Exploring Self-Assessment in Writing: A Study of Undergraduate Saudi Students Utilizing a Writing Course Rubric

**Abstract**

Self-assessment enables learners to monitor their own progress in second or foreign language writing. By reflecting on their writing performance, learners can identify areas of improvement and track their language development over time.

**Introduction**

In the context of second or foreign language learning in writing courses, Assessment as Learning (AaL) serves a pivotal function by empowering learners to actively track and evaluate their developmental trajectory. Central to AaL is the metacognitive practice of self-assessment, an activity that fosters an individual’s ability to discern their own strengths and shortcomings.

Bonk and Cunningham (2012) argue for the importance of situating assessment within a paradigm that prioritizes learner performance and centers around the learners themselves. This assessment paradigm should emphasize relevance, collaboration, integration, and a deeper connection to the learner's experience. To enhance the meaningfulness of assessment, it should involve a comprehensive consideration of learners as complete individuals, encompassing their emotions, physicality, and cognitive faculties, along with their memories, imaginings, affiliations, and self-identities (Stobart & Gipps, 2010). Furthermore, this perspective recognizes that the process of learning and assessment is a profoundly personal and distinct experience for each individual (Deardorff, 2011).

In the current study, we provide a concise overview of self-assessment practices in EFL writing instruction. Subsequently, we present a qualitative study based in a tertiary EFL setting that initially compares self-assessment outcomes against the respective final grades accorded by instructors. Then we focus on the follow-up feedback gathered through a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, to shed light on the students' perceptions and insights drawn from their self-assessment experiences. This approach aims to not only underline learners’ degree of writing proficiency self-awareness compared to their final evaluation scores but also to illustrate the qualitative aspects that outline the learners' point of view in a writing self-assessment activity.

**Literature Review: Self-Assessment in Second Language Writing Pedagogy**

One of the earliest papers on self-assessment in language learning is Blanche and Merino (1985) in which they reviewed 15 studies that have a self-assessment component. None of those 15 studies focused solely on self-assessment of writing skills. Since then, the specific field of self-assessment in language learning has remained rather unstructured, characterized by a lack of focus and theoretical dispersion regarding distinctions between terminological conventions (Zhao and Qi, 2023). In this paper, we adopt Earl’s (2003, 2013) concept of Assessment as Learning (AaL), which emphasizes student agency and active participation in self-assessment and autonomous learning as opposed to the summative Assessment of Learning (AoL) and the formative Assessment for Learning (AfL) (Schellekens et.al., 2021).

From the AaL perspective, students are envisioned as engaged participants in assessment, fostering the growth of metacognitive and self-regulating abilities (Earl, 2013). In self-assessment, learners evaluate their own performance and progress, taking on an active role in monitoring their learning journey. It involves students assessing their abilities, knowledge, and skills against predetermined criteria or benchmarks as a metacognitive strategy that enables them to reflect on their learning, identify areas for improvement, and devise strategies for growth (Andrade & Valtcheva, 2009; Lee, 2016).

In the context of second or foreign language writing learning, self-assessment takes on particular significance due to the complex nature of language acquisition. It involves evaluating various components of writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, coherence, organization, and style. Self-assessment enables learners to monitor their own progress in second or foreign language writing. By reflecting on their writing performance, learners can identify areas of improvement and track their language development over time.

Through self-assessment, learners gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses in writing. They can identify patterns of errors, language gaps, and areas requiring further practice, allowing for targeted improvement. Self-assessment facilitates the setting of realistic and achievable goals. Learners can establish specific objectives based on self-evaluation, focusing on areas that need improvement and aligning their language learning efforts with their individual needs (Dörnyei, 2001). Engaging in self-assessment enhances the overall language learning experience. It encourages active engagement, reflection, and refinement of writing skills, leading to increased motivation, confidence, and autonomy.

