citations
- Error logs in EN99 course w/ correction codes (pass these out)
- Reflections at end of semester in EN99 course

Method

Spring 2019:

- “Pizza & Punctuation” grammar workshops:
 - Transition Words / Connecting Sentences
 - Nonrestrictive Adjective Clauses
- Error logs in EN100 course w/ correction codes (more data)
- Reflections at end of semester in EN100 course

Method

Both semesters:

- Examined writing of students before and after they attended workshops.
- Looked for increased use of target grammar:
 - conjunctions
 - conjunctive adverbs
 - appositives
 - adjective clauses

Method

Both semesters:

- Survey on student perceptions of grammar workshops
- Counted number of errors of each type on assignments throughout semester in EN99/100 (Spring semester had more data)

Results

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Student Perceptions

“Pizza & Punctuation” Survey results:

Student Perceptions

Student reflections:

Limitations

- Improvements in grammar (use of transition words, etc.) could be due to extraneous factors:
 - input from other sources
 - in-class grammar instruction
 - receiving correctional feedback
- Transition words were also covered in EN99/100
- Grammar workshops were optional



Suggestions/Discussion

How might we encourage attendance at grammar workshop from those students who need it most?

More longitudinal studies necessary to determine in error correction codes help students reduce grammar errors.

References

- ◆ Chuang, F-Y. & Nesi, H. (2006). An analysis of formal errors in a corpus of L2 English produced by Chinese students. *Corpora*, 1(2) 251-271.
- ◆ Conti, G. & Sato, Y. (2015). Metacognitive enhancement and error correction: a discussion of the shortcomings of traditional error treatment and of the potential benefits of learner training in self-monitoring strategies. *The Language Gym*. Retrieved from <https://gianfrancoconti.wordpress.com/2015/05/07/why-teachers-should-not-bother-correcting-errors-in-their-students-writing/>
- ◆ Ferris, D. & Hedgcock, J. (2005). *Teaching ESL Composition*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.