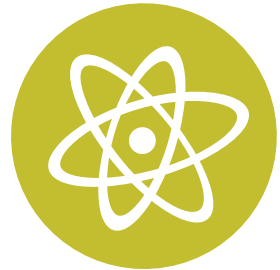


# WORKING WITH MULTILINGUAL STUDENT WRITERS

## FACULTY GUIDE



Purdue  
Writing  
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Salut Olà  
Hej Tere Mi hao  
Bonjour Aloha  
Tsubem Selam  
Mi hao Hello Ciao  
Salut Guten Tag  
Hei Aloha Olà

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# Introduction



## Reading and assessing the writing of multilingual students can be a unique challenge for college faculty.

The following guide offers strategies for how to read, assess, and provide feedback on the work of multilingual student writers, and it contextualizes these strategies in current Second Language Studies research. Please note that this guide primarily focuses on undergraduate students, though much of this material can also apply to graduate students. This guide includes the following sections:

- I. An overview of multilingual student writing at Purdue
- II. Differences between populations (international vs. immigrant; undergraduate vs. graduate)
- III. Rules-of-thumb and current research on multilingual student writers
- IV. Eleven tips for faculty
- V. Feedback Flowchart for Multilingual Student Writing
- VI. Best practices for commenting on multilingual student writing
- VII. Working with the Purdue Writing Lab
- VIII. Additional resources for multilingual students and faculty
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# Note on terminology

**In this guide, the term “multilingual writers” will refer to international student writers whose first language is not American English.**



Historically, this population has been referred to as “English as a second language” (ESL). “ESL” as a label is problematic and has long been out of use among language and writing researchers because it does not accurately reflect the characteristics of this group. Specifically, some of these international students are learning to write in English as a third or possibly fourth or fifth language; some may use English as their primary spoken language yet have had little experience writing in English; and some have been writing in English since they began school, though the language spoken in their home is not English. In addition to lacking accuracy, the term “ESL” has fallen out of favor because it carries with it the stigma of a skills deficiency, which can have negative impacts on these students in terms of assessment, placement, and academic ability. Several other terms are more accurate, current, and in use by contemporary language and writing researchers, although they may also suffer from the problems of stigma and lack of accuracy:

- **English as Another Language Learners (EALL)**
- **English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)**
- **English Language Learners (ELL)**
- **L2 learners (note: this term is currently favored by researchers in second language writing)**

# I. An overview of multilingual student writing at Purdue

**Purdue ranks 3rd among all U.S. public universities in total number of enrolled international students, and 1st in international students majoring in STEM disciplines,**



according to the Fall 2016 International Students & Scholars statistical report (<https://www.iss.purdue.edu/ISSOffice/Reports.cfm>).

In terms of the Purdue student body, 23% of students at Purdue are international. To further clarify these numbers, 5,133 or 17.1% of undergraduates and 4,170 or 40.1% of graduate students are international. Because of these trends, most faculty who teach at Purdue can expect to have a substantial number of international students in their classes.

Reading, assessing, and offering feedback on multilingual student writing may cause a degree of anxiety in faculty who feel unprepared to address the specialized writing issues international students are presumed to have. Typically these issues involve grammar, style, and sentence structures that differ significantly from the accepted standards of good writing in a given discipline. It is difficult enough to lead students who have been writing in American English their entire lives to produce clear and succinct prose, and this difficulty increases when the expected grammatical usage (e.g., subject/verb agreement or the omission of an article) is seemingly not part of a given student's understanding. Faculty are faced with the dual challenge of assessing student work fairly and of helping students develop academic and/or professional standards of writing.

## Historically, universities have approached the challenges of multilingual writers by offering specialized writing or language classes.



In addition, writing centers are often given the task of helping multilingual writers raise their proficiency level to match that of their monolingual peers. Purdue provides several services for multilingual student writers:

- Composition classes designed specifically for L2 writers
- The Purdue Language and Cultural Exchange (PLaCE) program which offers semester-long English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes for students whose TOEFL scores fall below a certain level
- PLaCE-sponsored short courses for busy graduate students
- The Purdue Writing Lab (whose clients are nearly 75% international) which offers workshops and one-on-one writing tutoring
- Other services that are sponsored by various university organizations and student groups

*For a more complete summary of Purdue's resources for international students skip ahead to section VIII.*

Although there are many resources available for multilingual student writers, the work of learning to write well in another language is a remarkably difficult and time-consuming task, and, inevitably, increased international enrollment means that more faculty members will need to acquaint themselves with instructional methods to help these students become more effective writers.


## II. Differences between populations (international vs. immigrant; undergraduate vs. graduate)



### International vs. Generation 1.5/ Immigrant multilingual student writers

The difference between international multilingual student writers and immigrant or “generation 1.5” student writers is a possible difference in cultural investment, educational background, and financial resources. International students are generally defined by their student visa status and are, therefore, temporary residents who may not invest as much in culture and language as immigrant populations because they do not see themselves staying in the United States beyond college or graduate school. They tend to be smart, hard-working, and ambitious students who were academically strong in their home countries (Ferris, 2009). Though it is often true that international undergraduates come from affluent families, this is not necessarily true for graduate student populations.






In contrast, generation 1.5 students tend to be more interested in assimilating, and they may have stronger oral language skills, as well as more knowledge of some of the social and academic conventions of the United States. They have most likely attended some pre-college schooling in the United States. Generally they are a more diverse group than the international students. A generation 1.5 student may have a radically different set of experiences and language skills compared to other generation 1.5 students who have been in the United States for a shorter or longer period (Ferris, 2009). Sometimes these students are bilingual, and sometimes they are not, depending on how long they have attended school in the United States. Often, generation 1.5 students are the first people in their family to go to college, and they often have work and family obligations that can greatly affect the amount of time they have to devote to school. Their abilities with the English language may be quite different from the abilities of international students (Harklau, Losey, & Siegal, 1999).

