Helping Students to Apply Grammar Lessons to Their Own Writing

In order to see improvement in grammar, students must begin to connect their own writing to the grammar lessons being taught in class. Here is an overview of how I have tried to incorporate students’ own writing into the teaching of grammar.

1. I mark up one paragraph or one page of their essays for grammar concerns, especially if those are the same topics we are discussing in class (e.g. run-on sentences or commas). I use symbols to mark where the error occurs and the type of error.

2. When I return the first set of essays to students, I also give them a “Correction Symbols” sheet that lists the error, symbol, example, and a link to a website discussing this issue. (see sample)

3. For each essay, I discuss 3-5 new symbols with my students. For the first essay in an English 20 class, for example, I may only teach the symbol for capitalization, missing a word, and spelling. If students have individual issues, such as parallelism, I can point them to the symbol sheet for more information.

4. As a follow-up assignment to each essay, students must identify some of their incorrect sentence, and, using the symbol sheet, correct their errors. This helps students to see the type of errors they are making. (see sample)

5. As the semester progresses, they usually notice that they have a tendency to make the same errors over and over. If a student still has trouble identifying errors, then this is a good opportunity to suggest a DLA at the Success Center or other resources that might help the student practice.