However, a significant challenge in self-assessment is attaining the objective detachment that an external reader naturally possesses when critiquing one's own work. There is a consensus that pedagogical interventions and strategies can foster the growth of this critical distance (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

When it comes to empirical studies in an EFL tertiary context we have found that L2 students’ experience of self-assessment is usually a component rather than the focus (Al-Rashidi et al, 2022; Cho et al, 2010; Phuong et al, 2023; Estaji, and Safari, 2023).

An example of this is Lam’s (2013) study which compared tertiary EFL peer, self and teacher assessment effectiveness in text revision and found that self-assessment resulted in significantly fewer text revisions than peer and teacher feedback. Nevertheless, Lam’s study provides valuable insight into EFL students’ perception of self-assessment. In the interviews, eight participants discussed self-assessment. When asked about their thoughts on self-assessment in text revision, three students found it motivating and helpful for improving their drafts. They claimed they became more responsible writers and checked their work thoroughly before seeking feedback. Two students believed it improved their understanding of the audience and made their writing clearer. However, some students lacked confidence and commitment in self-assessment, finding it mentally demanding, especially if they had little prior experience. One student, although recognizing its value in a portfolio context, considered it time-consuming and dull. To address these challenges, two students suggested expanding training workshops on self-assessment to make peers more familiar with its theory and practical aspects. Overall, students saw self-assessment as beneficial for language awareness and text improvement, despite reliability issues, limited experience, and the need for more comprehensive training.

On the other hand, Wang and Lee (2023) conducted an in-depth AaL multiple case study of three EFL undergraduate students at a University in China. Wang and Lee utilized extensive interviews, class observations, think-aloud recordings, student drafts and feedback and learning logs to examine EFL learners’ agentic engagement with peer and teacher feedback collaborations, and personal learning proactiveness. Despite the small sample, they found diversity in how the three students practiced agentic engagement in an assessment as learning-focused writing classroom. The level of engagement depended on each student’s writing proficiency, motivation and perspective towards the assessment roles of teachers and students.

**Current Investigation and Research Questions**

Situated in an academic English writing course offered to EFL first year college students at a major Saudi English medium health sciences university in Riyadh, this study seeks to address the following questions:

1. What is the level of correlation between the scores students assigned to themselves and the scores they received from their instructors?

2. How does the utilization of a detailed rubric influence students' self-assessment experiences during the essay evaluation process?

3. What are the perceived benefits and challenges that students encounter while engaging in self-assessment using the rubric?

**The Context and Framework**

Data collection for this study was conducted in April 2023 at the College of Science and Health Professions (COSHP) program at King Saud bin Abdulaziz University for Health Sciences (KSAUHS), Riyadh. The COSHP program is designed to equip recent Saudi high school graduates with the necessary qualifications for a transition into an undergraduate health sciences education.

To progress into one of the university's colleges—medicine, pharmacology, dentistry, applied medical sciences, or nursing—students enrolled in the COSHP program must successfully complete foundational English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and medical science courses, including anatomy and physiology. The students' performance in the COSHP program serves as a determinant for their admission into these colleges.

This study's self-assessment exercise was administered prior to the submission of the first essay in the third semester of a comprehensive, four-semester English program. This third course’s main aim is to enhance student autonomy in academic writing by leveraging the skills acquired in the two preceding foundation writing courses. Over the semester, students are tasked with synthesizing information from 2-3 sources and applying the Vancouver Referencing system for citation in two essays.

**Methodology**

**Participants and context**

The study included a cohort of 20 undergraduate students, all within the age range of 18 to 19 years. Upon entry into the program, all admitted students were at a language competency aligned with the A2 to B1 spectrum as delineated by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The English program is structured across four semesters, with an explicit objective to elevate the students' language proficiency to a minimum B2 level by its culmination. Since these participants were enrolled in their third semester at COSHP, and all 20 were taking the writing course for the first time, they would approximately be at a high B1 to low B2 level.

