

The Effect of Rubric-Referenced Self-Assessment on Developing the Writing Skill of Ninth Grade Students in Jordan

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Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of rubric-reference self-assessment on the development of the writing skill of ninth grade students in Jordan. Therefore, the study attempted to answer the following question:-

What is the effect of rubric-referenced self- assessment method on the writing skill of ninth grade students in Jordan?

The study utilized the quasi experimental design since the groups of the study were purposefully chosen from the ninth grade students in the Golden Jubilee School for Boys /Fourth Directorate of Education in Amman. Sixty- six students in two sections were assigned to the two groups of the study, thirty-two in the experimental group and thirty-four in the control group, and the study was conducted during the second semester of the scholastic year 2012/2013.The two groups of the study were found to be equivalent upon analyzing the data on the pre-achievement test by using the t-test.

The instrument of the study was the writing achievement test which was approved by a jury of judges.

The researchers administered the pre-and post –tests and the results were calculated using t-test for equivalent groups.

The findings of the study revealed statistically significant differences in favour of the rubric referenced self-assessment:

- There was a statistically significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the mean scores of the ninth grade students' writing performance between the experimental group and the control group that can be ascribed to the rubric-referenced self – assessment .

The researchers recommended that the rubric-referenced self-assessment be used in teaching and assessing English as a foreign language.

Background and Significance of the Study

Introduction

Assessment is one of the crucial components of instruction. People within the educational community, i.e. policy-makers, curriculum designers, teachers, educators, students, and parents, have different ideas regarding the implementation of assessment strategies. While some believe that traditional assessment methods are more effective, others think that performance-based assessment tools and methods are superior.

Assessment is defined as a wide range of methods for evaluating students' performance and attainment. Huba & Freed (2000) mentioned that the process of assessment involves gathering information from a variety of sources to cultivate a rich and meaningful understanding of student learning. A primary aim of assessment is providing the necessary information to improve future educational experiences. Yet, it is vital that the assessment data be accurate and relevant to effectively make informed decisions about the curriculum. It requires taking the time to ask relevant questions that help assess the effectiveness of the teaching strategies and curriculum plans.

However, with the advent of communicative teaching methodology and learner- centered approaches, traditional tests have been brought into question regarding their validity in assessing real- life tasks. Many scholars criticized the testing of language bit by bit and suggested using tests which encompass all components of language simultaneously. According to Bailey (1998), traditional assessment methods are indirect and inauthentic. She also added that traditional assessment methods are standardized, and for that reason, they are one- shot, speed- based, and norm- referenced. Law and Eckes (1995) underlined the same issue and stated that traditional assessments are single- occasion tests. That is, they measure what learners can do at a particular time. In recent years, many areas of instruction and assessment have undergone several reforms in response to the changing theories of learning and testing. As Birenbaum (1996) mentioned "One such reform is that the era of testing has changed into an era of assessment" (p.22).This trend of shift towards employing assessment procedures that enhance learning came into existence with the introduction of learner-centered and communicative teaching methodologies.

Research Problem

In response to the criticisms of the traditional assessment paradigm, some measurement experts have begun advocating the authentic, or performance –based assessment. This newly- recognized feature of testing and assessment has persuaded language teachers and testers to employ methods and procedures that enhance students' learning as well as monitoring it.

Assessment philosophy and practices must affirm that learners do vary in their needs due to factors such as having different cognitive experiences and educational backgrounds. Therefore, it is important that learning should be more individualized and should offer significant connections to the personal and professional lives of learners. Performance-based assessment uses activities that reveal what students can do with language, emphasizing their strengths instead of their weaknesses.

Its instruments are not only designed and structured differently from traditional tests, but are also graded or scored differently.

In this respect appears the rubric referenced self-assessment, which has been floating around the educational field for many years now to involve students in assessing the development of their writing skills by inviting self-reflection and encouraging them to assume control over their writing. In other words, the acts of using a rubric can be a powerful process for many reasons not least of which is that it helps students see themselves as writers, particularly when it involves many opportunities for self-evaluation. Thus, this study tried to investigate the effect of rubric-referenced self-assessment on the development of writing skill of the ninth grade students in Jordan.