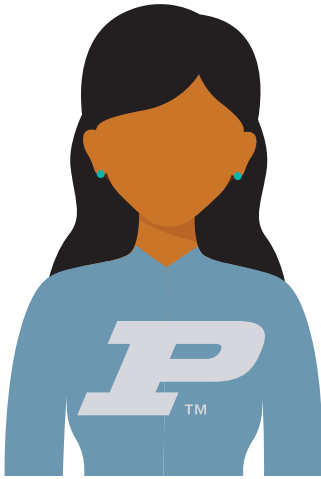


## Generation 1.5/Immigrant multilingual student writers:

- May have high spoken-English proficiency, but low written-English proficiency.
- May have an “ear” for learning oral English, but not have a strong grasp of the metalinguistic language (e.g., terms like verbs or prepositions) that international multilingual student writers often possess.
- May use non-standard dialects of English (Harklau et al., 1999) that are heavily influenced by the language spoken in their home or community.
- May not have attained written mastery in any language (unlike international students who tend to have written mastery of their home language).
- May have unexpected gaps in their knowledge due to missing important material in content-area classes while attending pull-out English language classes.



Any of the items above may or may not apply to a particular international or generation 1.5/immigrant multilingual student writer. It is best to find out more about a particular student’s learning background whenever possible. In terms of this guide, the strategies mentioned for working with multilingual student writers can also apply to generation 1.5/immigrant writers, as well as most other kinds of student writers.



## Undergraduate vs. graduate multilingual writers

The difference between undergraduate level and graduate level multilingual student writers is mostly a difference in maturity and ability to take initiative and is not necessarily a difference in English writing proficiency. The tips and suggestions in this guide assume that the multilingual student writers in question are undergraduate international students; however, the rules-of-thumb, big picture tips, and best commenting practices are also relevant for graduate students. In addition, graduate writers have a strong need to learn disciplinary guidelines and conventions because, in most cases, their degrees are professional degrees. Ensuring that disciplinary conventions are communicated to students is not only helpful for their writing but will also be helpful to their future careers.



***See Rule-of-thumb #5 in section III and tips 1 & 2 in section IV for more information on how to approach disciplinary guidelines.***

### III. Rules-of-thumb and current research on multilingual student writers



**Multilingual student writers come from a variety of backgrounds, geographical locations, and levels of English proficiency.**

The following section offers some general rules-of-thumb regarding multilingual student writers, using some of the most current and/or relevant research about this group. Please note that this list is not meant to be used as a set of rules to apply, but as contextualization for the best teaching practices in the sections that follow.

#### **Rule-of-thumb #1: L1 and L2 student writers are different kinds of writers.**

Multilingual student writers and their monolingual (L1) counterparts have been found to have differences in composition processes, including planning, drafting, and reviewing their writing. Additionally, differences have also been found between their written texts on measures of fluency, accuracy, quality and structure (Silva, 1993). Faculty members should keep these differences in mind when reading student writing and offering feedback.

***For direct strategies on how to approach these differences, skip ahead to sections IV and V.***

**Rule-of-thumb #2: Learning to write academic prose in a second language takes a long time, and learning grammar is only part of this process.**

Though language instruction in areas like grammar and vocabulary is obviously important in helping multilingual students become more proficient writers, research into L2 writing has found that there is no “quick fix” when it comes to learning to write in a second language. It’s important for faculty to understand that (a) it takes a long time to learn how to write for academic purposes in a second language (Collier [1987], for example, demonstrates that it will take 7 years under ideal learning conditions), and (b) sending students to the Writing Lab will help, but in all likelihood it won’t make L2 writers suddenly write like L1 writers. Being realistic about how much students can improve their writing over the course of a single semester will reduce both faculty and student anxiety. In addition, tolerating minor differences in grammar that do not impede communication will allow more time to focus on differences in grammar that do impede communication.

**Rule-of-thumb #3: Focused and purposeful error correction can be an effective way to improve student writing; however, marking every error can be counterproductive.**

Effective error correction requires intensive work from both the multilingual student writer and the faculty member to measurably improve a student’s grammar in the long term. Dana Ferris, one of the leading researchers on the subject of corrective feedback and the editor of the *Journal of Response to Writing*, says in an interview that for corrective error feedback to work,

**Rule-of-thumb #3: continued on next page**



### Rule-of-thumb #3: continued

It really needs to be individualized and adaptive in the sense that as students make progress in one area you start focusing on something else, so I absolutely think it is critical that students be allowed or required to revise, correct, [and] apply feedback on a particular paper. I think you are kind of wasting your time if you give students error feedback and say next time you write a paper, remember that. (Yao, 2015, p. 73)

In other words, improving student grammar is a long-term investment that works best when students have time to revise their current work with feedback in mind. Moreover, says Ferris, focusing on a few error patterns at a time and working toward incremental progress is best:

I very much believe in focused feedback, meaning specific error patterns and not too much of it at any given time. If you just take a paper and write all over it students can't see any rhyme or reason or pattern to it, again it is overwhelming and I'm not sure how much they can get out of it. But if you mark three or four error patterns and then give them a little note at the end saying here's what I marked then you are giving them something to go on that is manageable enough for them to learn something from it and apply it in the future. (Yao, 2015, p. 73)


What is not helpful, as Ferris notes, is marking every error on every page. "Correcting" grammar errors can be effective; however, for these corrections to have an impact, faculty members should consider how to systematically respond to a particular error type and how they want a student to proceed in future writing tasks, whether in revisions of the current work or in entirely new assignments.

