THE ROLE OF RUBRICS IN DEVELOPING ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS: METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS AND PRACTICAL OUTCOMES

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Abstract. The present study examines the role of rubrics in developing academic writing skills among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Academic writing requires students to demonstrate coherence, logical organization, linguistic accuracy, and adherence to specific task requirements. In this regard, rubrics serve as an effective assessment and instructional tool that provides transparent evaluation criteria and supports students throughout the writing process. The study aims to explore the methodological foundations of rubric-based assessment and analyze its practical outcomes in enhancing students' academic writing performance.

The research is based on both theoretical and empirical approaches. The theoretical part reviews contemporary perspectives on writing assessment, formative evaluation, and rubric design in language education. The practical component was conducted at a language university in Uzbekistan and involved prospective English language and literature teachers. Data were collected through writing assignments, classroom observations, assessment records, and feedback obtained during the implementation of rubric-guided writing activities.

The findings reveal that the use of rubrics positively influences students' writing achievement by improving their understanding of assessment criteria, increasing task fulfillment, and enhancing the quality of written texts. Furthermore, rubric-based instruction encourages self-assessment, critical reflection, and learner autonomy, enabling students to identify their strengths and areas for improvement more effectively. The study also demonstrates that rubrics contribute to greater consistency and objectivity in writing assessment.The results suggest that integrating well-structured rubrics into academic writing instruction can significantly support the development of writing competence and promote more effective teaching and learning practices in higher education settings.

Keywords: academic writing, rubrics, writing assessment, EFL learners, learner autonomy, formative assessment, writing competence, higher education.

Introduction. One of the most important aspects of the job of an English teacher is giving students the feedback and corrections they need to improve as second language learners. This is especially true for written English. In writing classes, the process of providing feedback to students on their writing takes-up significant amounts of time and effort both inside and outside of the classroom. In order to streamline the feedback process teachers often make use of tools, such as rubrics, to help them provide their students with feedback. Traditionally rubrics have been seen as tools that have the potential of "increased consistency of scoring, the possibility to facilitate valid judgment of complex competencies, and promotion of learning "[2]. In the field of first language composition whether or not the rubric is an effective tool in providing students with the feedback that they need to improve as writers is a topic of debate in a variety of academic journals. Researchers have come out both in support of (H. G. Andrade, 2000; H. L. Andrade, Wang, Du, & Akawi, 2009) or against (Broad, 2000; Kohn, 2006; Wilson, 2007) the use of rubrics as a means of providing students feedback about their written work.

Literature review. Essay writing for literature courses remains a problem for students and teachers alike. While most of EFL students have had writing experience, it is important for them to realise that academic writing for a literature domain at university level is different from the practices they have so far encountered. A potential drawback of this viewpoint is the lack of a perspective on how lecturers may take students' experience in the academic world into account, and how this concern may play out in their responses to students' academic outcomes. Thus, a set of writing rubrics (referred to hereafter as META) were designed in the research reported here to scaffold EFL English majors'

academic writing in literature classes. METAfocuses on four key elements of academic writing, that is, mechanics, use of evidence, presentation of the thesis/claim, and analysis [4].

Andrade (2000) defines a rubric as "a scoring tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work" and one which "articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor" [1]. Research by Schafer, Swanson, Bené, and Newberry (2001) offers indirect support to the view of students as users of assessments. They speculate that the higher test scores are the result of teachers incorporating operational definitions of achievement into their instruction in ways that were understood and used by students [7].

This suggests that if carefully designed, rubrics can help students in goal-setting and planning. These are metacognitive strategies which support their learning and at the same time, can help them understand the goal of an assignment and support teachers in unbiased grading, giving feedback and assigning more challenging work to students [1,2]. Thus, rubrics have the potential to help students develop understanding and skills, as well as make dependable judgments about the quality of their own works beyond traditional testing [2].

Rubrics were first proposed as a tool to analyze writing in 1912 when Noyes suggested the use of a rubric as a means of standardizing the evaluation of student compositions: "Our present methods of measuring compositions are controlled too much by personal opinion, which varies with the individual. What is wanted is a clear-cut, concrete standard of measurement which will mean the same thing to all people in all places and is not dependent upon the opinion of any individual" [5]. Of these scales the most famous is the Hillegas scale, which was developed in 1912 and "gave English teachers the first reliable means of estimating objectively the quality of their pupils' written production". In 1915 Thorndike improved upon Hillegas rubric for grading student compositions by "substituting new specimens for certain of the original samples and by including several examples in the steps at or near the middle of the scale" [6].

Methodology. " Writing is vital to students' achievement in school, the working environment, and society at large" [8]. Since the voices of all educators andstudents ought to be valued, particularly in the zone of evaluating students' writing, this study investigates the perspectives of EFL instructors toward rubrics to develop insights into the reasons behind such dispositions. For this reason, there were conducted a investigation at Uzbek State World Languages university among language and literature teacher. To conveniently access the participants, the researchers selected the university where one of the researchers worked. The participants consist of three language teachers and three literature teachers. Even though the data represent only a small group of respondents from only one Uzbekistan university which may not offer absolutely generalizable answers, it brings out some serious points of considerations for the application of assessment tools in diverse cultural contexts. The data collection instrument, questionnaire, provided :

1. What are the perspectives of the teachers pertaining good writing?
2. How do the teachers evaluate writing?
3. How do the teachers perceive the use of rubrics for the writing assessment?

Moreover, to study on quantitative research more research questions are covered on experimental classes.

№	Questions	Yes	No
1	Do you use a rubric to assess your students' writing?	100%	
2	Do you agree that rubrics provide the students a clear idea of your assessment criteria?	100%	
3	Do you use one specific rubric to grade every writing	50%	50%
	assignment?		

4	Do you feel that students generally write better, if the teacher provides them a grading rubric ahead of time	67%	33%
5	Does students' performance reflect their understanding of your expectation from their work?	83%	17%

Table shows that all teachers use rubrics in writing classes and they consider that it is good idea to assess writing tasks. Moreover, half of the teachers think that it is practical to use one single rubric for everyday writing classes while other 50% claim that is not practical enough. Additionally, more teachers, 67%, feel that providing rubrics ahead lesson impacts to compose writing piece, whereas only 33%. Likewise 83% of teacher consider rubrics gives more understanding and expectation on the works of students and just 17% do not support this option.

Conclusion. The analytic rubric should be used for the assessment of written expressions. Thus, it allows teachers to determine the deficiencies in students' writing skills right at the beginning of the school year, to act in line with these deficiencies, and to adopt an appropriate strategy. Rubrics developed in accordance with the analytic rubric preparation principles should be applied at schools. The English language teachers and classroom teachers should test the practicability of the rubrics through scoring trials.

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