Research Question

The study attempted to answer the following main question:

What is the effect of a rubric-referenced self assessment on the development of the writing skill of ninth grade students in Jordan?

Research hypothesis

There is no statistically significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the mean scores of ninth grade students' writing performance ascribed to the method of assessment (rubric-referenced self-assessment and traditional assessment).

Significance of the study

The researchers felt that it is worth to conduct a study that investigates the effect of using rubric-referenced self-assessment on the development of ninth grade students' writing skill, which would not only improve the teaching and assessment of students, but would also facilitate the teaching and learning circumstances.

The findings of the study should be of importance to:

- Curriculum designers by inviting them to incorporate rubric-referenced self-assessment method when designing English as a Foreign Language curriculum and textbooks.
- EFL teachers in basic stage schools by providing them with practical guidelines on how to use rubrics in classrooms to enhance writing.
- Learners of English can also benefit from their classroom instruction and self-assessment to help them be independent and able to respond appropriately in real-life situations.

Limitations of the study

The study limited itself to the population of ninth grade male students at the Golden Jubilee School for Boys / the Fourth Directorate of Education in Amman during the scholastic year 2012/2013.

The Self-assessment method was limited to rubric-referenced self-assessment. The rubric adopted by the researcher tackled five sub-skills that are grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, style and organization. The study is limited to the writing skill achievement test, Therefore, and the generalization of the findings depends on its validity and reliability.

Operational Definition of terms

Rubric

A rubric is a rating scale with a list of criteria by which student's knowledge, skills, and / or performance can be assessed. It is a set of criteria of dimensions of quality for a given type of performance.

Writing skill

- The learner's ability to achieve the writing task properly and transform his/ her ideas and thoughts into language. The act of writing in the current study involved writing compositions that included no more than 150 words about writing a story, writing an essay and letter writing. It required tackling five sub-skills that were grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, style and organization. It is measured by the student's score on the writing achievement test.

Theoretical Background and Previous Related Studies

This part reviews the literature related to the present study. It is divided into two sections. The first section includes the theoretical background which encompasses the self-assessment, rubrics and the writing skill. The second section presents the related studies which tackled the effect of self-assessment on the writing skill.

Section One: Theoretical Background

Self-assessment:

Sweeny (1994) identified self-assessment as the involvement of the student in the assessment process. This may

involve the students in helping to devise the criteria by which their work will be assessed. It may involve the student in evaluating the strengths or weaknesses of what he /she has achieved or in attributing marks to the work.

Drake (2001) highlighted that it is important that teachers communicate their evaluation criteria to their students to eliminate confusion over project expectations. It is essential that teachers provide clear criteria that support high academic standards and bring consistency to the grading process. For instance, history teachers will need to create a rubric that will assess students' knowledge and skills within that academic discipline.

In fact, self-assessment is used to relegate more responsibility to students to identify where they believe they have been successful and where they believe they require assistance. It refers to the involvement of learners in making judgment about their own learning, particularly about their achievement and the outcomes of their learning. It is a way of increasing the role of students as active participants in their own learning and it is mostly used for formative assessment in order to foster reflection on one's own learning and results.

In teaching students to become active life-long learners, we need to encourage them in self-reflection and assist them to gain expertise and confidence in this process.

Shepard (2000) mentioned that this new type of assessment views learners as active participants in the construction and evaluation of their own knowledge and thinking. Self-assessment has many advantages. The first of these advantages is that it promotes students' autonomy. The second advantage, as mentioned by Nunan (1988) is that self-assessment assists students in "the development of a critical self-consciousness... of their own role as active agents within the learning process" (pp. 134-135). The third advantage mentioned by Andrade (1999) is that self-assessment improves students' meta-cognition, which can, in turn, lead to better thinking and better learning. The fourth advantage of self-assessment is that it enhances students' motivation, which can, in turn, increase their involvement in learning and thinking. The fifth advantage is that it fosters students' self-esteem and self-confidence, which can encourage them to see the gaps in their knowledge and thinking and to quickly begin filling these gaps. The last advantage mentioned by Dickinson (1987) is that it alleviates the teacher's assessment burden.

