

An Empirical Study of the Impact of Rubrics on Writing Performance of Kurdish EFL Students

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Abstract:

The current study investigates the impact of rubrics on developing the writing performance of thirty-three Kurdish EFL university students (English Language Department - University of Halabja). In addition, it examines how rubrics are perceived by those students. This study adopted a quantitative research method, with a pre-test/post-test design and a survey after the post-test. In the pre-test each student wrote an essay without guidance, then a rubric was introduced which outlined essay writing criteria. In the post-test, using the provided rubric the students wrote another essay. In the analysis of the pre-test and post-test scores a significant improvement in writing performance was revealed after using the rubric. A post-writing survey explored students' perceptions. Results indicated a positive view of rubrics, with students appreciating the clarity, fairness, and guidance they provided. However, some students expressed concerns about potential limitations on creativity and suitability for self-assessment. The study highlights the potential of rubrics to enhance writing performance and student perceptions of the evaluation process.

Keywords: Rubric, Essay Writing, Writing Performance, Student Perception.

المخلص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة أثر استخدام نموذج التقييم على الأداء الكتابي لثلاث و ثلاثين من طلبة الصف الرابع في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية في جامعة حلبجة بالإضافة إلى استبيان آراءهم حول نماذج التقييم. استخدم هذا البحث التصميم الكمي في الاختبار القبلي و البعدي مع اجراء استبيان بعد الإختبارين. في الاختبار القبلي قام الطلاب بكتابة مقالات دون توجيه، تبع ذلك تقديم لقاعدة التقييم التي تحدد معايير كتابة المقالات. أما في الاختبار البعدي، قام الطلاب بكتابة مقالا آخر باستخدام نموذج التقييم الأنف الذكر. كشف تحليل درجات الاختبار القبلي والبعدي عن تحسن كبير في أداء الكتابة بعد استخدام نموذج التقييم. بين استبيان ما بعد الكتابة تصورات الطلاب في ما يخص نموذج التقييم. كما أشارت النتائج إلى وجود إدراك إيجابي لاستخدام نماذج التقييم التي احتوت على الوضوح والإنصاف والتوجيه. ومع ذلك، أعرب بعض الطلاب عن مخاوفهم بشأن القيود المحتملة على الإبداع وملائمة التقييم الذاتي. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على إمكانات نماذج التقييم لتحسين الأداء الكتابي وتصورات الطلاب لعملية التقييم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: نموذج التقييم، كتابة المقالات، أداء الكتابة، إدراك الطالب.

پوخته

ئهم توێژینهوهیه به‌هواداچوون بۆ کاریگهری به‌کارهێنانی روبهریک له‌سه‌ر ئه‌دای نووسین و تێروانینی خوێندکار له‌ سی و سی خوێندکاری قوناغی چوارهمی به‌شی زمانی ئینگلیزی له‌ زانکۆی هه‌له‌بجه ده‌کات. له‌م توێژینهوهیه دیزاینیکی چه‌ندایه‌تی تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی پیشی و پاشی له‌گه‌ڵ راپرسییه‌کی دای نووسین به‌کارهێنرا. خوێندکاران له‌ پیش تاقیکردنه‌وه‌که‌دا به‌ی رێنمایی وتاریان نووسیوه، دواتر روبهریکیک که‌ پێوه‌مه‌کانی نووسینی وتار ده‌خاته‌ روو پێشه‌کییه‌کی خوێندکاران کرا. له‌ تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی پاشیدا، خوێندکاران به‌ به‌کارهێنانی روبهریکی پێشه‌که‌شکراو وتاریکی دیکه‌یان نووسی. شیکاری نهمه‌کانی تاقیکردنه‌وه‌ی پیشی و پاشی باشتربوونی به‌رچاوی له‌ ئه‌دای نووسیندا ده‌رخست دای به‌کارهێنانی روبهریکه‌که‌. راپرسییه‌کی دای نووسین تێروانینه‌کانی خوێندکارانی هه‌له‌سه‌نگاندوه. نه‌جابه‌کان نا‌ماژمیان به‌ دیدیکی گشتی ئه‌رینی کرد بۆ روبهریکه‌کان، خوێندکاران ئه‌و پرونی و دادپه‌روهری و رێنماییانه‌ی که‌ روبهریک پێشه‌که‌شیان ده‌کات به‌رز ده‌نرخین. به‌لام هه‌ندیک له‌ خوێندکاران نیگه‌رانی خۆیان ده‌ربری سه‌بارت به‌ سنوورداریبوون له‌ دا‌هێنان و گونجایی بۆ خۆ هه‌له‌سه‌نگاندنی. توێژینه‌وه‌که‌ تیشک ده‌خاته‌ سه‌ر توانای روبهریکه‌کان بۆ به‌رزکردنه‌وه‌ی ئه‌دای نووسین و تێروانینه‌کانی خوێندکاران بۆ پرۆسه‌ی هه‌له‌سه‌نگاندن.

