GAYLE MORRIS
LSA SWEETLAND CENTER FOR WRITING
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

PROVIDING FEEDBACK AND GRADES TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS: SUPPLEMENT 3

The Error Code List

AGR = subject / verb agreement
DET = determiner (words like "a," "an," "some," "none," "many," "one," "their," "our,")
      it may be useful to use the following, more specific, DET codes:
      DETC = determiner choice
      MDET = missing determiner
      UDET = unnecessary determiner

ME = mechanical error (too many or too few spaces between words; too many lines between paragraphs; paragraph is indented incorrectly; justification or line spacing is unusual or inconsistent; in-text citations or references are formatted incorrectly.) If you point out these errors on students' first paper, it is realistic to require that they produce papers free of mechanical errors throughout the remainder of the semester.

Note that many international students use laptops and/or word processing software purchased outside of the US. The default settings of laptops and word processing software purchased outside the US are often quite different than the default settings of laptops and software purchased in the US. These discrepancies can make it difficult for students to format their papers according to American conventions. Generally, it's possible to reconfigure the default settings of a non-American laptop and/or software program in ways that make it easier for students to produce papers that conform to American conventions. The Knowledge Navigation Center and/or UM IT helpdesk can help students reconfigure the default settings of their laptops and/or software programs.

      The UM IT helpdesk: 734-4357 (HELP)
      The Knowledge Navigation Center: 734-647-5836

MV = missing verb
MW = missing word
PC = punctuation or capitalization
SP = spelling
VF = verb form (tense or aspect is incorrect. Tense = past vs. present; aspect = perfect vs. simple vs. progressive)
WC = word choice (use this only if you think the student can come up with an alternate word on his/her own. In many cases, it may be more efficient to simply provide an alternate wording.) The "WC" code can be useful in drawing students' attention to the fact that they have chosen a singular pronoun to refer to more than one person; a masculine pronoun to refer to a woman; etc. This code can also be useful in drawing attention to the fact that students used an adjective when they needed an adverb or vice versa.
WF = word form (generally, I use this to indicate that a singular noun should be plural or vice versa)
WO = word order (use only for simple instances of incorrect word order; when syntax is very convoluted, it's probably better to do one of the following: 1) highlight the sentence and ask student to break into shorter sentences [one thought = one sentence], or 2) suggest a more syntactically felicitous rewording
UW = unnecessary word