Despite the previously mentioned advantages, self-assessment also has a number of disadvantages. The first disadvantage is that it is an unreliable measure of thinking and learning. The second disadvantage mentioned by Burton and Nunan (1988) is that self-assessment is quite difficult for some student types. The third disadvantage of self-assessment is that few students engage in it.

Rubrics and their rationale:

Goodrich (2000) remarked that rubrics are currently among the most popular innovations in education; but little research on their effectiveness has been undertaken. Moreover, few of the existing research efforts have focused on the ways in which rubrics can serve the purposes of learning and thinking as well as meet the demands of evaluation and accountability.

A rubric is usually a one- or two-page document that lists the criteria for a specific assignment and describes varying levels of quality, from excellent to poor.

Rubrics are sets of categories that define and describe the important components of the areas being assessed. Each category contains a gradation of levels of implementation with a score assigned to each level and a clear description of what criteria need to be met to attain the score at each level. As an assessment tool, rubrics are effective in evaluating institutional performance in areas which are complex and vague. Rubrics can be created in a variety of forms and levels of complexity, however, they all contain common features which focus on measuring a stated objective (performance or quality), use a range to rate performance and contain specific performance characteristics arranged in levels indicating the degree to which a standard has been met.

Although the format of a rubric can vary, most rubrics have two features in common: a list of criteria, or what counts in the evaluations of a project or assignment, and gradations of quality. According to Mertler (2001), a scoring rubric is a rating scale that consists of specific pre-established performance criteria, used in evaluating student work or product on performance assessments. Rubrics provide one mechanism for providing guidance on the conduct and assessment of alternative assessments. Rubrics are written descriptors of learning expectations that include the key criteria used to distinguish between levels of quality. These criteria are developed before the instructional episode/unit begins and are shared with the student. The use of rubrics is widely advocated in educational writings.

Rubrics work in a number of different ways to advance student learning. In addition, rubrics improve teaching, contribute to sound assessment, and are an important source of information for program improvement. Huba & Freed (2000) also indicated that rubrics have the potential to be excellent assessment tools because they offer students a vision of what the teacher is seeking to accomplish in the class and why it is important.

The Writing skill

Writing plays an important role in our personal and professional lives. In recognition of such a vital role that it

plays in the development of students' ability to write effectively for a variety of purposes and audiences, it has become one of the desired goals of communicative instruction in schools. Despite the fact that writing is cognitively a demanding process, it is often dealt with as an individual action that requires silence from students to be able to concentrate. Usually, after a period of forty-five minutes or less, the papers are collected to be corrected by the teacher without even giving the students the chance to discuss their mistakes or errors.

Writing is an important instrument of thinking because it provides students with a way of gaining control over their thoughts. Students are often unaware of the power of the written word, yet the written word enables the writer to sense the power of language. Richards & Rodgers (2001) pointed out that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master. The difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable texts. The skills involved in writing are highly complex. L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organization as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice and so on.

There is a consensus among educators, including foreign language teaching specialists that curricula should include writing. A variety of reasons are presented for the importance of students' learning writing. However, a profound and detailed justification for the need of learning to write is provided by Graves (cited in Cotton, 2001:5-6) who stated:

- Writing is a highly complex act that demands the analysis and synthesis of many levels of thinking.
- Writing develops initiative. In reading, everything is provided. In writing, the learner must supply everything: the relationship between sounds and letters, the order of the letters, their form on the page, the topic, information, questions, answers, order, etc.
- Writing develops courage. At no point is the learner more vulnerable than in writing.
- Writing more than any other subjects, can lead to personal breakthroughs in learning.
- Writing can contribute to reading from the first day of school. Writing, as some say, is active, whereas reading is passive.
- Writing contributes strongly to reading comprehension as children grow older. The ability to revise writing for greater power and economy is one of the higher forms of reading.