کلێله وشه: روبهریک، نووسینی وتار، ئه‌دای نووسین، تێروانینی خوێندکار

1. Introduction

Due to its extensive historical context, dictionaries may not reveal the intended meaning of the word "rubric." The term was derived from the Latin word "rubrica," which means red ochre or red earth, and was used to describe the red headings in religious texts, such as the Bible or prayer books, that were used to highlight significant passages. According to Stevens and Levi (2005), this practice of highlighting important sections in red evolved into the use of rubrics as a set of guidelines or standards for completing a specific task.

Today, the most widely acknowledged definition of a rubric is a scoring guide that specifies evaluation criteria for a student's academic work, such as papers, projects, or tests. The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines rubric as "a guide listing specific criteria for grading or scoring academic papers, projects, and tests." This definition demonstrates how the term has evolved from a simple color heading to a more comprehensive set of rules or guidelines for evaluating student work (Brookhart, 2013).

During the 1990s, rubrics acquired popularity in the educational world due to the emergence of alternative assessment methods. Initially, administrators and researchers utilized them to evaluate and compare the efficacy of various school systems (Turley & Gallagher, 2008). With the advent of the process approach to writing instruction, however, rubrics gradually became an important tool for providing students with feedback on their writing products in relation to the criteria, as well as suggestions for how they can develop their writing skills. Not only are rubrics used by instructors for grading, but also by students for planning their work (Dawson, 2015).

Andrade (2000) emphasized the significance of rubrics as a teaching instrument that facilitates student learning and the development of complex reasoning skills. Rubrics aid students in comprehending assignment requirements and how their work will be evaluated. Rubrics can also be used to encourage self-evaluation and reflection, as students can compare their work to the rubric and identify areas for improvement. Rubrics are particularly beneficial for formative assessment, which focuses on enhancing student learning rather than assigning grades.

Thus, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

- 1- How do rubrics influence the writing skills of university students?
- 2- What are university students' perspectives on the use of rubrics in writing assignments?

To provide appropriate answers to the research questions, the following hypotheses are projected to frame and direct the current study:

- 1- The use of rubrics significantly enhances the writing skills of university students compared to traditional feedback methods.
- 2- University students have a positive perception of the use of rubrics in their writing assignments.

2. Literature review

Rubrics have been employed in the field of education for numerous years as a means of evaluating students for diverse purposes. According to Kennedy and Shiel (2022) rubrics allow “teachers and students to engage with the language of writing assessment and raise expectations about writing quality” (p. 1). An underlying rationale for this practice is that educators endeavor to assess their pupils by means of authentic situations or concerns (Picket & Dodge, 2007). Nevertheless, certain scholars have raised apprehensions regarding the impartiality and precision of conventional evaluation techniques (Gardner, 2000; Wiggins and McTighe, 1998). According to Picket and Dodge (2007), there is a perspective that suggests that teachers have not adequately conveyed assessment criteria or provided sufficient clarification regarding their utilization in evaluating students.

The improvement of formative assessment concepts has been identified as an area where educators could enhance their practices. According to Marzano, Pickering & Pollock (2001) as well as Marzano (2007, 2010), there is a lack of effective implementation of formative assessment practices by educators to facilitate the advancement of their students. Currently, an ever growing number of academic professionals recognize the importance of the unbiased evaluation methods that have the advantage for every student, no matter what their gender, cultural background, financial status and other related variables are. Cleveland (2011) stressed the need of the provision of learning objectives through the setting of clear expectations, constructive feedback, and affirmative reinforcement. According to Duin and Tham (2020) educators who accept that evaluating students is an essential component of the learning process also acknowledge that rubrics have the potential to fulfill both of these functions.

