



Employing Rubric-referenced Self-assessment for Novice Writers

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Abstract. This study aims to explore the efficacy of the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment on students' writings. The goal is to provide experimental and qualitative support for the application of rubric-referenced self-assessment among EFL students who are in the early stages of acquiring English writing skills, comprising a total of 59 participants. 30 students assigned to the experimental group composed English procedural texts with the help of rubric-referenced self-assessment. In contrast, their peers in the control group adhered to conventional assessment procedures when writing their texts. Quantitative data were taken from the evaluations of both initial drafts and final texts, while qualitative data were drawn from interviews, logs, and students' writings. The findings show that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in writing procedural text. In addition, the study highlighted the impact of rubric-referenced self-assessment, as it promoted autonomous learning. Instructively, the teacher gave less support for the experimental group since they displayed the capacity to independently identify and correct their errors, enhancing the overall quality of their works by comparing their work against the criteria in the rubric. They managed to add specific elements in their writings, such as temporal conjunctions and sequence markers. Students in the control group, conversely, were able to improve their writings only in terms of generic structure.

Keywords: Rubric-referenced Assessment, Self-assessment, Novice Writer.

1 Introduction

One of the primary goals of education in Indonesia is to foster character and competitiveness in human resources (HR). Achieving such HR requires high-quality education. Each educational unit is expected to produce learners who consistently engage in critical thinking. In their personal development, these learners should be capable of evaluating and analysing various information relevant to their chosen areas of expertise.

Developing critical thinking skills is inseparable from the presence of innovation in the education system. Learners continually innovate to create ways of assisting themselves in becoming problems solvers, independent decision-makers, and lifelong learners. Furthermore, the educational landscape is currently undergoing a revolution like never before. Online learning growth statistics continue to soar. This revolution brings

not only advantages but also several challenges that must be addressed. These challenges affect the learning process. Learners face obstacles such as limited access to technology and the internet, disparities in learning resources, and a lack of experience in online learning, which can lead to a loss of motivation during this era of revolution. One crucial adjustment for learners is taking control of the learning process. They must take personal responsibility for the education they pursue. To facilitate this, learners can assist themselves by conducting self-assessments. Through self-assessment, learners can monitor their progress, reflect on their own learning, develop metacognitive skills, and ultimately enhance their potential for lifelong learning [1].

To support thoughtful self-assessment, we can provide a rubric; a list of criteria to measure the level of learning and performance of students in different learning areas [2]. Rubrics initially were used as student assessment but today many scholars believed that rubrics are useful in the process of teaching and learning as well. Rubrics help students identify what they can do well, what they need to do in order to be improved and how they can overcome their difficulties [3]. To be meaningful in the process of self-assessment, rubrics need to be carefully designed. If the rubrics cannot define the quality of an assignment adequately, it will be difficult for teachers to give feedback and it may constraint the students' creativity.

Considering the potential advantages of employing rubric-based self-assessment in the context of students' performance, it becomes imperative to investigate its impact on the writing abilities of students, particularly those who are still in the early stages of acquiring English writing skills. In Indonesia, young learners encounter a limitation in terms of English instruction hours within the classroom, with the primary school curriculum treating English as merely an auxiliary subject, referred to as *muatan lokal*. This situation poses a significant challenge for first-year junior high school students in their quest to enhance their writing skills. While the number of research exploring alternative assessment in the Indonesian educational system is expanding, the studies regarding the rubric-referenced self-assessment for beginner context are very rare.

Therefore, in order to confirm the effectiveness of rubric-referenced self-assessment in Indonesian novice writer context, further investigation providing both qualitative and quantitative evidence is required. Such an undertaking holds the potential to provide teachers with valuable insight into the use of self-assessment as a means of enhancing the learning process. This current study attempts to identify the effectiveness of rubric-referenced self-assessment in improving English writing skills of Indonesian first-year junior high school students. Accordingly, the following research questions are addressed.

- a. Does the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment affect students' writing?
- b. In what ways does the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment affect students writing?

2 Method

Since the design used in this research is explanatory sequential design, the quantitative data taken from the scores of initial and final students' writing were analysed prior to

collect the qualitative data collection and analysis. For in-depth qualitative data, the content of the students' writings, interview results, and their logs were collected and analysed.