***For more suggestions and tips on how to best provide feedback to L2 writers, including suggestions about how to systematically respond to grammar errors, skip ahead to sections V and VI.***

## **Rule-of-thumb #4: Attention to global concerns is just as important as sentence-level attention.**

Organization, genre conventions, and the overall purpose of the writing task are considered by writing experts to have a significant bearing on the effectiveness of a given piece of writing. See Bean (2011) for information about the connections between critical thinking and writing, and Sommers (1982) for an explanation of how instructor comments focus student writers' attention when revising. A global concern is anything meaning-related, and helping multilingual student writers focus on these kinds of concerns will help them improve their focus and clarity of thought on a given piece of writing, just as much as or more so than a focus on sentence-level concerns. Questions that deal with global concerns might include the following:

- How do the ideas align and cohere within the text?
- Does the big picture organization meet the assignment guidelines?
- Are the claims adequately supported by evidence?
- Are students using the best words to describe what they are writing about?



Of course, sentence-level concerns, or local errors, are sometimes impossible to ignore, and when this happens, it is best to prioritize focus on local issues that impair global meaning. Local errors that do not impede meaning should take a backseat to those that do.

***See sections V and VI for a detailed explanation of suggested feedback practices.***



**Rule-of-thumb #5: What counts as “good academic writing” can vary between contexts.**

The conventions of lab reports in mechanical engineering are different than they are in biology, and the conventions of a sociology paper are different than the conventions of an applied linguistics paper. Being clear about expectations, including what kinds of guidelines students are expected to follow when writing, is essential for faculty who wish to help their students succeed in both the academic and professional world. These guidelines might include the following:

- General information about writing in a given discipline, including style guides that provide example sentences
- Guidelines that specify the different parts of a particular kind of text (e.g., a lab report, memo, email) and the material that should be included in each part
- Specific formatting instruction if any, such as type size, headers, how to label figures, what a title page should look like, etc.
- Specific examples of all of the above



**Rule-of-thumb #6:** What counts as “good academic writing” can be similar between contexts.

Many academic writers regard academic prose as an information-delivery system that works best when the most important information is delivered as clearly and quickly as possible. Despite field-specific variation in writing conventions, some features of “good writing” are shared among academic disciplines in the United States; therefore, these features are best to emphasize when discussing writing assignments and disciplinary conventions or when offering feedback:

- Clarity of prose, including a top down and efficient organizational structure where the main point of the paragraph appears first
- Correct handling of citation conventions
- Adequate support for claims using scientific or “objective” evidence from peer-reviewed or other verifiable sources

**Rule-of-thumb #7:** Education styles can vary radically from one culture to the next.

Studies in contrastive, inter-cultural, and comparative rhetoric, as well as in education, have found that the first language and home culture of a multilingual student writer has an impact on the kinds of assumptions and ideas that student brings to a given writing assignment (Leki, 1991; Connor, 2002). For example, researchers in comparative education have found that the American high school STEM classroom is typically “student-centered,” inductive, and experiential while high school STEM classrooms in China are “teacher-centered,” deductive, and focused on book-learning (Su, Su, & Goldstein, 1994). Sullivan,

**Rule-of-thumb #7: continued on next page**



## **Rule-of-thumb #7: continued**

Zhang, & Zheng (2012) offer a comparison of American and Chinese college level essay styles, suggesting that the expectations for essay writing in the United States tend to be more critically- and procedurally-oriented while the expectations in China for essay writing encourage literary elegance and a positive message. While these are just a few examples, the point here is that home culture may also lead to different understandings of academic and professional conventions and expectations.

## **Rule-of-thumb #8: Writing is a skill unto itself and may not necessarily relate to other language skills.**

Multilingual student writers who are proficient at speaking are not necessarily proficient at writing. In fact, researchers have found that scores on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) tend to be distributed unevenly. A student might be good at writing and speaking, or at reading and listening, but it can be unusual for an individual to possess equal skill in all four categories. In terms of multilingual student writing, the important point here is that writing is a skill unto itself, separate from other language skills; therefore, a multilingual writer might be struggling with writing and with English as a language. To help students become better writers, attention should be drawn to the features of writing the instructor wants improved. Research into Second Language Acquisition (SLA) has shown that there is very little that a language learner “picks up” without consciously noticing a given feature (Schmidt, 1990). Thus, to help students improve their writing in academic and professional contexts, it is necessary to make writing an explicit part of the curriculum.

## IV. Eleven tips for faculty working with multilingual student writers

The following suggestions should be considered best practices for working with multilingual student writers but may also be applicable for college writers generally.



*See Section VII for an explanation of how the Writing Lab collaborates with faculty on all aspects of writing instruction.*

**When working with multilingual student writers, it is often best to:**

1. **Be as specific as possible when outlining assignment requirements.** This may include preparing a convention guide; discussing differences between genres; and providing examples of target work, citation guidelines, discipline-specific vocabulary, and/or rhetorical moves.
2. **Provide specific examples of the work students should produce.** These examples could be student examples, professional examples, or any other effective excerpts. Additionally, spend time in class explicitly discussing these examples and the kinds of rhetorical moves that they make (for example, what goes into an introduction in a lab report and what kind of language is used to accomplish this task). Providing specific examples can also be helpful for informal writing assignments such as reflection papers and journals.