2.1. Definition of "Rubric"

The term "rubric" is mostly used in the field of assessment and evaluation to mean a rating scale that is used to detect the levels of proficiency in a certain skill that students have (Popham, 1997; Brualdi, 1998). According to Mertler (2001), rubrics are the evaluative tools that have the preset criteria for the prediction of the different levels of performance, which are then used to grade the students' work or evaluate their performance. According to Stevens and Levi (2013), rubrics are commonly displayed in a tabular structure that comprises four essential components. The initial component delineates the specific undertaking that is anticipated of the students. The second component furnishes a metric that delineates the tiers of accomplishment, such as surpassing expectations, fulfilling expectations, and falling short of expectations. The evaluative criteria are included in the third element, which delineate the various components or dimensions that students must take into account when carrying out the task. The fourth and ultimate component delineates the definitions of quality or descriptors of performance for the aforementioned criteria at distinct levels of accomplishment. The all-encompassing methodology employed in rubric design enables educators to furnish precise feedback to students and guarantee that every student is being assessed impartially and justly.

2.2. Types of rubrics

Rubrics are a widely used assessment tool in education that can be categorized into four different types. According to Brookhart (2013), these four types of rubrics are holistic, analytic, general, and task-specific. Each type of rubric has a different approach to evaluating student performance.

Holistic rubrics are employed to assess the performance of a student by making a comprehensive judgement on a singular descriptive scale, while considering all the criteria (Popham, 1997). A prevalent illustration of a holistic rubric is the assessment scheme implemented in higher education institutions, wherein each grade denotes a comprehensive standard of achievement. This particular rubric is deemed advantageous in furnishing a comprehensive assessment of a student's academic output (Moskal, 2000).

Conversely, an analytic rubric centers on precise facets of performance and necessitates the scorer to assess criterion-by-criterion scores (Scott, 2000). This methodology involves deconstructing the skill under evaluation into its constituent criteria, and subsequently assigning a score to each criterion based on a range of proficiency levels, from the lowest to the highest. The employment of this particular approach to evaluation facilitates a more comprehensive analysis of a learner's academic output.

As implied by its nomenclature, general rubrics employ standards and evaluations of achievement that are applicable to various undertakings. These can be utilized for diverse tasks that must be exemplars of a common learning objective (Popham, 1997). As an illustration, the assessment of writing or mathematical problem-solving skills can be conducted utilizing a comprehensive rubric. This particular rubric is deemed advantageous in evaluating diverse tasks that are associated with a specific educational objective (Popham, 1997).

Finally, rubrics that are specific to a particular task are created for the purpose of assessing that task. According to Brookhart (2013), the provided materials comprise solutions to a given problem,

elucidations of the cognitive processes that students are expected to employ, or enumerations of the factual and conceptual elements that students are expected to incorporate. He also adds that this particular rubric is tailored to the performance task under consideration and serves the purpose of appraising the degree to which the student has comprehended and executed the assigned task.

2.3. Rubric for writing

In the process of English writing, the rubrics for English writing have an undeniable impact in

various aspects Liang (2024). Analytic rubrics are a favored option among educators for delivering comprehensive assessments and precise feedback on student achievement. Rubrics of this nature are widely utilized for evaluating the writing proficiency of students, with emphasis placed on diverse components including but not limited to structure, substance, technical accuracy, and manner of expression (Brown, Irving & Keegan, 2008). According to Alamri and Adawi (2021), Rubrics for scoring writing are a useful way to correct and improve students writing. Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hearfiel, & Hughey (1981) developed the initial analytic scoring rubric, which was referred to as the English as a Second Language (ESL) Composition Profile. The rubric comprises five distinct grading components, each with varying weights assigned to them, the components are: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Additional instances of analytic scales are the Test in English for Educational Purposes, which was formulated by Weir (1990).

Mertler (2001), citing Airasian's (2000 & 2001), recommended that teachers make a preliminary determination on whether to evaluate the performance or product holistically or analytically before constructing a rubric. It is imperative that educators establish their preferred approach to interpreting outcomes prior to developing or employing a rubric. A holistic rubric is appropriate when a comprehensive, overall score is sought. In the event that educators necessitate formative evaluation, it would be more suitable to utilize an analytic rubric. The utilization of analytic rubrics by educators enables the gathering of a comprehensive overview of individual student aptitudes and deficiencies, thereby facilitating informed instructional determinations. Rubrics have been acknowledged as effective instruments for both assessment and instruction in the EFL setting, as the teaching of writing in this context continues to incorporate these two aspects (Turgut & Kayaoğlu, 2015). Hence, it is imperative for educators to contemplate the utilization of analytic rubrics while assessing students' writing proficiency to ensure efficacious evaluation and provision of constructive criticism.

