

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to examine the effectiveness of formative assessment rubrics in enhancing students' writing development. It attempts to make learners aware of the writing criteria and help them enhance their writing quality by engaging them in the process of self-assessment. Despite the great interest in improving learners' writing quality, little has been done to explore the potential relationship between assessment and writing development. This study is built on the hypothesis that if students are involved in self-assessment through formative assessment rubrics, their writing will develop and their achievements will be satisfactory. The main concern of the research was to collect evidence on students' needs to be informed about the writing criteria and to be engaged as active participants in self-assessment by using rubrics. An experimental research has been conducted with forty (40) second year students of English at the Teachers' Training School in Constantine (Algeria). Data was collected using a pre- and a post test. The results of the study demonstrate that students' awareness of the writing criteria and their involvement in self-assessment through rubrics have a positive effect on their writing. The study concludes with some pedagogical implications directed to the teachers and to the syllabus designers to enhance the students' writing quality by using formative assessment rubrics and self-assessment.

Key words: formative assessment, self-assessment, rubrics, assessment criteria, writing development

ملخص: ان الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو اختبار مدى فاعلية استخدام سلم التقدير اللفظي للتقويم التكويني في تعزيز وتطوير الكتابة لدى الطلاب. كما تسعى أيضا إلى توعية وتعريف الطلبة بمعايير الكتابة الجيدة ومساعدتهم على تحسين جودة كتابتهم من خلال إشراكهم في عملية التقويم الذاتي. نرى انه وعلى الرغم من الاهتمام الكبير بتحسين نوعية الكتابة لدى المتعلمين، إلا أن وجود علاقة محتملة بين التقويم والكتابة الجيدة ظل جانبا مهمشا ولم يلق الكثير من البحث. لذلك بنيت هذه الدراسة على فرضية مفادها أنه إذا تم ادماج واشراك الطلاب في عملية التقويم الذاتي من خلال سلم التقدير اللفظي كأداة تقويم تكويني، فإن جودة كتاباتهم ستتطور وكذا تحصيلهم الدراسي في اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية سوف يتحسن. اهتم هذا البحث بالحصول على أدلة تثبت حاجة الطلبة الى التعرف على معايير الكتابة الجيدة وكذلك ادماجهم واشراكهم كأعضاء فعالين ونشطين في عملية التقويم الذاتي باستخدام سلم التقدير اللفظي. وقد

تم اجراء بحث تجريبي على أربعين (40) طالب سنة ثانية في اللغة الإنجليزية في المدرسة العليا للأساتذة بقسنطينة (الجزائر) و تم جمع البيانات باستخدام اختبار قبلي وبعدي. أظهرت النتائج أن وعي الطلاب بمعايير الكتابة ومشاركتهم في التقويم الذاتي من خلال سلم التقدير اللفظي له تأثير إيجابي على كتاباتهم. وخلصت الدراسة إلى بعض الآثار التربوية الموجهة للأساتذة ومصممي المناهج الدراسية لتحسين جودة الكتابة لدى الطلاب باستخدام نماذج التقويم التكويني والتقويم الذاتي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التقويم التكويني، التقويم الذاتي، سلم التقدير اللفظي، معايير

التقويم، تحسين الكتابة.

1. Introduction

Assessment is one of the essential precepts of instruction which would help to determine the students' learning development as well as the success of teaching. Assessment provides essential information about the teaching /learning process in order to improve future educational experiences. These information, however, should be accurate and pertinent to effectively make clued-up decisions about the syllabus/ curriculum. Criticisms to traditional writing evaluation suggested that assessment should be formative and it should encompass all the components of language simultaneously. Law and Eckes (1995) stated that traditional assessments are single-occasion tests. That is, they measure what learners can do at a particular time. Subsequently, many reforms were straightened out in the area of language teaching and assessment as a result to the changing theories of learning and testing. As Birenbaum (1996: 22) mentioned "One such reform is that the era of testing has changed into an era of assessment". Therefore, the major leap from traditional to modern language testing has paved the way to writing assessment procedures that would enhance writing development.

Numerous research works have been undertaken to find solutions that would promote students' performances. One of the great methods to assist students learn is formative assessment. The purpose of formative assessment is not evaluation *of* learning but evaluation *for* learning. Formative assessment refers to a variety of methods that educators (teachers) employ to make evaluation during task performance. In other words, it assesses students' understanding and learning progress throughout a course, a unit or a program. It helps teachers facilitate learning tasks and overcome likely encountered difficulties before the completion of the learning course. Therefore, any required interventions will be made in the right time to attain objectives. Formative assessment helps teachers detect learning problems, and students have a vision about their strengths and weaknesses.

