



Using rubrics as an instructional tool in EFL writing courses

Fehmi Turgut^a, M. Naci Kayaoğlu^{a*}

^a Karadeniz Technical University, Trabzon 61080, Turkey

APA Citation:

Turgut, F., & Kayaoğlu, M. N. (2015). Using rubrics as an instructional tool in EFL writing courses. *Journal of Language and Linguistic Studies*, 11(1), 47-58.

Abstract

This study investigates the effect of using rubrics as an instructional tool on students' writing performance in English as a foreign language. The major goal was to liberate the students from the narrow perception of writing based solely on the notion of correct grammar which is strongly felt in EFL writing. In this quasi-experimental research, the treatment group ($N = 16$) was given a rubric which provided them with a clear set of criteria for good writing. They were guided in using the rubric while writing two different essays. The students in the control group ($N = 22$) wrote the same essay types but they were not introduced to the rubric. The data were collected through student interviews and their essays, which were evaluated by three independent raters using the same rubric. The results revealed that students who received the rubric outperformed the students in the control group. The analysis of the student interviews proved that integration of the rubrics into the course, though initially somewhat challenging, helped the students appreciate the qualities of good writing and then utilize appropriate strategies to achieve them in their own writing.

© 2015 JLLS and the Authors - Published by JLLS.

Keywords: Rubrics, instructional tool, language education, process writing

1. Introduction

The majority of universities in Turkey offer a one-year intensive English preparatory program as students are required to take certain courses in English in their major subject and produce papers in English with a view to improving their academic literacy abilities and meeting future individual and social expectations. Given these stakes, teaching English as a foreign language is a daunting task.

One of the most concrete examples demonstrating the pivotal role of English as a medium of communication within the European context is the Erasmus Program (European student exchange program), which allows more than 200 .000 students to visit foreign countries for a period of between 3 months and 12 months every year to further their studies at a university abroad. Furthermore, a range of different joint educational exchange programs and agreements between different universities outside Europe as well as rapid growth in international contacts with countries have again asserted the essential role of English as a tool for academic success. It is fair to state that the quality of students' work and their intellectual capabilities are judged largely by their writing skills. However, writing does not seem to receive much enthusiasm from the students, which can be accounted for by two reasons: Firstly, students appear to be very much obsessed with the narrow definition of writing based

* Corresponding author. M. Naci Kayaoğlu
Tel.: +90-462-377-4036
E-mail address: naci@ktu.edu.tr

on the notions of correct grammar and usage. Grammar and rhetorical forms are major concerns since writing has long been perceived to be in the service of grammar. Secondly, the students appeared to have no insights about the qualities of good writing. Teachers appear to be much concerned with the form as well. This low image of writing among the students was worsened with the practice that writing is used conventionally by teachers as a means of quickly assessing the students' language production, giving too little attention to the process of writing including the conscious and unconscious decisions which the students can make for the purpose of communicating in different situations.

Moreover, teachers keep their own criteria for assessment to themselves without articulating what counts when they give grades, creating inconsistent assessment of student performance across the school. However, there is a strong need to assess our “assessment” and “different approaches to assessment are required to accommodate the various ways in which learners construct knowledge” (Stears & Gopal, 2010, p. 591). For example, one teacher may place great priority on the linguistic structure in the assessment process while another may be more interested in the development of ideas. This always results in hot debate between the teachers and the students when writing course exam results are announced as there are shocking discrepancies between the expected scores and those given.

Taking the rubric to the classroom and asking students to write according to a scoring rubric does not bring success in spite of linguistically clear descriptors for each trait in the rubric. For instance, in terms of the organization category in the rubric, -fluent expression, ideas clearly supported, succinct, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive- may make much sense to students. What it is that makes a paragraph well-organized or an essay cohesive remained unclear. The rubric in this case only serves to provide a set of standard criteria for teachers to judge consistently and justifiably students' papers, but it is likely to fail to enable the students to develop the sophisticated thinking skills required to produce works of writing up to the standards of the rubric. Students have great difficulty internalizing the criteria specified in the rubric used to evaluate their performance. The students need several opportunities of working with real samples of writing work to internalize each trait of the rubric and reflect on their own work by meaningfully practicing the criteria with the guidance of an expert teacher Literature review