2.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 59 first-year junior high school students from public school in Karawang. None of them had received any English lesson in primary school that they were completely new to learning English formally. They never received private English writing lessons outside the classroom or had not implemented English writing self-assessment prior to the study. However, they had covered the first topic in class which was descriptive text writing.

2.2 Instruments

In this present study, instruments used were rubric, procedural essays, students' logs, and interviews. A brief description of each instrument is provided below.

Rubric for self-assessment. The rubric for self-assessment was adapted from Andrade et al.[4]. Since there is no single rubric that is appropriate for the research purpose, the researcher adapted the rubric by including all important elements and main characteristics of procedural text into it. The language and delivery were also translated and adjusted so the participants who are beginners in English could understand it easily. The rubric consisted of three levels of quality and five aspects of procedural text to look at. Each level of quality is given descriptors and score range to help the teacher to give fair score. The rubric was validated by two experts.

Multiple essays. After both groups received the same amounts of hours of instructions, they were asked to compose two different procedural text. They were asked to finish their initial draft on the fourth meeting and the final draft on the seventh meeting. For both procedural texts, teachers gave three different topics to choose from.

Students' self-assessment logs. After class, students were asked to answer some questions to reflect how they were doing in class, difficulties they encountered, their improvements and what they wanted to do next meeting. They also asked to assess their own writing based on the criteria in the rubric. They needed to highlight the rights and the wrongs of their writings.

Interviews. To get better understanding of the result, the researcher interviews five students in the seventh meeting. Each interview lasted about 15 minutes each. The questions asked how the rubric assisted them to develop their writings.

2.3 Data Collection Procedures

Before the self-assessment lesson, the students of both groups received formal instructions to learn about procedural text. In the end of the instructions, they were given a model of procedural text. The text was shown in front of the class and the teachers have the students to brainstorm characteristics of a good procedural text. Students in the experimental group were told that those characteristics would be included in the rubric to score their writings. Meanwhile, the control group generated a list of qualities of a good procedural text but they did not receive a rubric.

Before the self-assessment lesson started, the score obtained by both groups were scored by two experts. The Pearson Moments Multiplication Correlation Coefficient was used to calculate the scorer reliability. The correlation of those two scorers was found to be .93.

In the self-assessment lesson, the students in the control and experimental group participated in a total of four rubric-referenced self-assessment lessons. Each lesson has 2 session, 40 minutes long each. The first 40 minutes of the meeting were allotted for students writing their drafts. The latter part was used for discussion and feedback for control group and self-assessment for the experimental group. Since the students were still beginner in English writing, they were not able to finish their text in one session. So, they needed two days to finish one text.

The writing process of the experimental group was guided through self-assessment. They were asked to highlight the key phrases in the rubric and the evidence in their draft using the same color to show that they have met the quality set in the rubric. Once they could not find the evidence in their draft, they needed to make some improvement notes for the next draft. This process was done for all of the criterion listed in the rubric. Students in the control group did not use the rubric to self-assess their drafts but they invited one of them to show their draft in front of the class, discussed it together and got feedback from the teacher as the notes for improvement. At the end of the lessons, the final essay of all students was scored by the experts. The correlation between the scores given by those experts was found to be .94 (Table 1).

Table 1. Research Schedule

Total study period	7 weeks
1	Formal instructions to learn about procedural text
2	Formal instructions to learn about procedural text
3	Modelling + Text writing
4	Self-assessment lesson, draft 1
5	Self-assessment lesson, finalize draft 1
6	Self-assessment lesson, draft 2
7	Self-assessment lesson, finalize draft 2 + Interview

2.4 Data Analysis Procedure

To know if the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment affect the students' writings, the researcher examined the scores of initial essays and the final essays using a sample t-test when data followed a normal distribution. When it did not, a Mann Whitney was

used. The analysis was performed using the SPSS 27.0 package program. To answer the second research question, the qualitative data was categorized according to the themes and analysed.

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Effect of rubric-referenced self-assessment on students` writing quality

Before looking at the results of initial and final essays closely, it was important to check if the data distribution is normal. The Table 2 and 3 briefly showed the result of the normality test of the experimental group and control group.

