

THE IMPACT OF RUBRICS ON ASSESSMENT ATTITUDES IN LITERATURE STUDIES

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Overview

- Context: the research question, tied in with my work for the think tank of lectorate contemporary testing and assessment
- Method: two pilot cases with feedback from questionnaires
- Results: what rubrics were used, how did the students respond to the questionnaires, what has the impact been (so far)
- Conclusions and next steps

The larger framework

- The think tank for the lectorate wishes to both study and implement considered and competent testing and assessing
- This involves studying the effects of self-assessment geared towards personal development of teacher-trainers in considering their perceptions on testing and assessment as well as their practical and theoretical knowledge of testing and assessment

Partners are all colleges of education

- Nijmegen / Arnhem University of Applied Sciences,
- Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg
- VU University Amsterdam
- Zuyd University of Applied Sciences,
Heerlen / Maastricht, De Nieuwste PABO

So far: March to October 2011

- Volunteer teacher-trainers supervised by one or more readers at their university have indicated their particular area of research, linked to the overall aim
- Relevant existing instruments have been studied and accepted or rejected
- Some have, in a very small way, introduced their research in their teaching practice

What next? October 2011 to February 2012

- Development of an instrument for self-assessment which:
 - * focuses on how professionals learn
 - * gives feedback on one's knowledge and skills on testing and assessment
 - * is developmental, i.e. aimed at one's personal growth
- Describing one's own 'best practice'

My research questions

- Courses on literature and academic writing
- Focus for now only on needs of M Ed English
- Essays and didactic assignments to replace or add to exams: the dilemma of 'testing the untestable'
- How to define the features of work that constitute quality? (definition Arter and Chappius i): rubrics may be the desired tools

Case one: Top-down

- Rubrics used at Fontys College of Education but not structurally
- Examples pre-service training portfolio and performance, research project
- Need determined to introduce rubric in course Academic Writing: heavy reliance on teacher feedback and very little progress even when given lots of feedback

The rubric for academic writing

- First use: for students to measure their work and check if it met all requirements
- First effect: less student anxiety and fewer questions on why and how work was rated
- Later effect: improved work with more attention to feedback and greater effort to structure well
- Rubric based on a rubric created by J. Arthur and Jan Chappius, edited and added to by C. Burghout

The impact case 1

- The questionnaire runs from score 1 (not at all) to score 5 (very much). Out of a group of 16 students writing essays at that point in the course, 11 responded.

1. How (if at all) did the rubric add to your understanding of your teacher's expectations?

2 x neutral, 6 x score 4, 3 x score 5

2. How (if at all) did the rubric help you plan how to approach your essays?

2 x neutral, 5 x score 4, 4 x score 5

The impact case 1

3. How (if at all) did you use the rubric in the process of completing your essays?

2 x neutral, 5 x score 4, 4 x score 5

4. How (if at all) did the rubric help you to reflect on your work?

6 x score 4, 5 x score 5

5. To what extent (if at all) do you think the rubric will influence your marks?

3 x neutral, 3 x score 4, 5 x score 5

The impact case 1

6. Did using the rubric make a difference to the quality of your work?

3 x neutral, 6 x score 4, 2 x score 5

7. Did the rubric help you understand the feedback on your essays?

4 x neutral, 4 x score 4, 3 x score 5

8. Are there any elements which should be added to the rubric?

- Possibly an 'overall impression' somewhere
- More room for creativity in essay writing

The impact case 1

8. Are there any elements which should be added to the rubric?

- * Possibly an 'overall impression' somewhere
- * More room for creativity in essay writing

9. Do you think you will use rubrics in your classroom when you teach? Why or why not?

- * Yes, possibly, already do so, yes, but in a simplified form, yes as it is a good guideline, yes but only as an aid, not to base marks on, yes, it is very helpful, yes it is helpful if you use it to be specific about what you expect

The impact – conclusions for case 1

- Small response, hard to draw any broad conclusions
- Rubric seems to have been accepted as a tool which the students have indeed used and benefitted from
- Question five needs fine-tuning, different interpretations
- Will response to questions 6 and 7 be more positive when the rubric is introduced at the start of the course next time round?
- Positive response to using rubrics in their own teaching

Case Two: Modern Novels

- 2nd-year students unhappy with materials development assignment, repetitive
- Alternative offered: worksheets, rated after feedback from both peers and teacher
- Rubric developed **with** the students to ensure clear guidelines for feedback and transparency in assessment
- Input: features of good worksheets plus discussion possible impact rubrics

Rating worksheets: rubric

- 🌀 Rubrics versus 'impressionist' marks
- 🌀 Plus side: transparency, enables self-and peer assessment, guidelines
- 🌀 Down side: writing to the rubric can kill creativity
- 🌀 Rubric can be holistic or analytic
- 🌀 Holistic generally one frame containing all requirements
- 🌀 Analytic shows levels, allows precise grading

Rating worksheets: feedback

- 👁️ What should the rubric contain?
- 👁️ 3- or 4 scale (insufficient, sufficient, good (excellent?))
- 👁️ Organising peer feedback on worksheets: classroom or via our digital workspace?
- 👁️ Keep track of how the rubric works for you: does it help or hamper? How and why?
- 👁️ How many worksheets is fair for 14 -16 hours of work (see credits for this course)

