



## **The Impact of Training Vietnamese EFL Learners for Self-Assessment on Writing Performance**

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The present research broke new ground by investigating the influence of instructing English as a foreign language (EFL) learners in Vietnam to employ analytical rubrics for self-assessment on their writing proficiency. Sixteen students who were English majors were subjected to a 17-week training course on refining their writing abilities via the use of analytical rubrics. The study applied a comprehensive and rigorous experimental mixed-methods approach, consisting of two writing tests and semi-structured interviews. The research findings revealed that the practice of self-assessment utilizing analytical rubrics had a favourable influence on the writing performance of the students. This practice encouraged introspective thinking, reinforced self-regulation and self-monitoring, and improved language competence. The study suggests that EFL teachers in Vietnam and those in other contexts integrate the utilization of analytical rubrics for self-evaluation in their teaching procedures to upgrade their assessment techniques and pedagogical efficiency, which would eventually result in improved language learning outcomes for their students.

**Keywords:** analytical rubrics, provocative investigation, impact, training, Vietnamese EFL students, self-assessment, writing performance

**Citation:** Phuong, H. Y., Nguyen, A. T., Nguyen, H. T., Pham, T. T., Pham, Q. T., Huyuh, T. A. T., & Le, T. T. (2024). The impact of training vietnamese EFL learners for self-assessment on writing performance. *International Journal of Instruction*, 17(2), 237-258. <https://doi.org/10.29333/iji.2024.17214a>

## INTRODUCTION

English's role in global economic integration and development is crucial, particularly in Vietnam, where it facilitates communication and professional pursuits. Nevertheless, teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) face numerous challenges, with reports of ineffectiveness despite educational improvements. Traditional classroom assessment, mainly summative and emphasizing lexical and grammatical knowledge, is a significant challenge causing misalignment with EFL objectives (Cao, 2018). Vietnam's prevalent teacher-centered approach results in antiquated assessment methods, unreliable and invalid measures, and test-focused teaching (Thanh, 2016). Addressing these challenges, Vietnam's Ministry of Education and Training promotes formative assessment as a potential solution (Tien et al., 2021). Formative assessment identifies learners' strengths and weaknesses, providing feedback for improved learning. It empowers learners, enhances classroom learning, and enables tailored teaching activities to boost learning achievement. Used alongside traditional assessments, formative assessment allows immediate revision and organization of teaching activities, improving learning outcomes (Heritage, 2007). Consequently, formative assessment constitutes a critical component of global EFL teaching and learning, enabling Vietnamese language teachers to augment student outcomes and learners to effectively develop English skills.

The process of teaching and assessing writing skills in EFL in Vietnam has proven to be challenging, and it has negatively affected the students' language learning outcomes. Vietnamese EFL teachers encounter difficulties such as how to motivate students to write in English, how to teach writing effectively, and how to assess writing skills (Nguyen, 2021). Alternative assessment methods, including checklists, videotapes, audiotapes, teacher observations, journals, logs, conferences, portfolios, self-assessment (SA), and peer assessment, are considered to be effective in achieving educational assessment goals (Dikli, 2003). Among these methods, SA has been identified as a particularly beneficial tool for formative assessment in writing courses as it enables students to evaluate and consider the quality of their work and abilities (Jamrus & Razali, 2019).

Besides, the assessment of writing skills in English is a complex task for language teachers. In this respect, scoring rubrics have been identified as a solution to evaluate various discourse and linguistic features of academic writing. Rubrics provide clear criteria for evaluating students' work, including essays, research reports, portfolios, works of art, recitals, oral presentations, performances, and group activities (Chan & Ho, 2019). They also offer benefits such as clarifying expectations for students, providing formative feedback, grading, and assessing courses and programs (Jonsson, 2014). Rubrics can be used for SA by faculty, students, fieldwork supervisors, or external reviewers. While analytic rubrics for SA have shown promise, little research has been conducted to verify their effectiveness. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the impact of training students to use analytic rubrics for SA on their writing performance.