## Eleven tips for faculty working with multilingual student writers continued

- 3. Use explicit rubrics.** Being transparent about grading criteria lets students know the exact specifications that a given assignment requires. Check out *Engaging Ideas, 2nd ed.*, by John Bean for a more extensive overview of the types and uses of rubrics.
- 4. Structure assignments to avoid cultural bias** by providing opportunities for multilingual student writers to be experts on what they know. For example, instead of asking students to focus on problems with American bridges or road surfaces, give them the choice of all bridges or road surfaces. Encourage and welcome an international perspective.
- 5. Assign multiple drafts,** or scaffold projects such that students work on them over time, receiving feedback along the way. This may be especially useful in the early stages of a course, for major projects, or for courses offered early in a department's course sequence.
- 6. Encourage proofreading** and other practices like peer review that students can do on their own before they submit their work. Do not assume that students know how to proofread on their own. For more on this, visit the OWL proofreading page for specific strategies (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/561/01/>), or

**continue on to sections V and VI for best commenting practices.**

- 7. Know who students are,** including their language and educational backgrounds. Multilingual student writers at Purdue come from all over the world and, depending on their unique backgrounds, will have different strengths and weaknesses when it comes to writing.

# Feedback Flowchart for Multilingual Student Writing

The purpose of this flowchart is to provide faculty with a systematic, easy-to-follow procedure for addressing errors in the writing of multilingual student writers. After considering the questions in the long rectangular box along the left side, begin with the first question ("Is the error global or local?") and proceed accordingly. Please note that this chart is to be used in conjunction with the "Purdue Writing Lab Faculty Guide for Working with Multilingual Student Writers." Those who use this chart will be able to do so more effectively if they understand the principles behind it. Definitions of the terminology used in this chart, as well as specific strategies for providing feedback, are explained within the faculty guide.

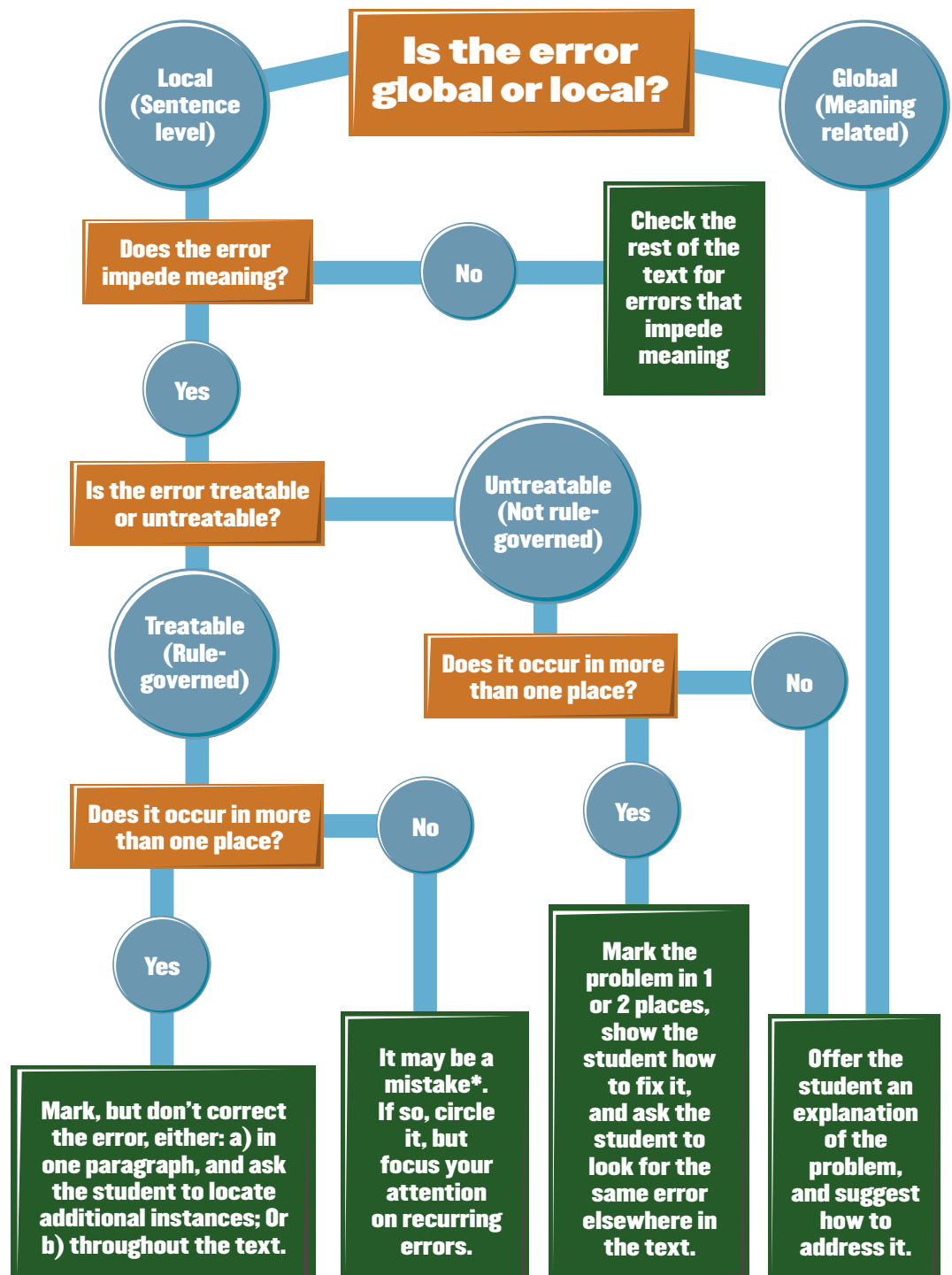
## To consider before reading student work:

- a) International or immigrant multilingual student writer?
- b) Undergraduate or graduate student?
- c) Writing in-progress or a final draft (i.e. should the feedback be summative or formative)?