Graves and Stuart (1985) explained that students' self-confidence as writers is worn out mainly due to teachers' persistence on perfect sentences, spelling, grammar, and handwriting from the first instance. Lemlech (1994) stated that both educators and the public are concerned that we are producing non-writers. It is argued that this might be due to assignments that require multiple choice selections and short answers.

In the product approach, writing is taught through prescribing a set of predetermined tasks or exercises to the students. Teachers assign papers, grade them and then hand them back. They attend to the product; its clarity, originality and correctness, but they do not attend to the writing process. The product approach has been proved to be ineffective in producing capable writers. (Parson cited in Cotton, 2001:9) identified some reasons for the failure of this approach:

- It emphasizes form and mechanics.
- It focuses on the product rather than the process.
- It seriously neglects the earliest stage of the writing process.
- It offers too many artificial contexts for writing.
- It isolates mechanical skills from the context of writing.

The other approach is the process approach which emerged in the 1970. It reflected a development in first language writing instruction.

Section Two: Previous Related Studies

Although a small body of research literature has explored teachers' use of rubric, the following are some studies which have been conducted to show the effect of rubrics and self-assessment on the development of writing.

Benson (1995) conducted a study that aimed at investigating portfolio implementation to determine its effectiveness as an evaluative tool to document students' progress. Specific research questions addressed: (1) the teacher's utilization of the portfolio, (2) students' ability to "Self-assess," (3) comparison of portfolio and traditional assessment, (4) parents' perceptions of the portfolio, and (5) the effects of portfolio on instruction practices. Participants in this study included four first grade teachers, 48 parents, and 80 students. Data were collected through interviews, observations, portfolio data, videotaping and questionnaires. Throughout this study, students became more efficient at making specific and individualistic assessment decisions about their work and setting more realistic goals for themselves. Evidence of increased self-esteem and pride in work were also acknowledged as a result of utilizing portfolio assessment.

Young (2000) conducted a study to explore whether fourth graders could enhance their writing performance by learning to use the criteria in a rubric to assess their work. The subjects of the study were 304 who were exposed to contrasting writing strategies: self-assessment with peer and teacher input, multiple practices with the teacher's written feedback only, and experience in converting the written product into speech. The students were

assessed with pre-and post-tests and the writing instruction strategies replaced the regular classroom writing instruction. The analysis of the post- test results of all three groups showed a significant improvement in writing. However the self- assessment group performed significantly better when fourth graders knew the criteria by which they were assessed, they could learn to use that knowledge to enhance their own writing.

Two studies were conducted by Goodrich (2001) to determine the impact of instructional rubrics on the development of students' writing skills and their understanding of the qualities of good writing. The first study spanned the 1996-97 school years and focused on the effects of instructional rubrics on eighth-grade students' writing and on their understanding of the qualities of good writing. Students in nine eighth-grade classes in two urban middle schools were asked to write three different essays: a persuasive essay, an autobiographical incident essay, and historical fiction essay. Before writing a first draft of each essay, students in the treatment classes were given an instructional rubric. Students in the control classes were not given a rubric but were asked to write first and second drafts of the essays. Findings from Study 1 indicated an uneven but intriguing pattern of results. On average, treatment students received higher scores on only one of the three essays, but these differences were statistically significant. In general, it appeared that instructional rubrics could help students write better, but that a more intensive intervention may be necessary in order to help all students perform at higher levels consistently. These results were somewhat encouraging since the size of the difference (half a point) between the treatment and control groups on the essay showed a significant difference which was educationally as well as statistically meaningful: a half-point difference on a 4-point scale is a 12.5% difference.

Song and August (2002) conducted a quantitative study that compared the performance of two groups of advanced ESL students in composition. Both groups had been enrolled in compensatory version of Freshman English for students with scores one level below passing on the Writing Assessment Test (WAT). At the end of the course, one group was assessed on the basis of portfolios; the other was assessed using the WAT. The study found that students were twice more likely to pass when they were evaluated by portfolios than when they were required to pass the Writing Assessment Test (WAT).