The objective of this current study directly responds to the contextual and theoretical gap by focusing on the issue of assessing writing skills in EFL in Vietnam although it

directly builds upon and connects with previous studies in several ways. For instance, this current study is extending the research done by Cao (2018) and Thanh (2016), who identified the challenges of traditional summative assessments and the teacher-centered approach prevalent in Vietnam. These researchers highlighted the need for changes in the assessment methods, and this study is essentially responding to this identified need by investigating the effectiveness of analytic rubrics as a formative assessment tool for SA in EFL writing. Similarly, the study also relates to the works of Dikli (2003), Jamrus and Razali (2019), and Jonsson (2014), which emphasized the benefits of formative assessment methods, including SA, in achieving educational goals. By examining the use of analytic rubrics in SA, this study is not only supplementing their arguments but also providing practical evidence to substantiate their theoretical insights.

Despite these connections, this research differs from previous studies primarily in two ways. First, most of the previous research focused on a variety of formative assessment methods in a broader context. In contrast, this study narrows down the focus to a specific tool: analytic rubrics for SA in the context of EFL writing. This makes this research more focused and provides a detailed understanding of this particular area, which has been somewhat neglected in the literature. Second, this research is unique in terms of its practical orientation. While previous studies have discussed the potential benefits of SA and analytic rubrics (e.g., Ayhan & Türkyılmaz, 2015; Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Taylor et al., 2012), there is limited empirical research on how to train students to use these rubrics effectively and what impact such training can have on students' writing performance. This research fills this gap by providing evidence-based insights into these aspects, thereby offering valuable inputs for teachers and educators looking for practical ways to improve EFL writing assessment in Vietnam. Thus, this research adds a new dimension to the existing body of knowledge and contributes to the ongoing discourse on formative assessment methods in EFL teaching and learning.

Therefore, the current study will investigate the effectiveness of training students to use analytic rubrics for SA in enhancing their writing performance. As a response to the contextual gap, this research will contribute practical insights on implementing SA using analytic rubrics as a part of formative assessment in EFL teaching and learning. Moreover, the study will shed light on the challenges faced by Vietnamese EFL teachers in teaching and assessing English writing skills. By offering potential solutions and strategies, this study seeks to help teachers overcome these difficulties and improve their assessment practices. This way, this study contributes to advancing EFL education in Vietnam, filling the identified contextual gap by equipping teachers with knowledge and tools that can lead to enhanced student outcomes in English language learning.

## **Literature Review**

### **Analytic Rubrics**

A rubric that encompasses explicit and well-defined criteria has been consistently deemed as an efficacious tool for evaluating learners' written and oral works (Allen et al., 2014; Suryanti & Nurhuda, 2021). The concept of rubrics has been variously defined by several researchers. Çetin (2011) described rubrics as a scoring instrument for appraising assignments. The author firmly believed that rubrics provided a meticulous and comprehensive guideline to aid raters in analyzing and determining an

overall score for a given text. With an assortment of points allocated for each category, raters could effortlessly follow the rubric to evaluate the substance of a written work. The expert reiterated the previous findings of other researchers, asserting that utilizing rubrics could augment the reliability and professionalism of writing assessments (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). Accordingly, rubrics can evaluate students' writing more objectively and overcome issues such as time constraints or insufficient personnel, rendering them a widely-utilized tool for scoring students' essays. Furthermore, a rubric is also defined as a scoring guide that incorporates criteria utilized to differentiate various levels of performance when evaluating students' work. As per the aforementioned studies, rubrics can be employed to evaluate student performance across an array of assignments, such as exams, research papers, portfolios, group projects, public presentations, internships, and other types of work. Each aspect of student performances is assessed swiftly with detailed subscales set within the rubric, and scores can be conveniently amassed into overall results for further analysis. Consequently, a rubric is an exceedingly advantageous instrument for evaluating students' work holistically or written products specifically.