Formative assessment collects detailed information to improve instruction. It links instruction and assessment to inform in-process teaching and learning.

Final term evaluation is not enough to decide about the level of students because assessment should be incorporated into the teaching/ learning process. It is considered as a way through which students discover and overcome problems that hamper them perform accurately. Assessment, then, is not made to grade the final achievement, but to inform learning by having students and teachers collaborate for building knowledge.

Self-assessment is one of the main principles in formative assessment. It is to have students think critically and assume responsibility over their own learning progress. Involving students in self-assessment and informing them about the evaluation criteria will help them to improve. As suggested by Cormack, Johnson, Peters & Williams (1998), students were able to perform better as the assessment criteria were known in advance. Engaging students in assessment will help them identify what is good and what requires support. Students are no longer passive as long as they reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and make judgments about their own performances.

Many studies highlight the importance of involving students in the process of evaluation. Andrade (2007: 60) asserted that “rubrics can be powerful self-assessment tool if teachers disconnect them from grades and give students time and support to revise their work”. The use of rubrics (in formative assessment) has become, thus, a worldwide research concern due to its striking impact on writing development. Rubrics are widely used for formative assessment purposes provided that they represent a link between teachers’ expectations and students’ performance.

As the aim behind this study is to find ways to help EFL learners improve their writing, this research hypothesizes that communicating good-writing criteria and involving students in formative assessment through the use of rubrics, will influence their writing positively. Assessment is assumed to close the gap between what students know (performance) and what they should know (expectations). The study seeks to answer how formative assessment rubrics help students improve their writing quality.

2. Review of the Literature

Learning/ teaching writing represents a challenging task for both students and teachers due to the diverse backgrounds of students, their levels of English proficiency as well as various learning styles. Hyland (2003: xv) argued that “writing is among the most important skills that second language students need to develop, and the ability to teach writing is central to the expertise of a well-trained language teacher”. Assessing writing also is a complex process for teachers and students. Many methods have been used in order to make this task easier. Teachers, as assessors, find it difficult to choose the best way to assess students’ writings in an objective way, to provide all students with sufficient feedback, and to select the appropriate methods to evaluate writing. Fortunately, students themselves can be excellent sources of feedback. Students using

instructional rubrics tend to learn more than those who do not because self-assessment supported by a rubric is typically related to remarkable progress in learning. For Andrade (2007: 60), “under the right conditions, student self-assessment can provide accurate, useful information to promote learning”.

Many studies introduce rubrics as tools or methods that teachers or students can use in assessing writing. There is almost no disagreement about the definition of rubrics or about their function. However, rubrics have been used differently according to educators’ objectives. They can be used in teaching or in evaluation. Stiggins (2001: 11) stated that “rubrics have the potential to help students develop a ‘vision of success’ as well as ‘make dependable judgment about the quality of their own work’”. In addition, rubrics have different functions and their users can use them differently as they desire. There are different types of rubrics, each type is used for specific purposes and necessitates a particular way to be used. Linked to testing students’ performance, rubrics are employed to grade learners’ performances based on a set of criteria. Those criteria are usually prepared according to the desired language features. They are also made in order to make the expectations clear for both students and teachers. Thus, students will be aware of what they are expected to do, and teachers will also be armed with the standards upon which their grades will be assigned rather than giving random marks.

The student uses rubrics to correct mistakes, to learn about them and to overcome obstacles in writing. The teacher, on the other hand, uses assessment to check students’ knowledge or to discover limitations within the teaching process. In this respect, Overmeyer (2009: 7) wrote:

Assessment, when used correctly in a formative way, can empower students and teachers not only to improve but, better yet, to believe in themselves as writers and teachers of writing. And once students believe they are writers and you believe you are a teacher of writing, any barrier, no matter how imposing, begins to crumble.

2.1. Formative Assessment

It has been defined by Headington (2004: 118) as “[it] is an ongoing process, relates directly to the learning that is taking place and is necessarily detailed”. That is, formative assessment is part of the learning process itself and, for that reason; it is mostly called assessment for learning. It is used to inform and improve learning and teaching rather than used for evaluation purposes.

