Suggested Readings on Reducing Error in Student Writing

Bartholomae, David. "The Study of Error." College Composition and Communication. 31 (1980): 253-69. Emphasizes that the focus for students should be on reducing error in their writing, not on becoming grammarians. Urges that teachers become proficient at analysis of student error.


Delpit, Lisa. "Acquisition of Literate Discourse." Theory into Practice. 31 (1992): 296-302. Argues that the profession’s disdain for formal grammar instruction is a disservice for many students, particularly many African American students.


Hillocks, George. Research in Written Communication. Urbana: NCTE, 1986. This is the most thorough review of all the research into the teaching of grammar. It is frequently cited as having conclusively demonstrated that “the teaching of grammar does no good and may do harm by taking time away from other, more beneficial, activities.


Kollin, Martha. "Closing the Books on Alchemy." College Composition and Communication. 32 (1981): 139-51. Takes the profession to task (and particularly Hillocks) for dismissing the teaching of grammar based on flawed and outdated research. Argues that students should study grammar of
the English language, not necessarily to improve their writing, but because it is a basic part of our culture. If students need to learn the properties of chemicals or the names of bones, surely they need to learn the basic structure of their language, Kolln argues.


Mulroy, David. The War against Grammar. Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Boynton Cook, 2003. A recent book that surveys attitudes toward the teaching of grammar and concludes we should return to an emphasis on the parts of speech, the components of the sentence, and even diagramming sentences.