## Remember to:

- a) Prioritize errors that impede meaning
- b) Explain your feedback

**\* A mistake is an idiosyncratic accident, like a typo.**





## Eleven tips for faculty working with multilingual student writers continued

8. **Encourage students to be proactive** in developing their professional and disciplinary vocabulary. This may include using an English dictionary (as opposed to a bilingual dictionary), keeping a discipline-specific vocabulary journal, or reading for pleasure in English.
9. **Support active reading practices** by being explicit about what students should look for in an assigned reading, providing context for the reading such as the author's background or where a particular research study fits with other research studies, or preparing a list of pre-reading questions.
10. **For in-class writing and reading assignments, allow multilingual student writers more time.** Reading and writing in a second (or third, or fourth) language requires more cognitive power and, therefore, more time. Keep this in mind for essay questions, in-class readings, Power Point slides or when assigning small group work.
11. **Direct students to additional writing and language support resources.** The Writing Lab offers conversation groups as well as writing consultations and workshops.

*For more information about the Writing Lab, as well as other campus resources that may be useful for multilingual student writers, see sections VII and VIII.*

## V. Feedback flowchart for multilingual student writing

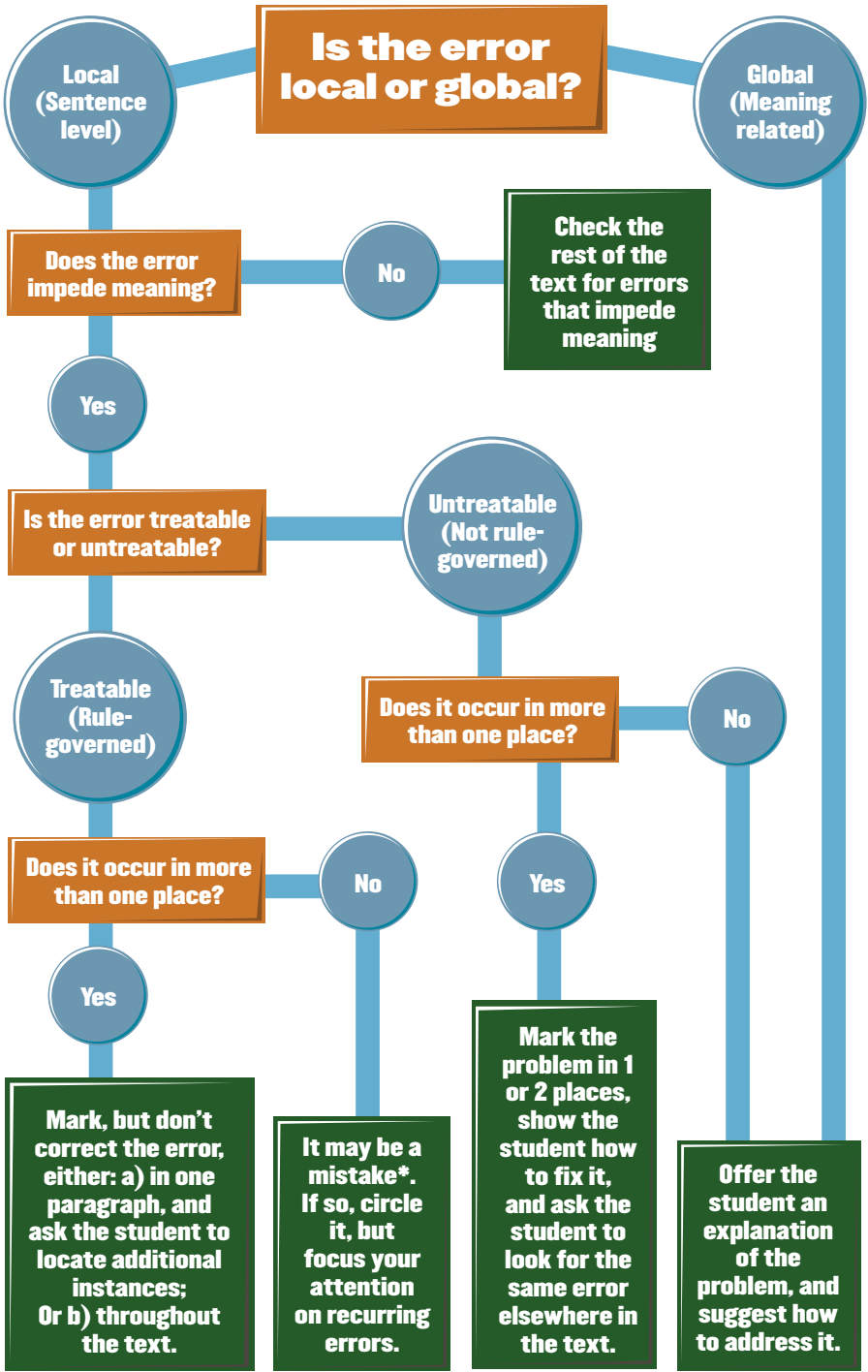


**The purpose of this flowchart is to provide faculty with a systematic, easy-to-follow procedure for addressing error in the writing of multilingual student writers.**

To use it, after considering the questions following this paragraph, begin with the first question (“Is the error global or local?”) and proceed accordingly. Please note that this chart is to be used in conjunction with the **“Purdue Writing Lab Faculty Guide for Working with Multilingual Student Writers.”** Those who use this chart will be able to do so more effectively if they understand the principles behind it. Definitions of the terminology used in this chart, as well as specific strategies for providing feedback, are explained within the faculty guide.