Formative assessment is commonly referred to as assessment for learning, in which the focus is on monitoring student response to and progress with instruction. Formative assessment provides immediate feedback to both the teacher and student regarding the learning process. (Jenkins & Johnson, 2009: 416)

It helps in:

- identifying the pupils’ current understanding;
- identifying pupils’ future learning needs;
- giving pupils constructive oral and written feedback;
- providing the teacher with feedback on pupils’ progress and teaching strategies (ibid).

The results obtained from this assessment are used not only in the development of learning but also in the improvement of teaching. In this respect, Nicholls claimed:

The main focus of this form of assessment is to identify strengths and shortcomings, such as errors and difficulties, in the pupils' work. It also informs the teacher of the nature of advice and information needed to improve pupils' future learning outcomes. Without formative assessment teachers would not be able to function effectively. Formative assessment also provides the basis of communication about individual pupils to teachers, other professionals and parents. (2004: 119)

Students' engagement in formative assessment can be clearly seen in their desire to apply their teachers' comments or feedback in other similar writing tasks, hence they try to write better. Brookhart (2011: 4) wrote:

What's new in formative assessment is the importance of students as formative decision-makers who need information of a certain type (descriptive) at a certain time (in time to act) in order to make productive decisions about their own learning.

Accordingly, formative assessment focuses on students' involvement in making decisions about their own learning. It helps students assess their writing by themselves, therefore, improvement may be brought through better understanding of their own errors which may ensure better writing.

2.2. Self-Assessment

Self-assessment as part of formative assessment refers to the involvement of students in assessing their own work. They themselves will assume the responsibility to judge their learning achievements. Freeman and Lewis (1998) agreed that self-assessment is not a method but a source. That is, a source from where students and teachers alike may get information about learning. It is also the process through which students share with their teachers the task of evaluation when they judge their own performances by themselves. Andrade (2007) defines self-assessment as formative assessment through which students assess works in progress to find ways to improve their performance. Students can develop a clear sense of their abilities by evaluating their own writing. During self-assessment, students reflect on the quality of their work, judge the degree to which it reflects explicitly stated goals or criteria, and revise.

Self-assessment refers to the involvement of learners in making judgments about their own learning, particularly about their achievements and the outcomes of their learning. Self-assessment is formative in that it contributes to the learning process and assists learners to direct their energies to areas for improvement [...]. (Boud & Falchikov, 1989: 529)

Considerable research has been undertaken to study the procedures and effects of self-assessment. A quantitative literature review by Boud and Falchikov (1989) found that if students are asked to rate themselves on a suitable marking scale or already known criteria, they tend to assess themselves in a way identical to the way in which they would be assessed by their teachers. They also talked about two key elements in student self-assessment: the first is the learner's

identification of criteria or standards to be applied to one's work. The second is the making of judgments about the extent to which the work meets these criteria. Thus, for self-assessment to be consistent, pre-established criteria must be clearly identified.

Through self-assessment, students develop editing, writing, and meta-cognitive skills. They will find themselves encouraged to contribute in systematic and elaborated processes that enhance learning in a way or another. When engaged in such processes, students will become self-reliant, guiding their own learning because they know what they want to achieve and what they need to do in order to achieve it (Lee 2006). Students, here, will feel responsible and motivated rather than alienated or victimized. The learning goals will be accomplished faster when using self-assessment. "Self-assessment is necessary if the individual is to have the motivation and self-insight to go on learning, be able to set their own direction and measure their progress" (Freeman & Lewis, 1998: 121). In brief, Boud (1995) claimed that "self-assessment is about students developing their learning skills" (17). For him self-assessment is used for: self-monitoring and checking progress; a way to promote good learning practices and learning-how-to-learn skills; a learning activity designed to improve professional or academic practice; diagnosis and remediation; self-knowledge and self-understanding; a substitute for other forms of assessment; a way to consolidate learning over a wide range of contexts. It is also a process to review achievements; a prelude to recognition of prior learning;

2.3. Definition of Writing Assessment

Assessment as a final stage in writing is meant to produce a snapshot about learners' writing at a given point of time. Yet, this does not mean that assessment is only a general picture of learners' writing that clearly shows weaknesses and strengths. Assessment can be defined as a measurement of learners' performance in a particular task, be it writing, reading, speaking or listening. Hyland (2003: 213) referred to writing assessment as:

The variety of ways used to collect information on a learners' language ability or achievement. It is therefore an umbrella term which includes such diverse practices as once-only class test, short essays, long project reports, writing portfolios, or large-scale standardized examinations.