The writing course consisted of three contact hours per week over a ten-week instructional period followed by three weeks for revisions and final exams. The course consists of writing lectures and workshops that require students to submit two essays. The first essay is argumentative and incorporates published research on a topic of each student’s choosing within the domains of education, learning, and digital technology. The second essay is on cause and effect and the topic had to be in the domains of education, consumerism, social image.

The self-assessment was conducted before submitting the first essay. Students were asked to fill in the rubrics and the questionnaires on a voluntary basis. Of the twenty who volunteered, four agreed to sit down with one of this paper’s authors towards the end of the semester. The researcher responsible for data collection was a teaching assistant with a research focus on second language teaching and assessment. He is closer in age to the participants, shares a similar background, and speaks the same native language. Such positionality enabled him to establish a rapport with the participants, and thus helped him to elicit in-depth and honest reflections on the participants’ experience with self-assessment.

**Data Collection Tools: Rubric, Questionnaire, and Interviews**

**Rubric**

The essay assessment rubric serves as the main data collection tool. The rubric is utilized by

participants to evaluate their essays before receiving the instructor’s evaluation based on the same rubric. The rubric is structured into distinct sections, each delineating specific criteria for evaluation and corresponding to different scoring levels: Exceptional (5), Very Good (4), Progressing (3), and Needs Developing (2). See appendix for a copy of the rubric. The specific components and criteria are as follows:

1. Process, Format, and Referencing
   * Criteria include adherence to the instructed format, the correct use of references and citations, and employing the specified number of academic sources and word count.
2. Organization and Cohesion
   * Focuses on the structural integrity and coherence of the essay, emphasizing the logical flow of ideas, a well-defined thesis, correct paragraph structure, and appropriate use of connectors for enhanced readability.
3. Content (Argumentation)
   * Evaluates the quality and development of the essay's content, examining the argument’s persuasiveness, clarity, and the relevance of supporting details.
4. Vocabulary (Lexical Resources)
   * Assesses the variety and correctness of academic vocabulary used throughout the essay, including the appropriateness of word choices and phrasing.
5. Grammar and Mechanics
   * Concentrates on grammatical control, including the correct use of complex structures, avoidance of run-ons and fragments, and proper spelling, capitalization, and punctuation.

Each section consists of various criteria that essays must meet to attain a specific score, with a focus on maintaining a high standard for exceptional scores, and progressively more lenient criteria for lower scores.

**Questionnaire**

To gain deeper insight into participants' experiences with the self-assessment process, we attached a questionnaire to each rubric used in the self-assessment. The participants were asked to return both once when they were done. The questionnaire had three open-ended questions about the positive and negative aspects of the self-assessment exercise. The structured questionnaire included the following questions:

"Tell us about your overall self-assessment experience?" — This open-ended question was designed to capture a comprehensive view of the participants' encounters with self-assessment, encouraging them to articulate their feelings, perceptions, and any noteworthy occurrences during the process.

"Tell us about the problems you ran into during the self-assessment." — This query served to pinpoint the specific challenges and obstacles the participants faced.

"Were there any benefits to utilizing a rubric for self-assessment, and if so, what were they?" — The third question was crafted to elicit reflections on the positive aspects of using a rubric for self-assessment.

Participants were encouraged to provide detailed responses, and the responses are utilized as part of the qualitative analysis and as additional support for the interview data.

**Interviews**

Four of the participants responded to a request for an interview. The four semi-structured interviews were conducted in person by the same faculty member who does not teach any of the participants. The interviews aimed to gather detailed insights from students regarding their experiences with self-assessing their essays using the instructor's rubric. Each interview lasted between 7 and 9 minutes.

The focal point of the interviews was to uncover both the positives and negatives of their self-assessment experience. Students were asked a series of questions, including whether it was their first time engaging in self-assessment, if they found the method beneficial enough to use again, and if they saw themselves using this self-assessment approach in courses other than the current one. The goal was to capture a holistic view of their experience and to understand their willingness to embrace this method in the future.

To ensure students could express themselves freely and accurately, the interviews were conducted in their first language, Arabic. Subsequently, each interview was translated into English to facilitate a detailed analysis.