El-Koumy (2004) conducted a study that aimed to investigate the effect of self-assessment of writing processes versus products on the quality and quantity of EFL students' writing. The subjects for the study were 80 students enrolled in two classes in two general secondary schools in Menoufya School District during the academic year 2001/2002. The two classes were randomly assigned to the two treatment conditions. In the process condition, each student assessed his writing processes in each session. In the product condition, each student assessed his written product. Prior to and at the end of the treatments, all subjects were tested on composition writing. The obtained data were analyzed using the t-test. The results showed no significant difference in the mean scores between the two groups on the pretest. The post test results revealed that the process group scored significantly higher than the product group on the quantity of writing and that the latter group scored significantly higher than the former group on the quality of writing.

The study conducted by Andrade and Ying Du (2005) suggested that students use rubrics to support their own learning and academic performance. In focus groups, fourteen undergraduate students discussed the ways in which they used rubrics to plan an approach to an assignment, check their work, and guide or reflect on feedback from others. The students said that using rubrics helped them focus their efforts, produce work of higher quality, earn a better grade, and feel less anxious about an assignment. Their comments also revealed that most of the students tend not to read a rubric in its entirety, and that some may perceive a rubric as a tool for satisfying a particular teacher's demands rather than as a representation of the criteria and standards of a discipline.

Method and Procedures

This section described the subjects of the study, the research instruments and their validity and reliability. It also included a description of the research material, research design, research procedures, and statistical analysis.

Subjects of the study

The subjects of the present study were purposefully chosen from the ninth grade students in the Golden Jubilee School for Boys in the 4th Directorate of Education/Amman. The researcher chose this school due to several reasons; first of all, the researcher's previous work as an EFL teacher in the same school for two years and as his work as an assistant principal in the same area made him familiar with the background and achievement of the students. Two sections were selected randomly to be the sample of the study. The first section of the sample consisted of (32) was considered as an experiment group while the other section which consisted (34) students was considered the control group.

Table (1) represents the distribution of the subjects of the study in the experimental and control groups.

Table (1)
The Distribution of the Subjects of the Study

Group	No. of students
Experimental	34
Control	32
Total	66

The pretest of the writing performance was administered and the means were calculated of two groups by the use of t-test.

Table (2) below shows the mean scores, standard deviations and the t-value obtained by the experimental and control groups on the writing achievement pretest.

Table (2)
Means, Standard Deviations, and T-value Attained by the Control and Experimental Groups on the Writing Performance Pretest

Group	n	\bar{X}	SD	t	Sig
Control	34	15.37	2.36	0.835	0.05
Experimental	32	15.85	2.71		

Table (2) presents the data collected by implementing the writing achievement pretest. To determine whether these differences were significant or not, the t-test for independent samples was used. The calculated t-value was (0.835) which is insignificant at ($\alpha=0.05$). Therefore, it is concluded that the two groups are equivalent in their writing performance. The equivalence might be related to the fact that students are coming from the same area and are of the same background and economic class. As a result, any later significant change in the students' performance will be attributed to the effect of the assessment method.

Research instrument

The instrument of the current study was the writing achievement test which was devised by the researcher in accordance with the syllabus and students' interests and backgrounds. The purpose of the test was to investigate whether there was any difference in students' writing achievement. The test consisted of a semi-guided composition topic about writing a story. It focused on the five sub- skills of grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, style and organization of ideas. It requested students to use these skills in meaningful coherent entities. As the writing achievement test was about telling a story of no more than 150 words taking into consideration the five sub-skills, each sub-skill was given six marks, and the final mark was 30.

The rubric adopted by the researcher was used by the students and the teacher to assess the students' progress in writing. It included five sub- skills, grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, style and organization of ideas. It used a six –point –graded scale ranging from very poor (0) to excellent writing skills (5) (Appendix 1).

To guarantee the validity of the writing achievement test, it was given to a group of judges comprising experts from departments of English and curriculum and instruction in Jordanian universities as well as EFL supervisors and experienced teachers who were invited to comment on it .On the basis of their comments and notes, a modified version of the test was prepared by the researcher (appendix 2).

