

Teaching Multilingual and International Students:
Strategies, Resources, and Advice for Faculty
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Understanding our Students— Aren't All Multilingual Writers the Same?

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Dana Ferris (*Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing*, 2nd edition, 2011) describes three subgroups we may see represented in our student population. The descriptions that follow *are generalizations*. Complicating factors such as country of origin, first language, socio-economic background, and a host of other variables complicate these definitions, and should encourage instructors to evaluate each student based on their personal background as much as possible. However, the following distinctions are helpful in a discussion of corrective feedback because they can affect what type of feedback a student expects and what type of feedback is useful to a given student.

International Students

Have often learned English in a formal academic setting and are often comfortable discussing grammar in terms of *subject, verb, clause, tense, agreement, etc.* These students also often expect and welcome instructor feedback on their writing, seeing their educational experience in the US as a limited time to improve on their writing skills as much as possible.

Late Arriving Resident Immigrants

Although these students may have been in the US only a short time longer than most international students, they often have “interrupted [first language] schooling and haphazard or even nonexistent [second language] instruction” (Ferris). These students have often attended high school or even middle school in the US and, consequently, have usually developed a sense of what sounds right. This can help them produce writing that feels more natural, but may exhibit ‘fossilized’, or habitual, errors that are difficult for the student to identify and correct.

Early Arriving Resident Immigrants or Generation 1.5 Students

This group of students has the most exposure to English, having often lived in the US and attended English-language schools from a very young age. Their situation can be complicated by

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growing up in a native language community and/or spending large amounts of time in their parents' home country, speaking their parents' native language.