3. Methodology

3.1 Participants

This study involved 33 (the full class size) fourth year students enrolled at the English Language Department of University of Halabja.

3.2 Data collection procedures

The current study is a quantitative study that employs a pre-test/post-test design with a post-writing survey to assess the impact of using a rubric on writing performance and student perception.

In the pre-test, the students were asked to write an essay of no less than 200 words within a period of 45 minutes without having any writing instructions or guidelines. After this, an intervention presented a rubric designed by Jacobs et al. (1981), containing key features considered important for essays. In the post-test, the students were asked to write another essay of no less than 200 words within the same time frame, using the rubric as a guideline. After the post-test essay, participants were asked to complete a survey consisting of 15 questions and they were asked to respond to statements related to the use of rubrics using a five-point rating scale (from Totally Disagree to Totally Agree). The survey was adopted from a study conducted by Laurian and Fitzgerald (2013).

3.3 Data analysis

The evaluation of the essays was done by two teachers using the above mentioned rubric developed by Jacobs et al. (1981). The rubric itself has an analytical aspect, but for the sake of simplicity the overall holistic scores were taken into consideration. Then the scores of the pre-test and post-test were compared to find out the difference between each participants' score, and then the mean of the overall tests were taken and compared to find out whether there would be a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test.

Survey Analysis: Data from the post-writing survey was analyzed to understand students' perceptions of the rubric's effectiveness and its impact on their writing process. The data was analyzed using SPSS 23.

4. Results

In the following section the results are shown. It is divided into two parts, the first part highlights the results of the pre-test and post-test with the changes between them and the second part shows the results of the survey.

4.1 The pre-test post-test results.

Table 1: Pre-test, post-test and the change in the scores

Participants	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
1	67	76	+9
2	77	83	+6
3	81	86	+5
4	47	55	+8
5	50	61	+11
6	63	72	+9
7	59	68	+9
8	67	79	+12
9	83	90	+7
10	75	84	+9
11	67	68	+1
12	63	72	+9
13	63	72	+9
14	72	81	+9
15	56	64	+8
16	58	67	+9
17	73	86	+13
18	75	84	+9
19	61	71	+10
20	75	83	+8
21	80	90	+10
22	76	88	+12
23	71	81	+10
24	62	77	+15
25	82	92	+10
26	70	81	+11
27	86	95	+9
28	70	80	+10
29	54	65	+11
30	79	88	+9
31	88	93	+5
32	64	87	+23
33	86	92	+6
Mean	69.69	79.12	+9.4

As it can be seen from the table all of the participants benefited from the rubric, but to varying degrees. The highest change was from participant 32 with +23 change between the pre-test and post-test. And the lowest change was from participant 11 with only +1. The overall pre-test has a mean of 69.69 while the post-test has a mean of 79.12, and the mean of the change is +9.4, with a standard deviation of 3.5.

4.2 The survey results

The following are the results of the survey. Each table represents a question (statement) and the responds chosen by the participants. The positive and negative responds are grouped together.

Table 2: Statement 1

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	2	6.1
	Neutral	3	9.1
	Agree	21	63.6
	Totally Agree	7	21.2
	Total	33	100.0

The first statement is about the usage of a rubric if it was available for an assignment, and the table shows that 84.8% of participants would use a rubric if it was available for an assignment, while 6.1% disagree with the rest of the participants being neutral.

Table 3: Statement 2

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Disagree	3	9.1
	Neutral	2	6.1
	Agree	16	48.5
	Totally Agree	12	36.4
	Total	33	100.0

The second statement is about having rubrics as a help when doing works. As seen from the table 84.9% of participants have a positive perspective towards having rubrics as a help while doing their work, with 6.1% of participants being neutral and 9.1% of participant having a negative view.

Table 4: Statement 3

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	2	6.1
	Disagree	12	36.4
	Neutral	11	33.3
	Agree	5	15.2
	Totally Agree	3	9.1
	Total	33	100.0

The third statement is about doing the work without a rubric so they have the freedom to design their own ideas. The table shows that 24.3% of participants agree with the statement while 42.5% disagree with it, and 33.3% are neutral.

