

Chapter 1

Using Rubrics for Language Assessment

Laura E. Mendoza

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8649-8775>

University of Texas at El Paso, USA

ABSTRACT

The use of rubrics for classroom assessment has been evolving rapidly during the last decades. Unfortunately, because rubrics across language classrooms are only sometimes standardized, some may provide a non-friendly language for students, which is useless for their linguistic development. In addition to defining rubrics from an array of perspectives, the present chapter presents possible benefits linked to the appropriate use of rubrics among emergent bilinguals. Shabani and Panahi highlight essential benefits for students when presented with language assessment tools, such as rubrics, and the authors use their observation for this chapter. It aims to highlight the importance of rubrics in the language classroom in an effort for educators, evaluators, and policymakers to be more conscious when creating and using rubrics.

INTRODUCTION

Assessing and, more importantly, addressing students' learning can be challenging in any classroom. Particularly in the language classroom, assessing students' needs can represent additional challenges given the many capabilities that, interposingly, are continuously present. It is relevant to remind the reader that although the word 'rubric' is continuously used throughout the chapter, the concept is to be mainly used in the language classroom context. Nevertheless, readers should be warned that the term 'rubric' is used today in arrayed contexts and practices. However, the focus of the chapter will remain as an evaluative tool to assess students' linguistic practices and knowledges. The aim of the present chapter is to highlight the importance of rubrics in the language classroom in an effort for educators, evaluators, and policy-makers to be more conscious when creating and using rubrics.

DOI: 10.4018/978-1-6684-6086-3.ch001

BACKGROUND: DEFINING RUBRICS AND TYPES OF RUBRICS

The use of rubrics for classroom assessment has been evolving rapidly during the last decades. In education, for instance, teachers always use rubrics even without noticing it. Jeong (2015) reminds us how the use of rubrics, particularly in the language classroom, is of high value. For the purpose of the present chapter, a rubric should be understood as presented by Dawson (2017, p. 349):

A rubric is a tool used to assess student work that usually includes Popham's (1997) three essential features: evaluative criteria, quality definitions for those criteria at particular levels, and a scoring strategy. A design element is a particular variable, choice, or dimension that makes one rubric different from another. For example, the specificity element is concerned with the differences between task-specific and generic rubrics.

According to the author, “one rubric may use generic quality words (e.g., ‘good’ or ‘below standard’), whereas another may explain in detail what quality looks like” (p. 348). This said the level of specificity that a rubric may possess will serve as a guide for students, educators, and evaluators to gain a better understanding of the course expectations.

Some educators unknowingly use mental rubrics (Quinlan, 2012), whereas others purposefully use physical/digital rubrics. The author states: “Whether they know it or not, people create rubrics - guidelines for decisions for evaluation and assessment- in their minds every day” (p.2). Quinlan (2012) continues, “These mental rubrics help us to make decisions based on both our prior knowledge and current objectives.” In our classrooms, we generally use rubrics with the presumption that these will ease the path for students when trying to understand the expectations, components, objectives, and ways to be assessed in a given course or assignment; we are continuously bringing opportunities for students, and ourselves, to compare what it is good or not that good.

It has been evident that, particularly for students, rubrics in the language classroom can help them successfully prove what they are expected to do linguistically if provided with details. Dawson (2017) argues that there is a relevant variation amongst the level of detail provided in the quality section of the rubrics; therefore, this opens room to having rubrics that can be helpful for students and evaluators, whereas others need to be more specific. These distinctions will be thoroughly discussed later on as part of the present chapter. Therefore, the use of rubrics in the language classroom can be beneficial to demonstrate student success and for educators and evaluators to provide more detailed-oriented feedback, promoting meaningful learning.

Unfortunately, because rubrics across language classrooms are not always standardized, some of them may provide a non-friendly language for students, which is useless for their linguistic development; likewise, many others provide a language that might be too vague to comply with institutions' missions and objectives. Dawson (2017) highlights how the proliferation of the word ‘rubric’ has dealt with varied changes and adaptations. However, simultaneously, it has yet to develop a shared complete understanding of the term necessarily. For this reason, although many institutions require using rubrics for varied assessments, these fluctuate, navigating the use of the term and using it in the way that best benefits them.

13 more pages are available in the full version of this document, which may be purchased using the "Add to Cart" button on the publisher's webpage:
www.igi-global.com/chapter/using-rubrics-for-language-assessment/328691

Related Content

Transitioning Courses During COVID-19: Strategies, Processes, and Lessons Learned by Three Black Faculty at Primarily White Institutions

Kanita K. DuCloux, Michelle S. Jones and Jeffrey D. Herron (2021). *Strategies for Student Support During a Global Crisis* (pp. 99-125).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/transitioning-courses-during-covid-19/278553

Students' Attitudes Toward Education of Gifted Children and Competencies as Future Teachers: Case Study From Croatia

Jasna Arrigoni and Sanja Tatalovi Vorkapi (2018). *Curriculum Development for Gifted Education Programs* (pp. 19-42).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/students-attitudes-toward-education-of-gifted-children-and-competencies-as-future-teachers/198873

Restructuring Core Curriculum

Julie Christina Tatlock (2024). *Restructuring General Education and Core Curricula Requirements* (pp. 19-33).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/restructuring-core-curriculum/338633

Creating a Culture of Inclusion in Pre-Kindergarten: An Integral Analysis of Beliefs, Understandings, and Practices of Early Childhood Educators

Natalie Anne Prytuluk (2019). *Integral Theory and Transdisciplinary Action Research in Education* (pp. 238-269).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/creating-a-culture-of-inclusion-in-pre-kindergarten/219193

Scientific Practices and Skills Supported by a Problem-Based Learning Approach

Christopher Bowen (2019). *Handbook of Research on Science Literacy Integration in Classroom Environments* (pp. 27-40).

www.irma-international.org/chapter/scientific-practices-and-skills-supported-by-a-problem-based-learning-approach/214287