1.1. Literature review

A rubric or scoring guide, by definition, is a descriptive list of the criteria which teachers employ to judge their students' work. According to Moskal (2000, p. 22), “rubrics are descriptive scoring schemes that are developed by teachers or other evaluators to guide the analysis of the products or process of students' efforts”. Likewise, Mertler (2001, p. 189) defines rubrics as “scoring guides consisting of specific pre-established performance criteria, used in evaluating student work on performance assessment”. Primarily, a rubric for written work includes a list of certain aspects of writing performance, often subdivided under main categories such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Scoring rubrics provide a description of what is expected at each level or category with a view that students use this information to improve their future performance. Rubrics were initially developed as an assessment tool used only by the evaluators of students' writing without informing the students (Arter, 2000). In an effort to stress the powerful instructive elements of rubrics Andrade (2000, p. 13) states “rubrics are also teaching tools that support student learning and the development of sophisticated thinking skills”. Andrade (2000, p. 13) further indicates the strong link between teaching writing skill and the use of rubrics “it is usually used with a relatively complex assignment, such as a long-term project, an essay, or a research paper. Its

purposes are to give students informative feedback about their works in progress and to give detailed evaluations of their final products.”

There are two types of rubrics (holistic and analytic) identified in the literature consulted. A holistic rubric refers to a rubric which requires the teacher to score the overall process or product as a whole, without judging the component parts separately (Nitko, 2001). The focus of a score in holistic rubric is on the overall quality, proficiency or understanding of the specific content. It is suitable when errors in some part of the process can be tolerated providing that overall quality is high (Chase, 1999). An analytic rubric is a rubric which requires the teacher to score separate, individual parts of the product or performance first, then to add the individual scores to obtain a total score (Moskal, 2000; Mertler, 2001, Saxton, Belanger & Becker, 2012). Analytic rubrics are suitable when there is a need to assess student work in detail, and to give students specific feedback on their performance. Analytic rubrics make it possible to create a “profile” of specific student strengths and weaknesses. Prior to designing a specific rubric to use as an instructional aid, a teacher must decide whether the performance or product will be seen holistically or analytically.

Recent trends in writing instruction suggest forming a connection between assessment and instruction through creating informed, collaborative environments in particular for the EFL setting. Research indicate that involving students in the assessment process and informing them about what is expected can lead students towards becoming better writers. Hillock (1986, p. 17) summarizes the effect of using rubrics on student achievement as follows:

Scales, criteria and specific questions which students apply to their own or other’s writing also have a powerful effect on enhancing quality. Through using the criteria systematically, students appear to internalize them and bring them to bear in generating new material even when they don’t have the criteria in front of them. These treatments are two times more effective than free writing techniques.

Drawing from the composition theory and research, Soles (2001, p. 4) strongly recommends that teachers share the rubrics with the students and claims that “students primarily benefit because they will write better essays when they understand the criteria their teachers will use to evaluate their writing”. By making students apply the criteria to their works, students are, in fact, included into self-assessment process. The literature on self-assessment suggests that learning improves when students learn to assess themselves and monitor their learning (Bangert-Drawns et. al., 1991; Butler & Winne, 1995; Panadero & Jonsson 2013; Zhao, 2012; Diab & Balaa, 2011).

Being an assessment tool in essence, rubrics offer a lot as an aid to create informed teaching/learning environments and arousing consciousness in the students (Wesolowski, 2012; Birky, 2012). Wyngaard and Gehrke (1996) investigated the relation between the use of criteria scales and improvement in writing skills, using an analytic rubric containing clear descriptors for each trait. They discussed the rubric during the course and provide the students with the rubric to help them to assess their own works. At the end of the implementation, they assessed the students’ works themselves by using the same rubric. They concluded that the use of rubric is an effective way to improve student writing.

A recent study by Andrade and Du (2005) provides an additional support for the use of rubrics to foster learning. They investigated the use of rubric with the participation of 14 undergraduate teacher education students. The data were collected through interviews, and the analysis suggested that use of rubric let students know *what is expected* and helped them identify strengths and weaknesses thereby contributing to their learning. Noting the need for more research on the use of rubric, Andrade and Du (2005) call for investigations on students’ actual use of rubrics –instead of reported use- to see whether rubrics can serve for the purposes of learning.