After the translation process, the English transcripts were organized and analyzed through a systematic coding process. The responses were sorted into three primary categories: positive feedback, negative feedback, and students' suggestions and recommendations. This categorization aimed to neatly compile the students’ viewpoints, providing a clear road map to understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the self-assessment process from the students’ perspectives.

**Ethical Considerations**

During the research process, stringent ethical guidelines were adhered to ensure the utmost respect for the participants' privacy and integrity. Firstly, all collected data, encompassing responses from both the self-assessment rubrics and the interviews, were thoroughly anonymized to safeguard the confidentiality of the student participants. Moreover, the structured questionnaire was designed with the objective of promoting candidness while avoiding any questions that might lead to discomfort or distress. Prior to initiating the research, a comprehensive review was carried out by the university Institutional Review Board (IRB) which granted approval for the methods deployed, thereby ascertaining the study's adherence to the established ethical norms.

**III. Results and Analysis**

**A. Quantitative Analysis of Student Self-Assessment Scores**

All the participants were high performing. This might be linked to participation being voluntary. The lowest grade received for the relevant essay is 85%. As such the difference between the instructor’s grade and the student’s grade is small, with the one exception of a student who underrated himself by 13%. What is of note is that a third of the students (n=6) were able to correctly predict what grade the instructor would give; two of these students did not receive the full mark. A third of the students (n=7) overrated themselves and the final third (n=7) underrated themselves. In table 1, the grades and the difference between each instructor and student are shown and in figure 1, the distribution of these differences is shown.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Instructor | Student | Difference |
| 97 | 84 | 13 |
| 85 | 80 | 5 |
| 89 | 84 | 5 |
| 100 | 96 | 4 |
| 100 | 98 | 2 |
| 97 | 96 | 1 |
| 100 | 99 | 1 |
| 100 | 100 | 0 |
| 100 | 100 | 0 |
| 100 | 100 | 0 |
| 99 | 99 | 0 |
| 100 | 100 | 0 |
| 92 | 92 | 0 |
| 100 | 100 | 0 |
| 98 | 99 | -1 |
| 93 | 95 | -2 |
| 98 | 100 | -2 |
| 91 | 95 | -4 |
| 95 | 100 | -5 |
| 92 | 100 | -8 |

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**B. Qualitative Analysis**

The insights gathered from the participants are categorized into three main themes: positive aspects, negative aspects, and recommendations or suggestions for the self-assessment process. Each theme was further examined based on the frequency of specific comments mentioned, and the number of participants who expressed them, giving a nuanced view of the collective experience.

**Positives**

Many positive viewpoints were noted during the study. A salient point of consensus, mentioned by all four interviewees and six questionnaire respondents, was that self-assessment facilitates the recognition of both errors and areas neglected in their writing, with this aspect being brought up 22 times.

Interviewee 1: “I wouldn’t check everything carefully. But after they gave me the rubric and I started to assess based on the rubric I started to finally pay attention.”

Interviewee 2: “But when he looks at the rubric, he discovers that he has things and mistakes that he wouldn’t have seen otherwise.”

Interviewee 3: “I mean you find mistakes that you somewhat wouldn’t have found if you were looking at it just as a student.”

Interviewee 4: “Maybe when I looked at the rubric, I noticed things a little when I assessed them. It’s possible without self-assessment, a person will not be fully aware of their mistakes.”

Respondent 9: “I think self-evaluation experience is crucial for students because it let them try to find their mistake more easily.”

Respondent 6: “It helps you to find your own mistakes. You will know your weakness points. Using a rubric for self-evaluation it helps you to correct your mistakes and become a better writer.”

Ensuring comprehensive satisfaction of all criteria in the rubric was highlighted eight times, emphasizing a proactive approach to fulfilling the assignment requirements, and was acknowledged by three interviewees and six individuals from the questionnaire cohort.