Writing assessment requires patience and knowledge. Teachers should be well armed with all necessary data about testing in order for them to be good assessors. Assessment and teaching for most seem to be separate, yet, "... assessment and teachers have much in common: both shape the lives of students" (Crusan, 2010: 6). Crusan believed that teachers and assessment are almost alike because both have great impacts on students. Accordingly, teaching and assessment are closely linked to each other since both affect students. Teachers' influence, on the one hand, is clear as they are the ones who teach, explain, broaden minds, or simply bring a change.

Although assessment has been defined differently, it is always linked to the same elements: instruction, learning and teaching. As a result, a great interest is directed to assessment as an opportunity to improve learning and develop classroom practices. Huot (1996: 549) stated that, "for the most part, writing assessment has been developed, constructed, and privatized by the measurement community as a technological apparatus whose inner workings are known only to those with specialized knowledge". This means that assessment of writing is exclusive to those who are considered to be specialized in this field. "Assessment and evaluation judgments have usually been delivered long after the event, formulated in often mysterious and non-negotiable terms, with a heavy reliance on technical terminology and statistics" (Cummins & Davison, 2007: 415). This study attempts to involve students in the process of writing assessment to examine its effectiveness. For this aim, Hyland's (2003: 213) definition of assessment because better suits the research's requirements. He defined assessment as: "the variety of ways used to collect information on a learner's language ability or achievement". He also summarized its role saying that: "[it] provides data that can be used to measure student progress, identify problems, suggest instructional solutions, and evaluate course effectiveness" (ibid: 212).

Writing assessment is, then, related to instruction. It is this interwoven relationship that ensures positive results. "In effective learning environments, assessment and instruction are inexorably linked" (Spandel & Stiggins, 1990: ix). EFL learners should be assessed on the basis of the instruction they are given. A "primary purpose of standards-based classroom assessment is to inform teaching and improve learning... Assessment is an integral part of instruction..." (Carr & Harris, 2001: 35). Assessment is thus meant to inform teachers about the strengths and weaknesses of their teaching as well as to improve learners' levels. Moreover, it is closely linked to instruction, that is, the understanding of instructions can lead to better assessment results. In his book *Dynamic Assessment*, Poehner (2008: 12) discussed the issue of integrating assessment and instruction. He claimed their inseparable nature and ensured their beneficial effect on promoting learning.

The total integration of assessment and instruction can only be achieved when learner development becomes the goal of all educational activities, and this is the major contribution of Dynamic Assessment [...] the key to monistic view of assessment and instruction is providing learners with mediation, or appropriate forms of support, in order to simultaneously understand and promote their abilities.

That is, assessment and instruction can be integrated when learners' development becomes the aim of all tasks. Furthermore, the link between assessment and instruction creates a vital relationship that supports learning and helps students to understand and improve their abilities.

2.4. Definition of Rubrics

Rubrics have become popular in the field of education as a tool for learning improvement. They are used in order to instruct students, to guide their performance and to present the criteria upon which the assignment is based. Recently, they became. A rubric can be defined as a “descriptive guideline, a scoring guide or specific pre-established performance criteria in which each level of performance is described to contrast it with the performance at other levels” (Rezaei and Lovorn, 2010: 19). In other words, it is a set of criteria or instructions for grading or evaluating assignments. In the hands of students, a good rubric can orient learners to the concept of quality in writing, support self and peer assessment, and guide revision and improvement. Rubrics can be informative as well as evaluative.

The writing rubric has mostly been defined as the tool or the method that teachers use in order to evaluate their students’ writing. It consists of a set of criteria or standards that guide the assessor be it the teacher or the student to score the work. Most educationalists agree on the same definition of the rubric but they make slight differences concerning its function. According to Stevens and Levi (2005: 3), “a rubric is a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment. Rubrics divide an assignment into its component parts and provide a detailed description of what constitutes acceptable or unacceptable levels of performance for each of those parts”. The same thing was stated by different researchers (Popham 1997; Andrade 2000; 2007; Hyland 2003; McMillan 2007). Andrade (2005: 27) stated:

A rubric is an assessment tool that lists the criteria for a piece of work or what counts (for example, purpose, organization, details, voice, and mechanics often are what count in a written essay) and articulates gradations of quality for each criterion, from excellent to poor.

Writing assessment rubrics have some characteristics that may be common to other areas. They may differ in their format, yet all rubrics have two common features. Andrade (2001) stated some features and claimed that rubrics should represent the following points: They all contain a list of criteria to what counts in the evaluations of any type of assignment. Also, they present gradations of quality, or descriptions of strong, middling and problematic work. She also observed that rubrics should be written in a language understood by students. They should also define and describe the good-quality work. They should refer to common weak points in students’ performance and should indicate how these weaknesses can be avoided. Rubrics also should be comprehensive in a way that enables students to use them to assess their work-in-progress. That is, rubrics will guide revision and improvement.