The rubric is no longer seen as solely assessment technique to grade students' works but also as an instructional tool in teaching writing. Depending on this idea, four main characteristics of "effective assessment" have been identified in the related literature. These are: (a) There should be clear criteria for assessing writing, (b) Students should be involved to the assessment process, (c) Assessment should provide opportunities for improvement through revision and (d) Assessment criteria should be sensitive to student's developmental stages, referring to appropriate grade level standards (Andrade, 1999; Mueller, 2006). As the research has expanded on the use of rubric in writing assessment, its potentials have been cultivated.

Rubric can be created for or well adapted to process writing as well as product. Most rubrics contain qualitative descriptions of performance criteria that work well with the process approach since process approach gives priority to content, purpose, flow of ideas and audience rather than form and structure emphasized in product approach. The use of instructional rubric can, therefore, accelerate the transition period for students to adapt to the process approach, which "is thought to liberate students from the correct grammar and usage based perception of writing" (Kayaoğlu, 2009, p. 48). Instructional rubrics may also become instrumental in helping show students what counts in producing a good piece of writing as the rubrics and process writing allow students to write multiple drafts, making choices and decisions and working on feedback not only from teachers but also peers.

To conclude, together with increasing awareness of the importance of giving feedback (Bansilal, James, & Naidoo, 2010) and involving students in the assessment process, rubrics have changed from being simply an assessment tool to being a potential instructional tool. Likewise, the increasing popularity of process approaches has fostered a variety of feedback options such as real audience and peer group. Students are encouraged to develop a personal voice and also to take part in the assessment process. So, the use of rubrics has turned out to be a technique to make students a part of the assessment process since it provides for consistent and detailed feedback on works in progress and a justifiable grading of the final product. With this in mind, this research aimed to explore the effect of using rubrics as an instructional tool on learners' writing performance in English as a foreign language.

1.2. Research questions

The study aimed to investigate the following research questions:

1. Does the integration of rubrics into the writing course as an instructional tool have any effect on students' writing performance?
2. Can students be liberated from the narrow perception of writing based on the notion of correct grammar?
3. Do rubrics have potential for teachers to make their writing course more productive?

2. Method

This is basically a quasi-experimental research designed to answer the question "Does the integration of rubrics into the writing course as an instructional tool have any effect on students' writing performance?", comparing the pre- and post-test essay papers scored by the three raters upon the completion of a four-weeks treatment based on the use of rubrics. In order to see the

interreliability of the scores given by the three raters to the compare & contrast essays, an ANOVA test was used to analyze the raters for the control and experimental groups separately. A t-test was used to compare scores given to both groups by independent raters at the end of the treatment. In addition, a semi-structured interview was employed to explore the process of using a rubric from the students' point of view following the treatment. The interviews were recorded and content analysis of their self-reports was evaluated to see to what extent the internalization process was realized, and more importantly how the students felt about the rubrics as an instructional tool.

2.1. Sample and setting

The participants in this study included 38 university students aged 18-20, attending the intensive English preparatory program at the School of Foreign Languages at Karadeniz Technical University in Trabzon, Turkey. Sixteen of the students were in the treatment group and 22 in the control group, as each class contained that number of students. Their language proficiency in English was identified in advance as intermediate by a placement test designed by the School of Foreign Languages. When the data were collected, the participants had been attending the language program for four months. The convenience sampling technique was used in the selection of the participants (two classes) from fifty-five classes to ensure that both experimental and control groups were taught by the same experienced instructor, and classes were randomly assigned to either experimental or control groups.

2.2. Instruments: The Rubric

An adapted version of the rubric, the ESL Composition Profile, which was originally developed by Jacobs et al. (1981), was used for the current study. As an appropriate tool for any genre of writing, the Profile describes five main components of writing (content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics) which were presented along four levels of performance with detailed descriptions of the concepts at a scale of a 100 points maximum score. The numerical range for each level allows flexibility in scoring and more precise documentation of student growth in writing. The numerical weights given in the rubric were modified in accordance with the research objectives. For reliability and validity matters of the rubric, the findings of the studies by Jacobs et al. were taken as a base. In order to obtain reliable results while scoring the papers through the target rubric, each piece of writing was read by three evaluators.