Before reading student work, consider the following questions: (a) is the student an international or immigrant multilingual student writer, (b) is the student an undergraduate or graduate student, and (c) is the writing in-progress or a final draft (i.e., should the feedback be summative or formative)?

Additionally, remember to prioritize errors that impede meaning and explain feedback practices to students.



**\* A mistake is an idiosyncratic accident, like a typo.**



## VI. Best practices for commenting on multilingual student writing



**The following suggestions should be regarded as best practices for commenting on student papers and giving feedback to multilingual student writers.**

These practices are in accordance with current research on commenting and feedback practices in the field of L2 writing (**see section III of this guide for more information**) and are undergirded by the assumption that learning to write well is a process. Please note that many of these practices can also be applied to monolingual student writers.

## When commenting on the work of multilingual student writers, it is often best to:

### 1. **Distinguish between writing with grammar errors that impede meaning and writing with grammar errors that do not impede meaning.**

It is more productive and useful to focus feedback on grammar errors that impede meaning. These kinds of errors might include word usage, verb tense, verb form, and sentence structure issues. Types of errors that may not impede meaning might include article usage (e.g., *a* and *the*), singular/plural distinctions, and subject/verb agreement (**see #5 on page 31 for more specific ways to categorize error types**). Issues that impede meaning are generally considered “global errors,” while issues that are limited to being atypical grammar usage are considered “local errors.” If the multilingual student writer needs to fix global errors, it may be best to hold off on providing feedback on local errors until the former are dealt with. For more on the difference between global and local errors,



**see Rule-of-thumb #4 in section III.**

### 2. **Offer guidelines for revision when commenting on structural and meaning-related issues.**

Studies on commenting practices have found that global comments which offer specific guidelines for revision are appreciated and more likely to be taken seriously and used by student writers (Straub, 1997). For example, a comment that tells a student why an introduction is inadequate and how the student should rewrite it to meet disciplinary, professional, or classroom expectations will prove more helpful than a comment that simply says, “Rewrite the introduction.”

### 3. **Distinguish between treatable and untreatable grammar errors.**

A treatable error is governed by rules that can be learned and applied. Usually these rules can be located in grammar textbooks. For instance, verb tense errors or incorrect comma use are treatable errors; the student can learn and apply the rule in order to use the construction correctly. An *untreatable* error is an error that is idiosyncratic to a particular writer and context. These might include using the wrong word (“Another *piece* of this experiment included...”), the wrong word form (“Another part of this *experimental* included...”), incorrect idiomatic expressions, or the wrong preposition (“*On* other words...”). Often, untreatable errors are a matter of vocabulary knowledge, and of learning that, for example, verb X always takes preposition Y. In a sense, untreatable errors are best handled in the same way as global errors (**see #2 on page 29**), i.e., by providing explicit advice regarding the nature of the error and how to fix it.

### 4. **Raise student awareness of treatable grammar errors.**

Best commenting and feedback practices suggest that faculty members focus on systematic error correction with the goal of helping students learn to identify their own errors. This will include (a) raising awareness of student need, e.g., making sure that students know what kinds of mistakes are problematic and why, (b) helping students recognize particular error types, and (c) helping students find and correct their own errors (Ferris, 1995; Ferris, 2011).




**For more on this subject, see Rule-of-thumb #3 in Section III.**

**Numbers 5 and 6 on the next few pages offer two ways of raising awareness.**

## 5. Offer feedback on error types (Option 1).

In *ESL writers: A guide for writing center tutors*, Cynthia Linville (2009) offers a list of the six most frequent and treatable error types made by multilingual student writers at the college level. The following is a summary of this list:

- a. **Subject-verb agreement** errors occur when the subject does not agree with the verb in person or number. These errors can be as simple as “This *are* beneficial because...” or as complex as “The literature *state* that...”
- b. **Verb tense** errors occur when an incorrect time marker is used. For example, “I *was* working on my paper since 6:00 a.m.,” or “Previously, the solution *boils* at 154°C...”
- c. **Verb form** errors occur when a verb is incorrectly formed: “A tube from the feed reservoir is taken liquid from the fermentation broth,” or “The flux relating to the transmembrane pressure in the graph.”
- d. **Singular and plural** errors often occur when there is confusion about which nouns are countable and which aren’t. For example, “I have turned in all my homeworks this week.”
- e. **Word form** errors occur when the wrong part of speech is chosen: “Another scope of this work included...” and “I feel very confusing about this assignment.”
- f. **Sentence structure** errors occur for a variety of reasons: A word (often a *to be* verb) is left out; an extra word (often a duplicate subject) is added; word order is incorrect; or clauses that don’t belong together are punctuated as one sentence. Note that sentence structure errors often contain other types of errors within them (Linville, 2009 p. 119).



To use a list like this, faculty should first categorize the type of error and then write this categorization near the problematic word or words or in the margins of the line where the error appears.