Interviewee 1: “But no, when I started to self-assess with the rubric, no, that's it, I start to look at the ideas, the grammar, the capitalization, the conjugations, all these things, I started to focus on them after I started to assess myself with the rubric.”

Interviewee 2: “In this sense, honestly, it has affected me a lot. There are some things that we were taught earlier, but we forgot. So, the rubric teaches you the basic things that will develop your writing.”

Interviewee 3: “It made me go back and re-read my writing once, twice to three times to answer the questions that were there.”

Respondent 13: “This process made me to go deeper on my essay which made to change couple of things.”

Respondent 17: “It was overall satisfying and fulfilling to me, because it made me revise my essay multiple times to insure fulfilling all the crucial points needed.”

Self-assessment reflecting in grade improvement was another beneficial facet, mentioned five times, corroborated by three interviewees and three questionnaire participants. The proactive utilization of self-assessment not only in mandated instances but also in instances where it was not compulsory, was cited nine times by two interviewees, one of whom conditioned by being only useful for beginner language learners and with recorded speech.

Interviewee 1: “Allah willing, when we have writing. So, now, I don't need anyone to give me a rubric and tell me to self-assess…no no no… I will do it on my own. “

Interviewee 3: “But when we are talking about very beginner English levels, like in the first semester, and I revise my writing, the mistakes might be clear, and I notice that these mistakes are repeated and I will fix them…” “...you record your voice and you listen to it again and you’ll know what your particular problems are, one two three… “

However. interviewee 3 is of the view that at advanced levels of language learning, a learner would be unable to recognize their own mistakes.

Interviewee 3: “...however when something is very advanced, I don't think even if he recorded his voice, and then listened to it again, if he was advanced, he wouldn't know where the problems he made are, but if it was a beginner level in most fields, he could benefit.”

Also, reading the rubric prior to initiating the writing process was mentioned four times, primarily recognized by two interviewees as a positive pre-writing exercise.

Interviewee 1: “After I read the rubric, the first thing here, I wrote my paragraph, very naturally. First, I read the rubric then I wrote a paragraph.”

The attention to rhetorical devices via the rubric was affirmed by two interviewees, who mentioned this three times.

Interviewee 2: “Yes, the first thing is the order of ideas, like writing rules such as commas and transition signals and things like that.”

Interviewee 4: “Honestly, I told you, honestly, that the thing I liked the most was the idea of logical fallacies. Because for me, the matters that improve writing, some people say it's practice, some people say it's grammar, and such, but these things are not correct. My doctor taught me personally that logical fallacies and ways of thinking, right, are the best ways, honestly, to develop your writing.”

Furthermore, the distinct perspective offered by self-assessment separate from the instructor’s was appreciated, brought up three times by two interviewees and two questionnaire respondents.

Interviewee 4: “There may be a difference in point of view between me and my instructor, and assessors. But my point of view as a student with the level I have to evaluate myself at, not as an expert but as a learner, I think it's better from this perspective.”

Respondent 6: “It was a good experience, and it tells you how to evaluate yourself. Also, It shows to how people see your paper.”

**Negatives**

On the other side, the exercise also received certain criticisms. A prominent concern, mentioned six times by three interviewees and reiterated by six questionnaire respondents, was the overlooking of mistakes stemming from a lack of knowledge.

Interviewee 1: “It's possible that there are things that you are not knowledgeable about, like the doctor. When the doctor comes to assess your writing, he will have more information. For example, when you want to write a paragraph or a new type of paragraph, for example, an essay, when we came to write about it, it was the first time we took it, so I didn’t know how. So, when I got to assessing my writing with the rubric, there are things I’m not aware of and so I don’t know if what I’m doing is the same as what is written in the rubric… same as what’s important in the rubric in that it wants the ideas to be sequential and such. Are my ideas approximately sequential, a little, or not? I don’t know. I don’t know how to define it.”

Interviewee 3: “Right, there are other areas, but as I told you, when he is a beginner, however when something is very advanced, I don't think even if he recorded his voice, and then listened to it again, if he was advanced, he wouldn't know where the problems he made are, but if it was a beginner level in most fields, he could benefit.”