Table 2. Normality Test Result

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistics	df	Sig.	Statistics	df	Sig.
Treatment- Pretest	.173	30	0.23	.936	30	0.70
Treatment- Posttest	.147	30	0.95	.918	30	0.24
Control-Pretest	.310	29	.000	.617	29	.000
Control-Posttest	.159	29	.058	.936	29	.081

Table 3. Mann Whitney Result

	Kelas	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Increasing the value of learning outcomes	Experimental	30	38.20	1146.00
	Control	29	21.52	624.00
	Total	59		
Mann-Whitney U	189.000			
Wilcoxon W	624.000			
Z	-3.747			
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000			

Based on the output of the test statistics, the Asymp.Sig (2 tailed) was .000, less than .05. It means that there was a significant difference between learning achievement of experimental and control group. In conclusion, the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment positively affects the students` writings.

3.2 How the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment affect students` writing

To describe the way using rubric-referenced self-assessment affect the students` writing, the researcher analysed the students` logs, interview results, and students` essays. From those qualitative data, it can be concluded that:

Rubric-referenced self-assessment help students to increase their self-efficacy through targeted feedback. The students in the experimental group were confident to state if what they did was right or wrong because the rubric states the qualities clearly.

Rubrics can help students identify areas where they need improvement and provide them with specific feedback on how to improve [5]. Three out of five interviewees said that because the rubric describes each level of quality clearly, they know where they are at. The use of rubrics allows students to receive specific feedback on their writing, which can guide them in making necessary revisions. They become more aware of the criteria for good writing and can self-evaluate their work against these criteria.

In the rubric, there is some detail explanation which help a lot. For example, I know that I already did better when I read statement in the rubric that says 'You had less than three mistakes in mechanics' because my friends made more than three. If I know where I am at right now according to the rubric, I know what to do next to improve

Rubric-referenced promotes autonomous learning. Rubric-referenced self-assessment promotes a sense of ownership on the learning process, as students take an active role in assessing and improving their writing, fostering a growth mindset. Autonomous learning allows learners to take control of their learning process, which can reduce the amount of time teachers spend on individual students [2]. In this case, rubric-referenced self-assessment promotes autonomous learning thereby reduce teachers' workload. Based on the interview result, it is found that all of the interviewees said that they feel better to study with the help of rubric because they can assess their own work seeking feedback from the teachers. They could find their own mistakes and tried to revise their works by themselves.

When we went to the teacher to show our works, she replied us by smiling, nodding, or saying 'great job. She was used to have students' queue in front of her to ask for feedback

On one of the students' logs, the student wrote:

Without rubric, I think I will never be able to write well. I often feel shy to ask my teachers to look at my work. But now, with rubric, at least I can try to find my mistakes before I show it to my teachers. I think my friends also feel the same.

Rubric serves as a reminder of crucial details that are frequently overlooked. Because the students were new to English writing, they have very limited vocabulary. While composing text, they were busy with their dictionaries or asking friends for translations. The very first thing they think about was to write some words on their paper. Correct forms and details of procedural texts are not their first priorities. Since the rubric does not only state the key points of a procedural text, but also put some details, students in the experimental group were reminded to revise their work more thoroughly.

I thought my text was good already, but when I looked at the rubric, there were many parts I had to revise. Thankfully, I read the rubric.

Students in the experimental group managed to add specific elements in their writings, such as temporal conjunctions and sequence markers. Students in the control group, conversely, were able to improve their writings only in terms of generic structure. This finding supports the ideas delivered by Andrade which says students who engage in rubric-referenced self-assessment typically produce better writing, not just in mechanics but also in sophisticated qualities such as content, organization, and voice

[6]. In this case, the rubric works as a guidance. When the students finished with a certain aspect of a procedural text, they can look at the rubric and find the aspects which they want to improve; they continue making progress.

4 Conclusion

This study aims to explore the efficacy of the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment in the context of EFL students' writings. The goal is to provide experimental and qualitative support for the application of rubric-referenced self-assessment among EFL students who are in the early stages of acquiring English writing skills. The findings show that the students in the experimental group outperformed those in the control group in writing procedural text. In addition, the study highlighted the impact of rubric-referenced self-assessment, as help students to increase their self-efficacy through targeted feedback, promotes autonomous learning thereby reduced teachers' workload, and serves as a reminder of crucial details that are frequently overlooked.

In conclusion, implementing rubric-referenced self-assessment can improve learning outcome, as students become more engaged in the writing process, leading to better writing skills and comprehension of writing standards which are essential for students who are still in the early stages of acquiring English writing skills.

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