2.3. Data collection procedures

In the current syllabus, there are four hours of writing instruction a week, which both the control and experimental groups followed. There is a course book, (a text compiled for the writing course), which mainly focuses on five different essay types with multiple exercises. Normally, two weeks are allocated for each essay type. Students are given theoretical information about the target essay type, and various writing exercises at sentence and vocabulary level are carried out during the course. They are also instructed on the use of language which is thought to be necessary for that essay type. At the time of the data collection students were instructed on two essay types: compare and contrast and cause and effect.

The experimental group received training on using a rubric while producing their work. The students in the control group continued their classes without being taught the rubric. The treatment lasted for four weeks in which both the experimental and control groups were instructed on two different essay types by the same instructor.

In the first week of implementation, the students were provided with clear meanings of the words and expressions used in the rubric. In order to increase their appreciation for the qualities of good

writing with a view to helping them internalize the rubric, the students were given exemplary sample works and asked to analyze the samples by professional writers by answering the questions for each category of the rubric in the form of yes-no checklist such as “*Do the ideas flow, building on one another? Are there introductory and concluding paragraphs? Is there a clearly stated controlling idea or central focus to the paper? Are all ideas directed concisely to the central focus of the paper, without digression?*”.

The analysis sessions (done in students’ mother tongue) paved the way for fruitful discussion and interaction between the teacher and students. Students were asked many questions covering the categories of the rubric such as to figure out the sentence(s) which were not directed to the focus of the paper, or sentences which spoil the flow of ideas and the sequence of ideas, or which transitional markers were wrong or inappropriate. Following this, students were again given samples of good writing with deliberate defects and they were encouraged to make their own additions to improve the paper according to the rubric. This was followed by the analysis of anonymous student samples from the previous year. These samples were analyzed together with the students. Subsequently, students were provided with a list of topics to choose from and they carried out pre-writing activities related to the chosen topic during the class time. At the end of the first week, students were assigned to write the first draft on a chosen topic in the target essay type.

The second week began with the analysis of first drafts. Before the teacher saw the drafts, peer feedback sessions were organized for as long as time allowed. Students were required to change their drafts with their peers and they were encouraged to give feedback to their peers’ essays. In particular; they were asked to state what parts they liked and what parts they found weak using the rubric. Then, the teacher collected the drafts to give feedback. In the last lesson of the second week, students got their drafts back and began to revise their drafts in accordance with the given feedback. At the close of the second week, students were assigned to write the final draft of the essay.

In week 3, the essay type in the syllabus was a “compare & contrast essay.” In the first lesson of the week, students were instructed on the general outline and the language of the compare & contrast essay and the same exercises used with the control group were applied in the class. In the second lesson of the week, a perfect model of the compare & contrast essay was introduced to the students. Students were asked to point out the criteria identified by the rubric in the sample. Later, the students were provided a compare & contrast essay sample written by a student-writer; this was an imperfect model. This sample was analyzed in the class by the teacher in order to model how to handle the rubric and to show the teacher’s approach to the written work of the students. In addition, the teacher modeled essay writing by focusing students’ attention on the criteria in the rubric. After this, students were asked to analyze, judge and score another sample and then to justify their judgment. They were given time to go through the sample essay silently and to make notes for their justifications. Then, each student was given a chance to justify the scores they assigned. During the justification, no interference was made by the teacher; however, the peers were asked to elaborate on the justification whenever they felt the need.

At the end of the first class, students were assigned to write their first drafts of the compare & contrast essay type. Again the students were asked to analyze their peers’ drafts, judge and score them according to the rubric. Their peers listened to the justifications for the scores and any advice they had. In week 4 the essay type, according to the syllabus, was the “cause & effect essay”. A very similar format was followed for the cause & effect essay as in the previous week. At the end of the treatment, students in both experimental and control groups took an exam on compare & contrast essays as they were instructed by the same teacher. The exam papers were scored by three different experienced teachers. After the exam, the students in the experimental group were asked to reflect on the courses

they attended in relation to the use of rubrics They were asked whether they found the use of rubrics useful for their learning process or not. Depending on the students' remarks during introspection, any difference between experimental and control groups in terms of their writing skills was attributed to the integration of rubrics since the other features (language proficiency, instruction on the essay types, time) were kept the same.