Respondent 16: “I don't have the experience to grade myself.”

Respondent 19: “It is not easy to find the error I made because I thought they were correct.”

The fear that self-assessment might unduly influence or replace the instructor’s evaluation was a point raised three times in total, albeit it was shared by only one interviewee and one individual from the questionnaire group.

Interviewee 4: “Honestly, the self-assessment, it’s possible that some students may be afraid to rely on it. Do you understand? This is normal, I'll tell you frankly. Because even I, when I gave myself 98, of course I wanted 100. Of course I want 100, as much as I can. But when I put down 98, I was afraid that I would really get 98, even though I believe I deserve a 100.”

Respondent 7: “The main problem is that self-evaluation requires a person to critic and grade his/her own paper. This would lead to there being some kind of bias in grading.”

Self-criticism, emerging from the practice of self-assessment, was brought up two times, but this sentiment was echoed by a solitary interviewee.

Interviewee 3: “It's like you're trying to find fault with yourself. You see the questions and then you go back and try to find a mistake that you’ve committed.”

The issue of dishonesty, with students potentially feigning errors, was mentioned once, a sentiment confined to a single interviewee.

Interviewee 3: “Some of us say that our writing is excellent but make mistakes on purpose so that he can find something for me to fix. This also happens in the final exam. Some don’t write a first draft. They write the exact same as the final and add mistakes on purpose that they then fix with a red pen so that when the doctor sees that he had written a first draft, he can see that he had made mistakes and recognized them on his own. It’s like he did his own correction process.”

Similarly, the perception of self-assessment as a low-value endeavor was mentioned five times in total, albeit by only one interviewee and two participants from the questionnaire segment.

Interviewee 3: “Some of the students won't bother and won't care. Because basically no one will see their self-assessment. And a lot of them, when you give us the papers, they wrote carelessly. They said they wrote whatever.”

Respondent 15: “It took me more time to finish, and it was not easy.”

Respondent 16: “No positive experience.”

**Recommendations and Feedback on Self-Assessment**

In terms of enhancing the self-assessment experience, there was a strong consensus among all interviewees emphasizing the irreplaceable role of teacher feedback, underlining that self-assessment should not serve as a substitute for it.

Interviewee 1: “Are my ideas approximately sequential a little or not? I don’t know. I don’t know how to define it. So here the doctor helps me, no, teaches me how ideas can be sequential. So the rubric is great and helps you in writing and assesses you but some things might not be clear for you.”

Interviewee 2: “I saw the feedback that the doctor sent me. He found mistakes in the grammar from what I remember.

Interviewer: And you didn't notice this mistake when you did the self-assessment?

Interviewee 2: To be completely honest, no, I didn't notice them.”

Interviewee 3: “If there is an assessment by a specialist, a doctor, a teacher, it is better than the student self-assesses himself.”

Interviewee 4: “No, honestly, it wasn't complicated. But there are some things, of course, that not any student could know, there are some things I've looked into and there are other things we learned from the doctor as his personal initiative.”

A significant share of feedback came from participants noting that this is their first time trying self-assessment, indicating an area with potential for further exploration and familiarization. The inclusion of Arabic translations and a more detailed explanation of the rubric were pinpointed as avenues to potentially improve the self-assessment process, albeit mentioned less frequently.

Interviewee 4: “If…Because some people…Because I’m considering all levels So not everyone understands what adequate range or logical fallacies are. So maybe when it is explained as a curriculum or explained in the rubric in Arabic, I’m of the view that maybe the student has a better comprehension of it.”

Moreover, a solitary view expressed a preference for peer-assessment over self-assessment, suggesting it could offer a more effective approach.