Steps in making a rubric:

1. Identify aims / learning objectives
2. Identify observable attributes that you want to see (and don't want to see) demonstrated
3. Brainstorm characteristics that describe each attribute and find ways to describe levels for each attribute
4. Now write precise descriptors for lowest level and highest level
5. Write descriptors for the remaining (intermediate) levels
6. (During course) Collect samples of work which exemplify each level to become benchmarks

First try at our rubric: fill in

Feature	Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Excellent
Design, inviting Elicits reader response, fun to do				
Both general enough and specific enough				
Focus: related set of themes, incidents,symbols, etc				
Scaffolding: help and stretching to ZPD				
What it potentially shows the teacher				
Easy to mark, easy to rate?				
Transferable and / or to be tweaked?				

Rubric filled in part 1

Feature	Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Excellent
Design, inviting Elicits reader response, fun to do	No or few appeals made to senses by design, or chaotic			Attractive design draws in attention with relevant images /layout
Both general enough and specific enough	Could relate to various novels, or covers just one chapter / incident			Chosen approach and topic (s) relate to theme(s) of the novel
Focus: related set of themes, incidents ,symbols, etc	A list of questions with insufficient or no focus			Relevant focus, sustain-ed throughout. Clearly related items.
Scaffolding: help and stretching to ZPD	No apparent scaffolding or scaffolding set too low or too high			Well thought-out series of steps take learner to higher understanding
What it potentially shows the teacher	Shows memorizing, no new or deeper learning made visible			Shows enjoyment and experience of the book leading to new / deeper learning
Easy to mark, easy to rate?	Many (sub)questions, no clear weight given to items, too open			WS makes clear what is expected and what will count
Transferable and / or to be tweaked?	Very specific for this novel / for one level of understanding			Transferable to novels with same themes / plot, levels clearly there

Final rubric for worksheets

Rubric worksheets Modern Novel M Ed FLOT 2011 Version 3				
Feature	Insufficient	Sufficient	Good	Excellent
Design, inviting Elicits reader response, fun to do	No or few appeals made to senses by design, or chaotic	Design is attractive but not always relevant	Attractive design draws in attention with relevant images /layout	Excellent design, draws in attention, images are integrated, higher purpose than just visual effect or decoration
Both general enough and specific enough	Could relate to various novels, or covers just one chapter / incident	Covers a relevant section or theme or series of incidents in the novel	Items clearly relate to a specific theme or topic and cover this novel adequately	Chosen approach and topic(s) all relate to theme(s) of the novel and interrelate
Focus: related set of themes, incidents,symbols, etc	A list of questions with insufficient or no focus	Most questions focus on a relevant section or theme or series of incidents in the novel	Relevant focus, sustained throughout. Clearly related items	Relevant and tight focus with varied approaches all leading back to better understanding
Scaffolding: help and stretching to ZPD	No apparent scaffolding or scaffolding set too low or too high	The learner is helped and challenged occasionally	The steps are consistent in both helping and challenging	Well thought-out series of steps take learner to higher understanding
What it potentially shows the teacher	Shows memorising, no new or deeper learning made visible	Shows understanding of the novel at the expected level	Brings out the learner's experience and enjoyment of the novel as well as good understanding	Shows understanding, enjoyment and experience of the book leading to new / deeper learning
Easy to mark, easy to rate?	Many (sub)questions, no clear weight given to items, too open	Same questions show clearly what is expected but some still too open, no weighting of items	It is quite clear what is expected but no weighting of items	WS makes clear what is expected and what will count

Impact Worksheets Rubric

- Mixed feelings, overall lower scores than case one.
- Requirements in rubric not always transparent to learners: what is 'too expansive', what does 'attractive' mean in this context?
- Difficult for some to distinguish between sufficient, good and excellent
- Rubric somewhat daunting: how to achieve this all? Isn't it too precise? More practice needed.
- Time spent on developing rubric was less time spent on discussing novels – more time needed

Positive impact in case 2

- Introduced in busy time of year – many students not able to employ all its uses. Those who both used the rubric to check on their own work and to give feedback on peers were more positive
- Some thought it a perfect guideline
- Helps to produce materials that are more in-depth, helps clarify what is expected
- Forces you to think about what is important
- Clear that in this case **the giving and receiving of feedback** while using the rubric needs more attention

Conclusions and next steps

- Use of rubric may be made standard in courses involving academic writing
- Further work needed on introducing and developing rubrics for creative and didactic assignments with due attention to cons as well as pros
- Paper on impact of rubrics
- Feedback from project leaders
- (Hopefully) feedback from peers through talks such as this one

Thank You!

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- <http://tea.iatefl.org/> (website TEA SIG)
- Works cited:
 - ✓ Creating and Recognizing Quality Rubrics, Judith Arter and Jan Chappius, ETS 2006
 - ✓ Testing the Untestable in Language Education, Paran and Sercu, New Perspectives on Language and Education 2010