At the end of the treatment, both groups submitted a compare-contrast paper which was evaluated on the basis of the same rubric. To ensure reliable results, three independent raters scored the papers and the results of the experimental group were compared with those of control group to see whether integrating rubrics into the course as an instructional tool improved students' writing performance or not. Following the treatment, ten students from the experimental group volunteered at their convenience and were interviewed individually to measure the students' developmental change in their writing performance in connection with the components (content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics) identified in the rubric.

3. Results

In order to see the interreliability of the scores given by the three raters to the compare & contrast essays, an ANOVA test was used to analyze the raters for the control and experimental groups separately. The result showed that there was no significant difference between the scores given by the 3 raters for the control group; $F(df2)=.942, p>.05$. Similarly, the result of the ANOVA test done between the scores given by 3 raters for the experimental group showed that there was no significant difference between the scores; $F(df2)=.216, p>.05$. A T-test was used to assess whether the means of two groups were statistically different from each other. The results showed that there was statistically significant difference between two groups in the sense that the experimental group distinctively performed better than the control group in writing composition papers; (experimental group mean ($M=74$), control group mean ($M = 58$), $t(df2)= 9.987, p>.05$).

3.1. Qualitative data analysis

3.1.1. Interview results

Ten students from the experimental group were interviewed after completing the final task of writing "compare & contrast" essays using the rubric. Initially, they were asked to comment on the use of rubrics in general. There appeared to be an overall agreement among the students about the benefit of using rubrics in writing process. This is manifested in a very similar manner by the students: "I was always wondering how teachers grade our writing papers. Now it is good to know this" (S1). "Initially I did not know what were the things that I was to pay attention to" (S3).

Knowing how to write papers but not being able to do it accordingly made the task of writing in L2 quite challenging and sometimes a painful process. This requires more practice, trial, and patience. Although a few students expressed the stress-creating element of writing by the standards of the rubric at this level, they also found the use of the rubric very useful in creating a much better quality of writing. One of the respondents remarked:

Initially, there was a sort of uncertainty. I did not know on what criteria I was graded and I did not know by what criteria I was to write my composition papers. So I wrote haphazardly. After the introduction of the rubric, I don't say I now can write better but I know well what to pay more attention to and what to consider in writing (S5).

On the other hand, the use of rubrics at times turned out to be a source of stress and tension among the students because the task of having to produce a piece of writing up to a set of criteria was something very new to them. After internalizing the rubric to some extent, they felt they were in a

position to appreciate the properties of good writing, and they were better able to evaluate their own writing: “It has been three days since I started to write a compare-contrast essay. I have not produced even a half page. So far I have written many drafts but I did not like them at all because I feel it is not good by the rubric, and frankly speaking I was much more comfortable with writing before I used the rubric. This drives me crazy” (S7).

3.1.2. Content

In addition to the overall impact of using rubrics in the writing process, I sought to see how students dealt with each category of the rubric such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Students were asked to comment on their performance in terms of content.

Formerly, I did not have much anxiety for the content. After the rubrics, I became more aware of in particular, audience and purpose. There should be a thesis statement with supporting ideas. In the previous semester, I wrote for quantity. I mean I tried to put as many sentences as possible but now I write for quality (S9).

Unlike the previous semester, I try not to write down any sentence irrelevant to the subject” (S4).

Students made important progress in recognizing the importance of the interrelationship between and among the pieces of information given in the content area. Consistent with this, students appeared to write more grammatically correct and complex sentences to impress their teachers less. In other words, before the rubrics, there was much more focus on language correctness and the quantity of “beautiful” sentences at the expense of conveying a sense of completeness. This belief was perhaps fostered by the traditional practice of teachers under the influence of product approach. Due to the use of the rubric, the students were able to realize the importance of finding the facts, points and pertinent information concerning the topic.

3.1.3. Organization

What came out as a salient gain from the students’ reports in relation to the organization category of the rubric is that there should be an introductory, supporting and concluding paragraph. This is something about which formerly they had only a vague idea, but now the students were found to pay more attention to the overall relationship of ideas within and between paragraphs. The integration of rubrics increased their awareness of the fact that they need to logically develop points in paragraphs and use a sort of sequence as characterized in the quotations below:

I’m not saying I can write well organized papers but at least I know what to pay attention to due to the introduction of the rubric, which no one told us about in the past (S2).