Interviewee 3: “In most cases, at the advanced levels, I mean, it is teamwork so basically it is group work. So, I mean, each person has their own perspective that opens the others minds towards some issues. But self- assessment at the advances level…”

**Discussion**

In this section, we examine the key findings of our study, addressing each of the research questions that guided our investigation. We explore the level of correlation between student self-assessment scores and instructor-assigned scores, the impact of a detailed rubric on the self-assessment experience, and the perceived benefits and challenges students encountered during the self-assessment process using the rubric.

1. Correlation Between Student Self-Assessment Scores and Instructor-Assigned Scores

Our study revealed interesting insights regarding the correlation between the scores students assigned to themselves and the scores they received from their instructors. Notably, we found a range of correlations, with the twenty participants falling neatly into three groups; the first demonstrating a relatively close alignment between their self-assessment scores and instructor-assigned scores. The second slightly underestimated their performance and the third slightly overestimated with one outlier who widely overestimated his performance.

This variance in correlations underscores the complexity of self-assessment as an evaluative tool. While some students displayed a good understanding of their strengths and areas for improvement, others may have struggled with self-perception or the application of the rubric criteria. Additionally, the finding that a third of the students accurately predicted their instructor-assigned scores is noteworthy, highlighting the potential of self-assessment to enhance students' ability to gauge their performance.

Overall, our results suggest that self-assessment can provide valuable insights into students' awareness of their own work, although it may not always align perfectly with external evaluations. This aligns with prior research highlighting the utility of self-assessment for promoting metacognition and self-regulated learning.

2. Influence of a Detailed Rubric on the Self-Assessment Experience

Our study also examined the impact of utilizing a detailed rubric on students' self-assessment experiences during the essay evaluation process. The findings indicated that the rubric played a significant role in guiding students' self-assessment activities.

Firstly, the rubric encouraged students to pay closer attention to specific aspects of their writing that they might have otherwise overlooked. It prompted them to focus on elements such as grammar, organization, and coherence, which contributed to a more thorough and reflective self-assessment process. This aligns with the literature on the pedagogical benefits of rubrics in fostering improved self-awareness and self-improvement.

Secondly, the rubric helped students ensure comprehensive fulfillment of assignment requirements. By referring to the rubric, students proactively addressed essential criteria, enhancing their work's alignment with the instructor's expectations. This indicates that rubrics not only support self-assessment but also guide students toward meeting academic standards.

Finally, the rubric served as a pre-writing exercise for some students. Reading and understanding the rubric before initiating the writing process helped them structure their work effectively, demonstrating the rubric's utility as a planning tool in addition to an assessment tool.

3. Perceived Benefits and Challenges of Self-Assessment Using the Rubric

Our study investigated the perceived benefits and challenges that students encountered during the self-assessment process using the rubric. Several notable themes emerged from the analysis of student responses.

Benefits:

Error Identification and Improvement: Students consistently highlighted the rubric's role in helping them identify errors and areas for improvement in their writing. This reflective process allowed them to enhance the quality of their work.

Comprehensive Satisfaction of Criteria: The rubric guided students in ensuring that they met all the criteria outlined for the assignment, promoting a proactive approach to fulfilling requirements.

Grade Improvement: Some students reported that self-assessment led to grade improvement, indicating that the process not only enhanced their awareness of errors but also translated into better performance.

Attention to Rhetorical Devices: Students acknowledged the rubric's role in directing their attention to rhetorical devices and writing rules, such as punctuation and transition signals.

Unique Perspective: Students appreciated the distinct perspective offered by self-assessment, allowing them to view their work through both the lens of a student and a learner.

Challenges:

Lack of Knowledge: Some students expressed challenges in self-assessment, particularly when dealing with topics or concepts they were not knowledgeable about. This raised questions about their ability to evaluate aspects beyond their current expertise.

Fear of Replacing Instructor Evaluation: A small number of students voiced concerns that self-assessment might influence or replace instructor evaluation. This fear highlighted the need for a balanced approach.

Self-Criticism: A few students found the process of self-assessment to be self-critical, requiring them to actively search for mistakes in their work.