Douglas (2000) related rubrics to some characteristics including: objective, procedures for responding, structure, format, time allocated and evaluation criteria and procedures.

Rubrics (set of standards) are closely linked to the learning objectives. They are used to state these objectives on a paper for students and teachers. Using them, assessors (teachers/students) can evaluate each performance on clearly defined criteria which facilitate the task of assessment.

Scoring rubrics are typically employed when a judgement of quality is required and may be used to evaluate a broad range of subjects and activities [...] Judgements concerning the quality of a given writing sample may vary depending upon the criteria established by the individual evaluator. (Moskal, 2000: 1)

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Settings

The present research took place at the Department of English at the Teachers' Training School in Constantine (Ecole Normale Supérieure de Constantine ENSC).

3.2. Research Sampling

This study deals with a sample of forty (40) second-year EFL students. The researcher randomly assigned twenty (20) subjects to the control group (CG) and twenty (20) to the experimental group (EG). By random assignment, the researcher guarantees that all subjects have the same chance of being in the experimental or the control group. It is assumed that the two groups are equivalent when there is no systematic difference between the two.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1. Pre-Test

The pre-test in the current research was conducted to evaluate students' writing proficiency in English. It can be described as a kind of a diagnostic test which was carried out with two groups of twenty (20) students each. According to Harmer (2001: 321), "diagnostic tests can be used to expose learner difficulties, gaps in their knowledge, and skill deficiencies during a course. Thus, when we know what problems are, we can do something about them". This test, therefore, aims at investigating the students' problems in relation to the writing criteria mentioned in the rubric.

In the pre-test, all subjects were asked to write exemplification essays about: "the advantages and the disadvantages of the Internet". All subjects in the four groups wrote their essays in 90 minutes allotted time but only CG students received teacher's feedback.

In order to make a quantitative analysis of the control/ experimental groups' pre-test results, the researcher calculated the means and the standard deviations of the groups. The mean (\bar{X}) is the average of a set of scores which is obtained by adding the individual scores together and dividing by the total number of scores. The standard deviation (SD), on the other hand, is the most important measure of dispersion. It indicates how the students' means spread out from the mean of the group. A low standard deviation means that most of the scores are very close to the group's mean. A high standard deviation means that

the scores are spread out. Writing was a hard task for most students in all the groups as shown in tables 1 and 2 below:

Criteria	Pre-Test					
	CG			EG		
	Score x_n	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Score x_n	Mean \bar{x}	SD
<i>Organization and development of ideas</i>	45	2.25	1.02	43	1.95	0.94
<i>Mechanics</i>	43	2.15	0.875	47	2.35	0.813
<i>Language</i>	45	2.25	1.07	42	2.10	0.912
<i>Grammar</i>	49	2.45	0.759	45	2.25	0.910
Total	182	9.15	2.581	177	8.65	2.681

Table 1: CG/ EG Pre-Test Results Obtained in Each Criterion

The pre-test results show that the CG and the EG subjects are not highly proficient in writing. As shown in Table 1. There seems to be no significant difference between the performances of the CG and EG in the pre-test. Both groups show some problems and difficulties in the four writing criteria that have been employed to score the essays. Generally speaking, it can be said that the majority of the students were not able to write accurately.

4.2. Post-Test

Criteria	Post-Test					
	CG			EG		
	Score x_n	Mean \bar{x}	SD	Score x_n	Mean \bar{x}	SD
<i>Organization and development of ideas</i>	47	2.35	0.988	67	3.35	0.875
<i>Mechanics</i>	43	2.15	0.745	69	3.45	0.826
<i>Language</i>	43	2.15	1.089	68	3.4	0.754
<i>Grammar</i>	49	2.45	0.826	66	3.3	0.733
Total	182	9.1	2.712	269	13.45	2.25

The post-test was also administered to assess students' progress and examine the effect of formative assessment rubrics on writing development. In general, the post-test was undertaken to check whether the previously made errors had repeatedly occurred. During twelve weeks (3 months) of treatment, the EG students had been using formative assessment rubrics to assess their papers, whereas the CG students were receiving teacher's feedback. In the post test, the CG students revised their papers provided by teachers' feedback meanwhile the EG students used rubrics to self-assess their drafts. The post-test results show a salient decrease in the EG writing errors whilst the CG error frequency remains almost the same. The EG students seemed to have got over their difficulties as their errors decreased outstandingly.