**Another way to mark error types is with extensive coding.** Ferris (2011) prepared the following list of error codes that college writing instructors commonly use when offering feedback. Remember that it is essential that these abbreviations be explained beforehand. Do not assume that a multilingual student writer will be familiar with the following codes:


<b>Error Type</b>	<b>Abbreviation/Code</b>
Word choice	WC
Verb tense	VT
Verb form	VF
Word form	WF
Subject-verb agreement	SV
Articles	Art
Noun ending	N
Pronouns	Pr
Run-on	RO
Fragment	Frag
Punctuation	Punc
Spelling	Sp
Sentence structure	SS
Informal	Inf
Idiom	ID

**Here is an example of what feedback using these codes might look like:**

**WC/ID**

**VF**

In the other hand, the mixture's substrate began to boiling before the enzyme took effects.



Note that the preposition error “In the other hand,” could be considered a word choice error or an idiomatic usage error (as well as a preposition error, which is not listed in the codes above). Some errors will fall into multiple categories, and it is at the discretion of the faculty member to specify the type. As always it is important to prioritize errors that impede meaning over errors that do not impede meaning. In the case of the example above, arguably, only the verb form error affects the sentence’s meaning.

6. **Mark student errors by simply underlining or circling them (Option 2).**

Some studies have shown that students are able to effectively self-edit their work when instructors circle or otherwise mark treatable grammar errors (Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Ferris, 2006). This means that instructors do not need to identify the type of errors for students, as most multilingual student writers at the college level are familiar enough with grammar usage rules to recognize the type of error and correct these errors themselves, once they have been pointed out. Presumably, the more proficient the multilingual student writer is, the more likely it is that this approach will work.



7. **Prioritize and focus on the most essential errors.**

Marking up an entire paper is not only time-consuming and stressful for the faculty member, but it is also overwhelming and discouraging for the student. In terms of grammar-oriented feedback, choose a few areas for the student to focus on improving and encourage students to proofread for those errors on the next assignment. One way to do this is to thoroughly comment on one paragraph and then ask the student to examine the following paragraphs, looking for similar errors. Another way is to choose a couple of treatable errors and mark these throughout the entire text.

*See the Feedback Flowchart in Section V for help with prioritizing errors.*

8. **Explain commenting practices to students and be consistent when following them.**

All students, multilingual student writers included, need to know what feedback they can expect and how to interpret it. This includes explaining the type of language that will be used for feedback (e.g., what abbreviations stand for) and the kinds of features that will be commented on. The more explicit instructors can be about what they are doing and why, the better the chance that students will be able to meet these expectations.


## 9. **Set realistic goals for error feedback.**

It is unrealistic to expect drastic changes in the writing of multilingual student writers from one writing assignment to the next. Instead, look for improvement throughout the semester, and if there are particular systematic errors multilingual student writers are making, help them focus on these errors. If many of these errors are untreatable errors, try to focus on the errors that have the most relevance for the disciplinary or professional context. Expect gradual improvement from assignment to assignment, encourage self-editing strategies, be clear about expectations, and be tolerant of minor differences that do not affect the overall purpose of the writing.

## 10. **Consider the differences between summative and formative feedback.**

“Summative” feedback is given after an assignment has been handed in. It is usually a grade and/or comments regarding how the student met or did not meet assignment requirements. “Formative” feedback is given over the course of an assignment and is more directive in terms of how to improve a given assignment prior to the final grade. Giving formative feedback after an assignment has already been handed in is often ineffective as a means of improving student writing. Marking all the grammar errors on the final draft of a paper is not helpful for students and therefore is not a productive use of time for faculty.



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11. **Assign multiple drafts or scaffold projects so students receive feedback throughout the course of the assignment.** This may be especially useful in the early stages of a course, for major projects, or for courses early in a particular discipline.
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12. **Complement written feedback with one-on-one conferences when possible.**

Having conversations about written feedback, especially in the early stages of a class or assignment, can clear up possible misunderstandings. Research has found that one of the biggest problems with faculty comments is that students often cannot read them or cannot interpret them in the way that the professor intended (Ferris, 1995).

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13. **Direct students to additional language-learning resources when necessary.**

Some options include visits to the Writing Lab, on-campus writing workshops, and disciplinary-specific writing workshops. The more specific the faculty can be with their multilingual student writers about the issues they want them to address, the more focused these students can be when working with language specialists in addressing these issues. For example, instead of asking multilingual student writers to “fix their grammar,” a faculty member might ask them to work on a particular aspect of their grammar that has been identified as problematic (e.g., “work on verb tenses”).

## VII. Working with the Purdue Writing Lab

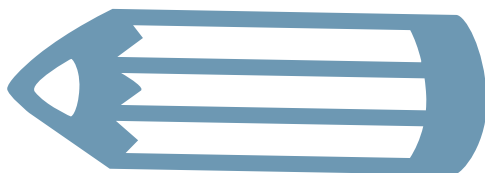
**The Writing Lab has conducted an initial study of Writing Lab use from Fall 2008 to Spring 2015.**

**Results from that study indicate that students who visit the Writing Lab for consultations for English 106 assignments have a statistically significant higher semester grade point average, an effect that holds up across any number of metrics (residency, college, ethnicity, and sex, as well as ACT, SAT, and TOEFL scores).**



*For detailed information about this research, visit the Writing Lab's webpage for research: <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/research/>*

Although students benefit from Writing Lab consultations, Writing Lab services are not only for students. The following section outlines how faculty can collaborate with the Writing Lab to improve their students' writing. This section points to ways that the Writing Lab can work with faculty to develop writing-related curriculum and to use the Writing Lab themselves.



## The Purdue Writing Lab:

### **Wants to collaborate with faculty.**

The Purdue Writing Lab should not be regarded merely as an outside service, a fix-it shop for writing, to which erring students can be referred. Instead, faculty are encouraged to work with the Writing Lab through every step of the writing process, from the initial conception of an assignment to its final assessment.