The reliability of the writing achievement test was computed by calculating the mean scores as correction was done by two raters. A sample consisting of twenty students from the population in the same school was excluded from participating in the study .The papers were corrected by the raters and the mean scores were 18.83 and 18.37 respectively. To ensure the reliability of the test, the researcher used the equation of agreement coefficient between raters. It revealed 0.85 agreement between the two assessors which indicated high reliability in the test.

Research material

The material consisted of different writing tasks such as letter writing, writing a story and writing an essay. Students were given certain titles and were requested to write compositions that consist of no more than 150 words. Students in the experimental group were asked to use rubrics to assess their writing while students in the control group were asked to write by following the traditional method without the use of rubrics. The focus was on five sub-skills of writing (grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, style and organization of ideas). And it lasted for two months.

Research design and variables:

The present study employed a quasi- experimental design since it is intended to find out the effect of using a rubric-referenced self-assessment on the writing of the ninth grade male students who were assigned purposefully to the study groups.

The following design was implemented:

EG : O X O

CG : O Xo O

EG: The experimental group

CG: The control group

O: The writing test

X: The assessment method based on rubric-referenced self-assessment

Xo: The assessment method based on the traditional method

The independent variable is the method of assessment which had two levels; the use of rubric-referenced self-assessment, and the traditional method. The dependent variables of this study are the writing performance skill of ninth grade male students.

Statistical analysis:

To answer the research question, and because there was equivalence between the experimental group and the control group, a t – test was used to identify any significant differences between the two groups.

Research procedures:

The researcher followed the following steps in carrying out this study:

Results of the Study

The researcher investigated the effect of rubric-referenced self- assessments on ninth grade students' writing skill .He assumed that the rubric-referenced self –assessment could have positive effects on the student's writing skill. Therefore, the researcher was motivated by the research question:

- What is the effect of a rubric-referenced self assessment method on the writing skill of ninth grade students in Jordan?

This section presents the results of the current study .It illustrates the data the researcher collected in an attempt to answer the study question. To answer the question, different statistical analyses were used. So the chapter begins with descriptive statistics which portray the data collected using the measurements of the study, and the inferential statistics which illustrate the relations between the study variables.

Before the study began, all subjects were tested in their writing skill, and then were purposefully assigned as two equal groups: an experimental group and a control group. In the experimental group, each student was asked to independently assess his own writing before and after each session. At first, the students showed that they were unable and afraid of writing. Also they were not serious and began complaining and explaining that they were not used to writing.

The cooperating teacher taught the experimental group and worked hard to help the students start writing as he explained to them the benefit and importance of using the rubric in simplifying and developing their writing. Before the beginning of each lesson, the teacher urged the students to use the rubric and they followed the teacher's instructions until they got used to using it. By the end of the semester, they changed from reluctant to better writers. In the control group, students were taught with the same traditional method without self- assessing their own writing. The study was conducted in a period of two months (one session per week). At the end of this period, all subjects were tested on the writing skill. Students in the treatment group were given rubrics that articulated the criteria and gradations of quality for their writing. The cooperating teacher corrected the students' writing on the basis of the scoring rubric adopted by the researcher. The test had five items of an overall mark of thirty, ranging from 1 to 6 points for each item. No item was given a zero mark unless the composition was completely missing. Students in the control group wrote the same topics but did not receive the rubric. Students in the treatment group achieved, on average, higher scores on writing skill.

The research question of the study addressed the difference between the students' use of rubric-referenced self-assessment method and the students who use the traditional method in their achievement in writing. So the hypothesis of study says "There is no statistically significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the mean scores of ninth grade students' writing performance that can be ascribed to the method of assessment (rubric-referenced self – assessment and traditional assessment) ". To test this hypothesis, the cooperating teacher administered the writing achievement protest. The data collected from the posttest is represented in Table (4).

Table (4)
Means, Standard Deviations and T-value Obtained by the Experimental and Control Groups on the Writing Achievement Posttest.