Table 5: Statement 4

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	5	15.2
	Disagree	16	48.5
	Neutral	4	12.1
	Agree	7	21.2
	Totally Agree	1	3.0
	Total	33	100.0

The fourth statement is about not using a rubric to help in doing the work. From this table it can be seen that 63.7 of the participants disagree. With 12.1% of them being neutral, while 24.2% agree.

Table 6: Statement 5

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Disagree	8	24.2
	Neutral	9	27.3
	Agree	12	36.4
	Totally Agree	3	9.1
	Total	33	100.0

The fifth statement is about rubrics lowering the standards for the work. As it can be seen from the table 27.2% of participants disagree with the statement, with 45.5% agreeing and 27.3% being neutral.

Table 7: Statement 6

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Disagree	2	6.1
	Neutral	2	6.1
	Agree	22	66.7
	Totally Agree	6	18.2
	Total	33	100.0

The sixth statement is about rubrics helping to raise the standards for the work. The table shows that 84.9% of participants agree to the statement, with 6.1% being neutral and 9.1% disagreeing.

Table 8: Statement 7

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	4	12.1
	Disagree	14	42.4
	Neutral	4	12.1
	Agree	9	27.3
	Totally Agree	2	6.1
	Total	33	100.0

The seventh statement is about rubrics stifling creativity. As the table indicates 54.5% of participants disagree with this statement, while 33.4% agree to the statement and the last 12.1% are neutral.

Table 9: Statement 8

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Neutral	6	18.2
	Agree	14	42.4
	Totally Agree	12	36.4
	Total	33	100.0

The eighth statement is about how the work was organized better when a rubric was used in this class. In this table the results show that 78.8% of participants agree with this statement, while 3% disagree and lastly 18.2% are neutral.

Table 10: Statement 9

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Disagree	2	6.1
	Neutral	6	18.2
	Agree	19	57.6
	Totally Agree	5	15.2
	Total	33	100.0

The ninth statement is about how a rubric can help in self-assessing the work before turning it in. As the table shows 72.8% of participants agree with the statement, while 9.1% disagree with the statement and the last 18.2% are neutral.

Table 11: Statement 10

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Disagree	9	27.3
	Neutral	2	6.1
	Agree	17	51.5
	Totally Agree	4	12.1
	Total	33	100.0

The tenth statement is about how a rubric can be too general to helped in the self-assessment process. As shown from the table 63.6% of participants agree with the statement, while 30.3% disagree with it, with the last 6.1% being neutral.

Table 12: Statement 11

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Disagree	3	9.1
	Neutral	5	15.2
	Agree	17	51.5
	Totally Agree	7	21.2
	Total	33	100.0

The eleventh statement is about how the overall performance was better when a rubric was used. 72.2% of participants agree with the statement, with only 12.1% disagreeing, and 15.2% being neutral.

Table 13: Statement 12

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	6	18.2
	Disagree	11	33.3
	Neutral	5	15.2
	Agree	8	24.2
	Totally Agree	3	9.1
	Total	33	100.0

The twelfth statement is about how the overall performance was better when a rubric was not used. 1.5% of participants disagree with the statement, with 33.3% disagreeing, and 15.2% being neutral.

Table 14: Statement 13

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	9	27.3
	Disagree	13	39.4
	Neutral	7	21.2
	Agree	3	9.1
	Totally Agree	1	3.0
	Total	33	100.0

The thirteenth statement is about the lack of impact of rubric on the overall performance. 66.7% of participants disagree with the statement, with 21.2% being neutral and 12.1% disagreeing.

Table 15: Statement 14

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	2	6.1
	Disagree	2	6.1
	Neutral	8	24.2
	Agree	15	45.5
	Totally Agree	6	18.2
	Total	33	100.0

The fourteenth statement is about how a rubric made the assessment process fairer. 63.7% of participants agree with the statement, with 24.2% being neutral and 12.2% disagreeing.

Table 16: Statement 15

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Totally Disagree	1	3.0
	Disagree	2	6.1
	Neutral	6	18.2
	Agree	18	54.5
	Totally Agree	6	18.2
	Total	33	100.0

The fifteenth and final statement is about whether the participants will use rubrics if they become teachers. 72.7% of participants agree with the statement, with 18.2% being neutral and 9.1% disagreeing.