At the beginning I start with a topic sentence but immediately I write two or more supporting detail sentences in the following paragraphs. The problem [is] I cannot write more. I mean I do not write long paragraphs, but when compared to the past I feel I am writing better (S3).

Another student noted:

A well-organized paper should have, first of all, a thesis statement, and each paragraph should have its own thesis statement. All these should be related to the main idea in the paper. There must be a reference to the topic sentence in the concluding paragraph. Nevertheless, I’m not saying I can write well organized papers but at least I know what to pay attention to due to the introduction of the rubric, which no one told us about in the past (S6).

Another student reported:

The most important gain of using rubrics in relation to organization category, formerly I used to put all my ideas in my paper without a good organization and sequence. I thought all my ideas were clear and good .but now when I look my previous papers, I can see my wrong and weak points very easily. For instance, I can say to myself that sentence is in the wrong paragraph or I should have said this here..... (S7).

In addition to these commonly shared points, students were found to highlight, as an important gain from the organization category, the importance of using appropriate transitional markers between ideas and paragraphs as highlighted below:

I did not know that transitional markers had so much magical power to connect ideas and paragraphs. Some sentences and even paragraph became very connected with a very minor change and the addition of appropriate markers (S4).

3.1.4. Vocabulary

As to the effect of the vocabulary category on students' writing processes, almost all of the students reported to have started very frequent use of dictionary to find a variety of effective words in their writing. The practice on vocabulary concepts in the rubric led the students to find out, in their own words, the "strategic" value of using dictionaries more effectively than before. Students used dictionaries to decide the most appropriate words to the given topic.

I spend much more time than ever on dictionaries; I continuously work through dictionary because I did not know that vocabulary was that much important for an effective composition paper. For instance, I used the verb apply instead of appeal for a charity business. Although our teacher understands what I mean, but it does not make our composition look better (S8).

Perhaps the most concrete outcome of efforts to internalize the vocabulary category was to gently switch to monolingual English dictionaries, not necessarily at the expense of bilingual dictionaries. Students appeared to have discovered the great power of using monolingual English dictionaries, which is an unexpected, positive side effect of integrating rubrics into the classroom. In the above quotation, the student, staying dependent on the bilingual dictionary for immediate use and needs as is the case with most of our EFL students, wrongly used "apply for money" instead of "appeal for money" because of the bilingual dictionary. Later, s/he was able to correct her/his mistake through clear contextual examples in a monolingual English dictionary. This switch could be painful as it was with some other students in our research because the definitions provided in some monolingual English dictionaries were found quite abstract, multi-layered and too dense to understand, and secondly, many definitions include many other unfamiliar words. This did not necessarily lead to the building of a better vocabulary, nor was it the end, but it turned out to be a pleasurable and profitable habit that enabled students to have the satisfaction of getting their ideas and thoughts across more appropriately and effectively in their writing. So far the students were much more concerned with having larger vocabulary without developing an understanding of what learning and using words meant. Instead of extending their range of vocabulary, the students in our case were observed to develop greater control and thinking over the meanings of the words to be used for a given topic.

3.1.5. Language use and mechanics

When it comes to the category of language use, students appeared to associate language use with the knowledge of grammar. Instead of using simple sentences, students tended to use more complicated sentences. Similarly, the category of mechanics received the least attention from the students for two reasons: first, students use spelling software programs on computers when they hand in their papers; secondly, they consider this a matter of personal attention rather than lack of knowledge. Additionally, this category gets only 5 point out of 100. Many students were found to try to demonstrate mastery of conventions and use effective complex constructions as indicated in the quotations:

Instead of using simple sentences all the time, I need to use more complicated sentences such as noun clauses and adjective clauses (S2).

Unlike the previous semester, I am now trying to use different grammatical structures. At least I know what I should understand from language use as we have a rubric in our hand. Nevertheless, I am not sure how much I can put all this into practice (S3).