Table 2: CG/ EG Post Test Results Obtained in Each Criterion

Students' scores were measured in attempt to check whether there is any significant difference before and after the treatment. The pre-test results show no salient difference, neither in scores nor in type and frequency of errors (as shown in Table 1 earlier). The CG's and the EG's means and standard deviations are close which indicate that the students are almost of the same level. A t-test was conducted to systematically analyse students' data. Accordingly, for the results to be statistically significant, a p value must be <0.05 . As noticed in table 3 below, p value of the t-test in the pre-test is larger than 0.05 at 38 degree of freedom ($p=0.5515 > 0, 05$). Therefore, there is no significant difference between the CG and the EG before the use of rubrics.

In the post test, however, the comparison of students' scores displays that there is a statistically significant difference in the means and the standard deviations of the CG and the EG. The mean of the CG is 9.1 with a standard deviation equals to 2.712. The mean of the EG is 13.45 and the standard deviation is 2.25. The EG's mean is larger than the CG's. Also, the EG's standard deviation is less than the CG's which entails that the EG's scores are tightly grouped around the mean of the group compared to the CG's. The p value of the t-test is lower than 0.05 ($p=0.0001 < 0.05$) at the degree of freedom 38. Therefore, the statistical analysis of the post-test scores indicates that the difference between CG and EG results is indeed statistically significant.

	Pre-Test		Post Test	
	CG	EG	CG	EG
<i>Mean</i>	9.15	8.65	9.1	13.45
<i>SD</i>	2.581	2.681	2.712	2.25
<i>Df</i>	38		38	
<i>T</i>	0.6009		5.5206	
<i>p Value</i>	0.5515		0.0001	

Table 3: The Difference between CG and EG Pre and Post-Tests Results

5. Interpretation of the Results

The findings seem to answer the research questions and confirm the stated hypothesis. In order to promote writing and overcome the problems, the researcher assumed that relating assessment to writing would lead to good results. It was found that the students have many difficulties of a different nature. Their errors were repeatedly made on the four writing criteria. As this research shows, problems appear at different levels, from the development of ideas to linguistic features. Organizational structures, mother tongue transfer, style, grammar, sentence structure, spelling, vocabulary, are all problematic issues. In fact, the overall analysis of the students' pre-test essays shows that papers lacked sentence correctness and variety, clarity in terms of structures and organization,

in addition to misuse of verb tense, prepositions, articles, plurals, punctuation, spelling, etc.

The CG scores are not acceptable. In spite of their teacher's feedback, some students have made the same errors in the post-test. Our conclusion in this respect is that though teacher's feedback is of vital importance, it is not enough. Teachers should always vary their ways of assessment and try to involve their students in this process in order to increase their interest and motivation. The EG have shown a significant progress after the use of rubrics. We assume that their willingness to revise and rewrite better drafts besides their awareness of the writing criteria represent the appropriate input that promoted them to write correctly. The responsibility they have been given enabled them to do better in their second essays. Self-assessment helped learners to develop a critical perspective to what they wrote and reflected their awareness of the good writing criteria on papers.

In general, these findings are to confirm the research hypothesis: if EFL learners are involved in formative [self] assessment through the use of rubrics, their writing will be positively influenced. Formative assessment rubrics are likely to have affected the students' writing development in a positive way. They provide a clear set of criteria to help them assess and improve their writing. They guide them in self-assessment and teach them how to enhance the writing quality and prevent errors in the future.

Conclusion

From the analysis and interpretation of the pre and post tests, the results reveal many facts, not only about the complexity of the writing skill, but also about the difficulty of its assessment. Results obtained from the CG were not satisfactory. Besides feedback, teachers should always vary their ways of assessment and try to involve their students in this process in order to increase their interest and motivation.

The EG Students become able to identify errors after they had used assessment rubrics and their writing process became more systematic. Moreover, they demonstrated a promising control over their problems because using self-assessment led them to dig deeper in English writing features. Despite the fact that the EG's writings did not all confront to writing criteria and some errors had been detected, but they had shown a considerable progress.

Rubrics proved to be effective tools in formative assessment. When students were made aware of what makes good writing, they started to think critically. We could easily discover this from their noticeable interest in the rubric and their constant questions about its different aspects. Students started to show more attentiveness about every single line on the paper. Consequently, we can say that in addition to teachers' feedback, there is another way to have students improve their writing.

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