### **Can help faculty design writing-related curriculum.**

In addition to one-on-one consultations regarding a specific piece of writing, Writing Lab staff (which includes the Directors of the Writing Lab, graduate writing consultants, a multilingual writing specialist, and a writing across the curriculum coordinator) are available to help faculty design and write assignment prompts, assessment tools, and writing workshops. Consultations can also cover topics such as proofreading strategies to share with students or big-picture strategies for incorporating writing into every kind of classroom or teaching style.

### **Is rich in writing-related resources.**

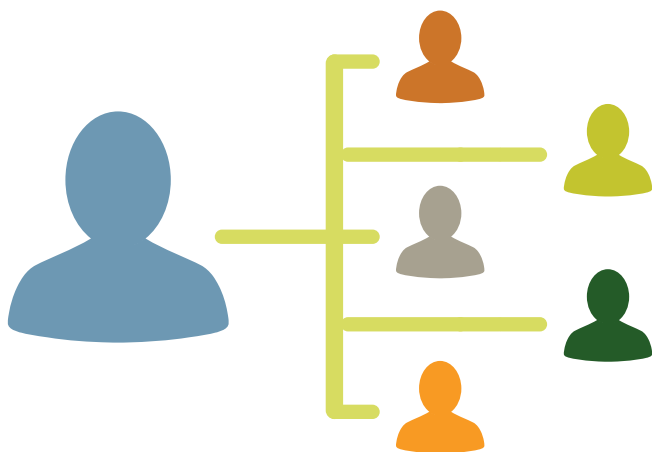
The Purdue Writing Lab has a comprehensive library of writing-related texts, including guides for designing rubrics, working with multilingual learners, and conceiving and drafting assignments. Additionally, the Purdue Writing Lab has a collection of Purdue-specific sample student papers and disciplinary convention guides. All of the above are available for faculty use.

### **Offers writing workshops and collaborative workshop development.**

Purdue Writing Lab consultants offer writing-specific workshops on various subjects (e.g., cover letters, citation conventions). The Writing Lab also seeks to help faculty design their own writing workshops. Collaborating on workshop design will be more effective in helping students become better writers because the content of these workshops is tailored to specific assignments and disciplines.

**Can assist at any stage in the writing process.** Often students come (or are referred) to the Writing Lab for the purposes of proofreading the final draft of a given document; however, there are many stages in the writing process, including what happens before the writer ever puts pen to paper. The Writing Lab can help with all of these stages. Consultants can help writers with brainstorming ideas, researching, drafting, developing support, clarifying the argument, organizing main points and support, discovering disciplinary conventions, correctly citing sources, and yes, the Writing Lab is also well-equipped to look at grammar and sentence-level concerns. Ideally, writers will seek feedback multiple times throughout the writing process.

**Is not just for students.** One of the best ways for faculty to acquaint themselves with Writing Lab services is to make an appointment to work one-on-one with a writing consultant. Not only will faculty receive feedback from an experienced reader on whatever kind of document they bring in, but they will gain first-hand-knowledge of how the Writing Lab works (which in turn, will help their students make best use of the Writing Lab). Alternatively, faculty are invited to stop by the Writing Lab to simply chat about what the Writing Lab offers.



## VIII. Additional resources for multilingual students and faculty at Purdue



**This section provides a brief list of some of the language and writing help available to international students at Purdue and in the surrounding community.**

The list is not exhaustive and might change without notice at any time.

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### **The Purdue Writing Lab**

The Purdue Writing Lab offers Purdue students, visiting scholars, staff, and faculty the opportunity to work one-on-one with trained writing tutors for half-hour or hour-long appointments. In addition, the Writing Lab offers a variety of other writing-related services, including the following:

- Conversation groups
- Workshops
- Online Writing Lab (OWL)
- Software & books for English language learning
- Consultations with faculty about writing assignments

*For more information visit <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/writinglab> or call 765-494-3723.*

## **Purdue Language and Cultural Exchange (PLaCE) program**

The PLaCE Program is designed to help improve the oral and written skills of international students at Purdue. Services include the following:

- Semester-long courses (ENGL 110 & ENGL 111)
- Short courses (non-credit, 6 weeks long)

*Please visit <http://www.purdue.edu/place/>, call 765-496-2743, or write [PLaCE@purdue.edu](mailto:PLaCE@purdue.edu) for more information.*

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## **English Department Courses**

Purdue's English department offers a number of courses specifically designed for international students, including the following:

- ENGL 106i: First Year Composition for International Students
  - ENGL 620: Classroom Communication in ESL for Teaching Assistants
  - ENGL 621: Writing Communication for International Graduate Students
- 

## **The Office of International Students and Scholars @ Purdue**

The Office of International Students and Scholars (ISS) is committed to the internationalization of Purdue University by providing appropriate services and support to international clientele and various University departments and offices. ISS seeks to enhance the academic, cultural, and social pursuits of students and scholars from abroad through knowledge and expertise in recruitment, admissions, immigration, advising, and cross-cultural programming.

*Visit <https://www.iss.purdue.edu/>, write [iss@purdue.edu](mailto:iss@purdue.edu), or call 765-494-5770 for more information.*

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## **Various Community Programs**

West Lafayette and Lafayette are home to many programs that offer services for international students, including ESL classes, conversation groups, and outreach. For a comprehensive list of these programs, please visit the Purdue Writing Lab in Heavilon Hall and ask for a copy of the "Academic Resources for International Students and Scholars at Purdue" handout.

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