The category of language use did not make contribution to my knowledge of grammar. But I am trying to use more effective and different structures. Now I find my previous composition papers boring and dull. In that sense Language Use category has a positive effect on me (S6).

In the first semester our writing teacher also told us to use different structures and avoid repetitive sentences and structures. For some reason, we did not take it very seriously but we have a written criteria in our hand. We are now paying more attention to language use (S7).

The category of mechanics received the least attention from the students for two reasons: first, students use spelling software programs on computers when they hand in their papers; secondly, they consider this a matter of personal attention rather than lack of knowledge. Additionally, this category gets only 5 point out of 100.

4. Conclusion

The integration of the rubric into the general flow of writing courses served us in planning and shaping instruction by breaking the writing course into measurable observable components and directing students towards manageable learning targets. The ultimate goal of using rubrics as an instructional tool is to empower students by awakening a sense of appreciation for what makes good writing in an EFL setting. Students are, in turn, expected to be able to develop their own writing skills in the long run. The use of rubrics in this present study made it clear that students, once provided with these clear criteria for quality in advance of completing the assignment, can consciously apply them to their work and become increasingly proficient in writing skills. It was quite interesting to observe that students got involved in feedback which was not necessarily limited to the correction of errors. During feedback sessions in the study, students were encouraged to recognize the merits and shortcomings in their own and peers' writing performance, understand the reasons for these shortcomings and negotiate with their peers and teachers possible improvements. This led students to develop a more visible individual voice and tone in their writing endeavor.

One of the concrete results from this research is that there was a statistically significant difference between the two groups in the sense that the experimental group outperformed the control group in writing composition papers. This obviously indicates that rubrics have potential for teachers to make their writing course more productive. The second major result worth mentioning here is that students felt that they would be able to produce better pieces of writing in English when the teaching approach emphasized writing as a process rather than writing as a product after having internalized the rubric. It is, however, hard to say that the use of rubrics liberated students from the burdensome specter of the teacher's authority since the traditional product-oriented approach to writing in the EFL setting appeared to transmit fixed cultural and linguistic behavior. Students are likely to continue to suffer from lack of genuine audience and sustained motivation in view of the fact that teachers remain their primary audience. It can be said, however, that students were virtually liberated from the narrow perception of writing based on the notion of correct grammar.

References

- Andrade, H., & Du, Y. (2005). Student perspectives on rubric-referenced assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation, 10*(3), 1-11.
- Andrade, H. G. (2000). What do we mean by results? Using rubrics to promote thinking and learning. *Educational Leadership, 57*(5), 13-18.

- Arter, J. (2000). Rubrics, scoring guides and performance criteria: Classroom tools for assessing and improving student learning. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED446100.pdf>
- Bangert-Drowns, R., Kulik C., Kulik, J., & Morgan, M. (1991). The instructional effect of feedback in test-like events. *Review of Educational Research*, 61, 213-238.
- Bansilal, S., James, A., & Naidoo, M. (2010). Whose voice matters? LEARNERS. *South African Journal of Education*, 30(1), 153-165.
- Birky, B. (2012). A good solution for assessment. *Strategies: A Journal for Physical and Sport Educators*, 25, 19-21.
- Butler, D. & Winne, P. (1995). Feedback and self-regulated learning: A theoretical synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 65(3), 245-281.
- Carstens, A. (2001). Generic versus discipline-specific writing interventions: Report on a quasi-experiment. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 29(2), 149-165.
- Chase, C. (1999). *Contemporary assessment for educators*. New York: Longman.
- Diab, R., & Balaa, L.(2011). Developing detailed rubrics for assessing critique writing: Impact on EFL university students' performance and attitudes. *TESOL Journal*, 2, 52-72.
- Hillocks, G., Jr. (1986). *Research on written composition: New directions for teaching*. Urbana, IL: ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills and the National Conference on Research in English.
- Jacobs, H., Zinkgraf, S.A., Wormuth, D.R., Hartfiel, V.F., & Hughey, J. B. (1981). *Testing ESL composition: A practical approach*. London: Newbury.
- Kayaoğlu, M. N. (2009). Process writing with the internet. *Modern English Teacher*, 18, 48-50.
- Mertler, C. A. (2001). Designing scoring rubrics for your classroom. *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(25). Retrieved from <http://www.ericae.net/pare/getvn.asp?v=7&n=25>.
- Moskal, B.M. (2000). Scoring rubrics: What, when and how? *Practical Assessment, Research & Evaluation*, 7(3). Retrieved from <http://PAREonline.net/getvn.asp?v=7&n=3>.
- Mueller, J. (2006) Why Use Authentic Assessment. In *Authentic Assessment Toolbox* (chap.2). Retrieved September, 17, 2006. Retrieved from <http://jonathan.mueller.faculty.noctrl.edu/toolbox/whydoit.htm>
- Nitko, A. J. (2001). *Educational assessment of students* (3rd ed). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Panadero, E., & Jonsson, A. (2013). The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment purposes revisited: A review. *Educational Research Review*, 9, 129-144.
- Saxton, E., Belanger, S., & Becker, W.(2012). The critical thinking analytic rubric (ctar): Investigating intra-rater and inter-rater reliability of a scoring mechanism for critical thinking performance assessments. *Assessing Writing*, 17, 251-270.
- Soles, D. (2001). Sharing scoring guides. Retrieved from <http://www.eric.ed.gov/PDFS/ED450379.pdf>
- Stears, M., & Gopal, N. (2010). Exploring alternative assessment strategies in science classrooms. *South African Journal of Education*, 30, 591-604.
- Uys, M., Van der Walt, J., Van den Berg, R., & Botha, S. (2007). English medium of instruction: A situation analysis. *South African Journal of Education*, 27(1), 69–82.