5. Discussion

The data from the pre-test and post-test shows that participants have managed to improve their performance with the introduction of the rubric where the average score increased from 69.69 in the pre-test to 79.12 in the post-test. This improvement using rubrics is consistent with previous research findings on the effectiveness of rubrics in enhancing learning outcomes among students (Andrade, 2000; Brookhart, 1999).

The biggest increase was noticed by Participant 32, whose score went up by 23 points, implying that the rubric was effective irrespective of the learning needs of individuals. On the other hand, Participant 11 presented the smallest change, suggesting potential areas for further investigation into factors influencing variability in response to rubric-based assessments. Perhaps, future studies could explore whether additional guidance on using the rubric would benefit students like Participant 11.

The results of the survey demonstrated that most of the participants had a positive perspective towards the use of rubrics aligning with the results of a study conducted by Goodwin and Kirkpatrick (2023). From the first and second statements, it can be seen that 84.8% of the participants would like to have a rubric when they have an assignment, and 84.9% would like to have it when they do any work; this is because “rubrics save time, provide timely, meaningful feedback for students” (Stevens & Levi, 2005, p.17).

Furthermore, the participants showed that the rubrics helped them to understand the expectations for their writing assignments and provided clear guidance on how they could improve their performance. The results also highlight that the participants generally think that rubrics can help to raise the standard of their work, in addition 72.2% of participants think that when rubrics are used they do a better work in the class, Nevertheless, some participants (33.4%) expressed the view that rubrics could be a little bit restrictive for their creativity, and 63.6% of them thought that rubrics were not very suitable for self-assessment as it can be too general. Such views imply the significance of taking into account students’ varied preferences and requirements while developing and putting into practice the rubric-based exams (Topping, 1998).

Moreover, the survey revealed that the participants perceived the use of rubrics to be fair and objective as 67.3% of them believed that the rubric made the assessment process fairer. They showed that the rubrics provided a clear and transparent way to evaluate their performance. So, a rubric can help to eliminate the ‘Assessment bias’ which “refers to qualities of an assessment instrument that offend or unfairly penalize a group of students because of students’ gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, or other such group-defining characteristics” (Popham 2017, p. 127). This coincides with other studies showing that student's view rubrics as being clear and fair measures of their assessments (Stevens & Levi, 2005; Panadero & Jonsson, 2013; Capuano, Caballé, Percannella & Ritrovato 2020). This perception of fairness and objectivity is crucial as it can help to increase students' motivation and engagement with the learning process.

The research demonstrates a number of pedagogic recommendations for educators. Initially, the optimization of performance reaffirms the role of rubrics in the assessment process. Educators would come up with guidelines and criteria as to what exactly is expected in order to make the situation more transparent and enhance learning.

Second the response among the participants in terms of improvement projects showed the need of differentiated instruction as well. Educators are likely to take a deeper role and give more tips about the rubric application, especially with participants who show a little positive change, as was the case with Participant 11. Personalized strategies can help overcome this divide.

Third, the conflicting views about rubrics’ constriction and their applicability to self-assessment indicate that rubrics need to be flexible and customizable. Educators shall, therefore, involve students in the developmental process of the rubric to guarantee that it is comprehensive yet leave room for creativity. In addition to this, training the students on the application of rubrics for self-assessment could be made more personal and less general.

Lastly, the image of rubrics as a fair, objective tool can lead to a rise in student motivation and activity levels. Teachers should use rubrics frequently so that students have transparent and fair assessments. This in turn creates a greater possibility of having a more inclusive learning environment where all students are treated equitably.

Through tackling these pedagogical considerations, educators may be able to best leverage rubrics to help in the meeting of the needs of diverse learners, promote fairness, and raise the level of academic performance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of rubrics in the assessment of writing skill is more common and beneficial in the learning institutions. The findings of this study revealed that participants' scores had a statistically significant increase from pre-test to post-test, and that the implementation of the rubric enhanced the students' performance. In particular, the raise was significant (by 9.4 points on average) pointing out to the improved comprehension and practical use of the main aspects highlighted in the rubric.

Moreover, the survey outcome gives credence to these observations whereby students had appreciated the idea of using rubrics. They believed that rubrics gave needed direction and uniformity in the assessment procedure. Several students felt that rubrics assisted them in comprehending what the teacher expected from them in the writing tasks, thus making the criteria for the assessment clearer to them. For students, such transparency was important given that it assisted them in finding out their areas of strength and weaknesses.