Group	n	\bar{X}	SD	t	Sig
Control	34	19.30	3.08179	5.785	0.000
Experimental	32	22.85	2.35938		

The total mark of the posttest was 30

The table above clearly shows that the total mean score achieved by the experimental group was (22.85) while the total mean score achieved by the control group was (19.30)

The t-test was used to compare the mean scores of the experimental group and those of the control group. The calculated t-value was (5.785) which indicated high significance at ($\alpha=0.05$) as shown in Table (4)

Figure (1) shows the effect of the rubric-referenced self-assessment method on the writing achievement of the subjects.

Figure (1) The Effect of the Rubric-referenced Self-assessment on the Writing Achievement

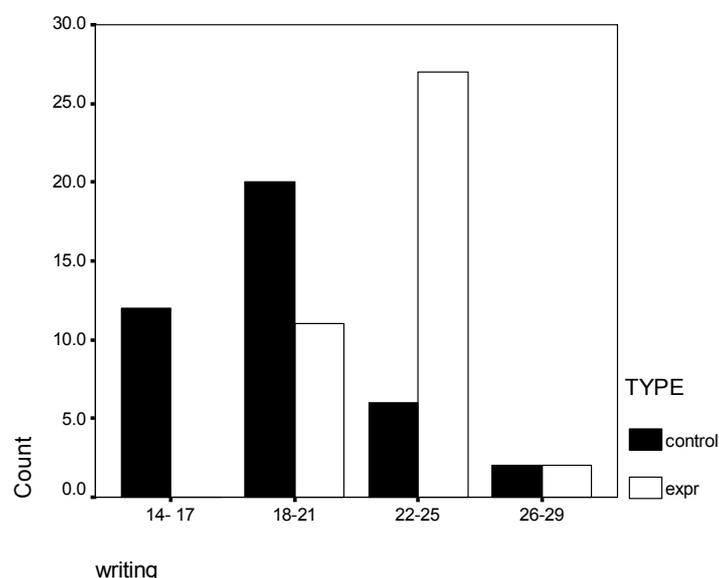


Figure (1) shows that the effect of the rubric-referenced self-assessment method on the writing achievement of the experimental group was higher than the control group. It shows quite clearly that the experimental group was improved on the writing achievement posttest. Therefore; the improvement was in favor of the experimental group.

Discussion and Recommendations

This chapter aims at discussing the results attained by implementing the rubric-referenced self-assessment which was investigated by the researcher. Based on these results, the second section suggests further recommendations for future research.

The hypothesis of the study said "there is no statistically significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the mean scores of ninth grade students' writing performance that can be ascribed to the method of assessment (rubric-referenced self-assessment and traditional assessment)".

The results of the writing achievement test indicated that there was a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group in favor of the experimental group. The mean score of the experimental group was (22.85) which is noticeably higher than the mean score of the control group which was (19.30). The t-value calculated on the t-test was (5.875) which revealed a significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) as shown in table (4). As a result, the null hypothesis "there is no statistically significant difference at ($\alpha = 0.05$) in the mean scores of ninth grade students' writing performance that can be ascribed to the method of assessment (rubric-referenced self-assessment and traditional assessment)" was rejected as there were significant differences in the mean score of the two groups in favor of the experimental group.

The call for increased use of meaningful (authentic) assessments that involve language students in selecting and reflecting on their learning means that language teachers will have a wider range of evidence on which to judge

whether students are becoming competent and purposeful language users. It also means that language programs will become more responsive to the differing learning styles of students and value diversity therein.

When used as assessment tools, rubrics not only made the instructor's standards and grading process explicit, but also they gave students a clear sense of what the expectations were for a high level of performance on a given assignment, and how they could be met. This use of rubrics could have been most important as the students were novices with respect to a particular task or type of expression. From the instructor's perspective, although the time spent in accepting a rubric could be considerable, once rubrics were in place, they could streamline the grading process. The more specific the rubric, the less the requirement for spontaneous written feedback for each piece of student work. Although provided with fewer written comments that were individualized for their work, students, nevertheless, received informative feedback. When information from rubrics was analyzed, a detailed record of students' progress toward meeting desired outcomes could be monitored and then provided to students so that they might also chart their own progress and improvement. With team-taught classes or multiple sections of the same course, rubrics can be used to make faculty standards explicit to one another, and to expect subsequent expectations. Good rubrics could be critically important when students' work in several classes is being graded by different assistants.