- Wesolowski, B. C. (2012). Understanding and developing rubrics for music performance assessment. *Music Educators Journal*, 98, 36-42.
- Wyngaard, S., & Gehrke, R. (1996). Responding to audience: Using rubrics to teach and assess writing. *The English Journal*. 85, 67-70.
- Zhao, C. G. (2012). Measuring authorial voice strength in L2 argumentative writing: The development and validation of an analytic rubric. *Language Testing*, 30, 201-230.

Dereceli Puanlama Cetvelinin (rubric) Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Derslerinde Öğretim Aracı Olarak Kullanılması

Öz

Bu çalışma, bir öğretim aracı olarak rubric (dereceli puanlama cetveli) kullanmanın, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin yazı performansları üzerindeki etkisini incelemektedir. Çalışmanın ana amacı öğrencileri, İngilizce yazarken çokça kendisini hissettiren sadece doğru gramer nosyonuna dayanan yazma algısından kurtarmaktır. Karma yöntem yaklaşımı kullanılarak, uygulama grubuna (s 16) iyi yazı yazmanın kurallarını içeren bir rubrik verildi. İki farklı deneme yazısı yazarken yazım süreçleri izlendi ve kendilerine rehberlik edildi. Kontrol grubundaki öğrenciler (s22) de aynı tip deneme yazıları yazdılar fakat onlara her hangi bir rubrik verilmedi. Veriler, öğrencilerle yapılan görüşmeler ve aynı rubriği kullanan üç bağımsız notlandırıcı tarafından değerlendirilen öğrencilerin yazılı metinlerinden elde edildi. Elde edilen sonuçlar, yazım sürecinde rubrik kullanan öğrencilerin kontrol grubundaki öğrencilerden daha üstün bir performans sergilediklerini ortaya koydu. Öğrencilerle yapılan görüşmelerin analizi, daha önce biraz zor gibi gözükmiş olsada, rubriklerin derslere entegrasyonunun, öğrencilere iyi yazının özelliklerinin neler olduğunu anlamada ve kendi yazılarında daha başarılı olmaları için uygun stratejiler kullanmada yardımcı olduğunu ortaya koydu.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Rubrik, öğretim aracı, dil eğitimi, yazma

AUTHOR BIODATA

Dr. Fehmi Turgut is a lecturer at Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, Karadeniz Technical University. He has been teaching language and literature-based courses for twenty years.

Assoc. Prof. Dr. M. Naci Kayaoğlu studied Applied Linguistics at Edinburgh University and received his PhD from Bristol University, the UK and has published numerous articles and contributed to various projects. His interests include professional development, materials development, educational technology, English language teaching, and corpus linguistics. He is the author of *Language Learning Strategies: Theory, Practice and Issues*.