Dishonesty: An isolated concern emerged about potential dishonesty in self-assessment, with students deliberately feigning errors to appear more self-aware.

Perception of Low Value: Some students perceived self-assessment as a low-value endeavor, particularly when they believed that their self-assessments would not be seen by others.

In summary, our study shed light on the multifaceted nature of self-assessment in the context of using a detailed rubric for essay evaluation. While self-assessment offered various benefits, including error identification and improvement, comprehensive criterion satisfaction, and grade enhancement, it was not without its challenges, such as potential bias and perceptions of low value. These findings underscore the importance of approaching self-assessment with clear guidelines, emphasizing its complementarity with external assessment, and addressing challenges to maximize its potential for enhancing students' metacognitive skills and academic performance.

Our study's results provide insight into the practice of self-assessment in writing among high-performing students. The quantitative analysis of student self-assessment scores revealed that the participants, who were all high performing, demonstrated a strong ability to assess their own work. This observation may be attributed to the voluntary nature of participation in this self-assessment study. The lowest grade received for the relevant essay was 85%. Although a third of the students overrated themselves, while another third underrated themselves, the overall difference between instructor-assigned grades and student-assessed grades was relatively small, with one exception where a student underrated himself by 13%. This alignment suggests that, in general, students possessed a good grasp of their writing abilities and can somewhat accurately predict the grades they would receive. However, it is crucial to recognize that self-assessment is not without its challenges. As our study revealed, students can both slightly overrate and underrate themselves, indicating a need for guidance and practice in self-assessment.

An analysis of the questionnaire answers and interviews were categorized into three main themes regarding writing self-assessment: positive aspects, negative aspects, and recommendations. Positive aspects of self-assessment included the recognition of errors and areas for improvement in writing, ensure the fulfillment of rubric criteria, grade improvement through self-assessment, and the pre-writing exercise of reading the rubric. Self-assessment fosters reflective writing practices by encouraging students to critically evaluate their work. Participants in our study described how self-assessment prompted them to revisit their writing multiple times, ensuring that they fulfilled all essential points. This iterative process of self-evaluation encourages students to think more deeply about their writing and make necessary revisions.

On the negative side, participants expressed concerns about self-assessment, particularly related to the limitations of their own knowledge. Some participants felt that they might overlook mistakes due to their lack of expertise, especially in advanced writing. There was also a fear that self-assessment might replace or unduly influence the instructor's evaluation, although this concern was not widely shared. This underscores the importance of maintaining a balance between self-assessment and external assessment, as well as providing clear guidelines for self-assessment.

Self-criticism and potential dishonesty in self-assessment were raised as issues, although only one participant voiced these concerns. They were not common concerns among participants.

**Conclusion**

Self-assessment in second or foreign language writing learning empowers learners to take ownership of their language development journey. By actively monitoring their progress, identifying strengths and weaknesses, setting goals, and engaging in targeted practice, learners enhance their autonomy, motivation, and performance. Incorporating self-assessment practices within language learning programs can significantly contribute to the overall success of language learners.

Overall, the current data highlights a range of perceptions surrounding self-assessment in the foreign language English writing classrooms. The positive outlooks leaned heavily towards recognizing the role of self-assessment in helping identify errors and adhere better to the stipulated criteria. Nevertheless, concerns pertaining to oversight of mistakes and the uncertain role of self-assessment vis-à-vis instructor assessments were prevalent. The recommendations extrapolated from the study invite an opportunity to refine the self-assessment strategy, focusing on enhancing the efficacy of rubric explanations and maintaining the vital role of instructor feedback in the learning process.

Limitations of the Study

Suggestions for Future Research

1. Al-Rashidi, A.H., Asif, M., Vanani, M.G. et al. Learner-oriented assessment (LOA) practice: the comparative study of self-assessment, peer assessment, and teacher assessment on EFL learners’ writing complicity, accuracy, and fluency (CAF), speaking CAF, and attitude. Lang Test Asia 12, 59 (2022). https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-022-00209-x
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