Having students assess their own writing process was important as self-assessment allowed students an opportunity to observe and reflect on their own approach, drawing attention to important steps that might be overlooked. Also self-assessment worked as a means of internalizing an explicit strategy, allowing opportunities for the students to mentally rehearse the strategy steps. Regular use of rubric-referenced self-assessment helped students track areas of strength and weakness and address problems before grades were issued. As suggested by Cormack, Johnson, Peters & Williams (1998, students were able to perform better as the assessment criteria were clearly known in advance by them and because of their acknowledgement that the products of their efforts had value beyond the assessment task .

Recommendations:

Based on the results of the current study, the following recommendations are suggested for those who are involved in the EFL learning and assessment:

- Teachers may take advantage of this study and other similar studies by applying the rubric- referenced self –assessment while teaching English as a foreign language because this might improve their student achievement in various levels and skills.
- Exploring other methods of self –assessment such as writing journals, peer-assessment and interviews which may contribute to the improvement of learner's achievement.
- The Ministry of Education is called upon to have more focus on self –assessment methods and techniques.
- Holding training courses for teachers focusing on familiarizing them with self-assessment and aiming at applying it in teaching English as foreign language.
- Supervisors should encourage and help teachers implement self- assessment methods at schools.
- Researchers may need to fill the gap and conduct studies that investigate the effect of applying self –assessment on other language skills, like listening.
- Researchers are invited to conduct further research on specific types of rubrics (holistic or analytical) to investigate their effectiveness on language learners.

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The Scoring Rubric

Content skill	5	4	3	2	1	0
Grammar	Few (if any) noticeable errors of grammar or word order.	Some errors of grammar or word order which do not, however, interfere with comprehension	Errors of grammar or word order are fairly frequent, occasional re-reading is necessary for full comprehension.	Errors of grammar or word order are frequent; efforts of interpretations are sometimes required on the reader's part. Limited vocabulary and frequent errors that clearly hinder expression of ideas.	Errors of grammar or word order are very frequent; reader often has to rely on his/her own interpretation. Vocabulary is so limited and so frequently misused that the reader must often rely on his/her own interpretation.	Errors of grammar or word order are so severe that make comprehension virtually impossible.
Vocabulary	Use of vocabulary and idiom is rarely distinguishable from those of educated native speakers.	Occasionally uses inappropriate terms or relies on circumlocutions; expression of ideas are hardly impaired.	Uses wrong or inappropriate words frequently, ideas may be limited because of inadequate vocabulary.	Frequent errors in spelling or punctuation which lead sometimes to obscurity.	Errors in spelling or punctuation are so frequent that the reader must often rely on own his/her interpretation	Vocabulary limitations are so extreme that make comprehension virtually impossible. Errors in spelling or punctuation are so severe that make comprehension impossible.
Mechanics	Choice of structures and vocabulary is consistently appropriate like that of educated native writers.	Occasional lack of consistency in choice of structures and vocabulary which does not, however, impair overall ease of communication	frequent; occasional re-reading is necessary for full comprehension. Patchy", with some structures or vocabulary items that are noticeably inappropriate to general style.	Structures or vocabulary items are sometimes not only inappropriate, but also misused; little sense of ease of communication	Communication is impaired by completely inappropriate or misused structures or vocabulary items.	Misused structures and vocabulary items rendering communication almost impossible
Style	Highly organized; clear progression of ideas, well-linked; like educated native writers.	Material is well-organized; links could occasionally be clearer but communication is not impaired.	Some lack of organization; re-reading is required for clarification of ideas.	Little or no attempt at connectivity, though the reader can deduce some organization.	Individual ideas are clear, but very difficult to deduce connection between them.	Lack of organization is so severe that communication is seriously impaired.
Organization						

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