Students also pointed at improved timeliness and practicality of feedback provided by rubrics. Whereas usually one gets some sort of generic remark or comment, they were able to focus on areas that required correction. This specific feedback was very useful to direct their correction and to improve their writing skills in general. Furthermore, the utilization of structured rubrics assisted the students to direct their attention towards the important aspects of the academic task hence resulting to well-organized essays.

The use of rubrics as an assessment strategy in writing was an effective technique that could be used in teaching. Not only did it make the students more attentive and eager to learn, but it also helped transform them into efficient and capable writers.

Limitations and recommendations

The current study has limitations caused by the small sample size (33 participants) that may limit the generalizability. In addition to that, a previously used single rubric may not be consistent with rubrics that are customized to fit specific writing tasks. In addition, the study only looks at the short-term influence within a single class session and uses self-reported data which may be biased. In the future, the following limitations could be mitigated by using a larger sample, using different rating scales, observing long-term effects, and including more items to assess student attitudes.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

COMPOSITION RUBRIC				
STUDENT:		TOPIC:		DATE:
	Score	Level	Criteria	
CONTENT		30-27	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: knowledgeable • substantive • thorough development of thesis • relevant to assigned topic	
		26-22	GOOD TO AVERAGE: some knowledge of subject • adequate range • limited development of thesis • mostly relevant to topic, but lacks detail	
		21-17	FAIR TO POOR: limited knowledge of subject • little substance • inadequate development of topic	
		16-13	VERY POOR: does not show knowledge of subject • non-substantive • not pertinent • OR not enough to evaluate	
ORGANIZATION		20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: fluent expression • ideas clearly stated/ supported • succinct • well- organized • logical sequencing • cohesive	
		17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: somewhat choppy • loosely organized but main ideas stand out • limited support • logical but incomplete sequencing	
		13-10	FAIR TO POOR: non-fluent ideas • confused or disconnected • lacks logical sequencing and development	
		9-7	VERY POOR: does not communicate • no organization • OR not enough to evaluate	
VOCABULARY		20-18	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: sophisticated range • effective word/idiom choice and usage • word form mastery • appropriate register	
		17-14	GOOD TO AVERAGE: adequate range • occasional errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured	
		13-10	FAIR TO POOR: limited range • frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, usage • meaning confused or obscured	
		9-7	VERY POOR: essentially translation • little knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, word form • OR not enough to evaluate	
LANGUAGE USE		22-25	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: effective complex constructions • few errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions	
		21-18	GOOD TO AVERAGE: effective but simple constructions • minor problems in complex constructions • several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions but meaning seldom obscured	
		17-11	FAIR TO POOR: major problems in simple/complex constructions • frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions and/or fragments, run-ons, deletions • meaning confused or obscured	
		10-5	VERY POOR: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules • dominated by errors • does not communicate • OR not enough to evaluate	
MECHANICS		5	EXCELLENT TO VERY GOOD: demonstrates mastery of conventions • few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing	
		4	GOOD TO AVERAGE: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing but meaning not obscured	
		3	FAIR TO POOR: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • poor handwriting • meaning confused or obscured	
		2	VERY POOR: no mastery of conventions • dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing • handwriting illegible • OR not enough to evaluate	
TOTAL SCORE		READER		COMMENTS

Appendix 2

Writing Rubric Survey

Questions	Totally disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Totally agree
1. When I have a rubric available for an assignment I use it to inform my work					
2. I like to have a rubric to help me in my work.					
3. I would rather do my work without a rubric so I have the freedom to design my own ideas					
4. I never use a rubric to help me to organize my work.					
5. A rubric lowers the standards for my work.					
6. A rubric helps me to raise the standards for my work.					
7. A rubric stifles my creativity.					
8. A rubric helps me to organize my work.					
9. A rubric helps me to self-assess my work before I pass it in to the professor.					
10. A rubric is usually too general to help me assess my work.					
11. In this class my work was better when I used a rubric.					
12. In this class my work was better when I did not use a rubric.					
13. In this class the rubric made no difference in the quality of my work.					
14. In this class the rubric helped the professor to grade more fairly.					
15. When I become a teacher I will use rubrics on a regular basis with my students.					