Numerous language teachers favor the analytic rubric over other types because of its ability to provide multiple scales and scores for a performance, as opposed to just one. In a study conducted by Beyreli and Ari (2009), which consisted of three sections and ten properties, the usefulness of multiple scales and scoring guides of the analytic rubric was verified in assessing writing performance. The complexity of the rubric was reflected in its external structure (format, spelling, and punctuation), language and expression (vocabulary, sentences, paragraphs, and expression), and organization (title, introduction, story, and conclusion). While it may take more time to develop, the scoring scales of an analytic rubric were typically more consistent and specific to areas of students' growth. Ayhan and Türkyılmaz (2015) further elaborated on the advantages of using analytic rubrics, stating that they provide valuable feedback to learners on areas of strength and weakness, and their dimensions can be weighted to reflect relative importance. Additionally, when the same rubric categories are used repeatedly, analytic rubrics can demonstrate to learners that they have made progress over time in some or all dimensions.

The deployment of analytic rubrics in writing has been proven to be an effective approach to assess students' writing proficiency levels and significantly improve the quality of their written work through scoring feedback and self-correction mechanisms (Çetin, 2011). By employing shared score sets in analytic rubrics, the sub-skills of each student's written product are meticulously analyzed, and the components of the writing (handwriting, sentences, title, etc.) are separately evaluated to determine their inclusion or exclusion in the final draft (Beyreli & Ari, 2009). Therefore, both teachers and students can benefit from using this assessment tool, as teachers can discern which specific property they are assessing for and provide detailed criteria, while students can create a quality text in line with the specified criteria. Analytic scoring can act as a guide for teachers, and students can direct their writing activities accordingly. Moreover, teachers can profitably comprehend their learners' current situation and thereby assist students in determining the strengths and weaknesses of their writing through orderly and comprehensive feedback (Beyreli & Ari, 2009).

Nonetheless, it is crucial for target language teachers to exercise caution when utilizing analytic rubrics in their classroom assessments. While analytic scales offer several advantages, their unprofessional use may result in unexpected outcomes (Çetin, 2011). Ayhan and Türkyılmaz (2015) reiterated the advantages of analytic rubrics, which include (1) the artificial point system potentially failing to provide students with a comprehensive assessment of their overall performance, (2) the creation and use of analytic scales requiring more time for teachers, (3) the difficulty in achieving inter- and intra-reliability across all dimensions compared to a holistic scoring guide, and (4) raters tending to evaluate grammar-related categories more strictly due to an overemphasis on accuracy. In brief, analytic rubrics may have potential for classroom assessment, but careful consideration is necessary. Turgut (2010) claimed that the reliability of scoring written products is generally lower due to a lack of agreement on the properties that should exist in a composition or written text and subjective criteria assessment. Therefore, analytic scoring can be a helpful tool to improve the agreement among raters and the reliability of scores. It is suggested that the criteria for assessing students' writing should be determined through composition, text linguistics, and literature knowledge. Despite possible negative impacts, analytic rubrics may be more suitable than holistic scales for assessing learners' writing compositions. Moreover, the current study aims to measure the degree of learners' writing improvement over time, requiring the collection, evaluation, and analysis of specific improvements in students' writing characteristics. Therefore, the use of analytic rubrics is suitable for the aforementioned aims.

### **Self-Assessment**

Self-assessment, a type of formative assessment, involves learners reflecting on and evaluating the quality of their own work and learning. Learners also judge the extent to which their work meets explicitly stated goals or criteria and identify their strengths and weaknesses for revision. However, there is a discrepancy in the definition of SA. Taylor et al. (2012) argue that self-grading, self-testing, and self-rating can also be forms of SA. Language research organizations differ in defining SA. For example, the ERIC Thesaurus and the Thesaurus of Psychological Index Terms treat self-appraisal and self-evaluation as synonyms. Taylor et al. (2012) define self-evaluation as evaluating and monitoring one's performance in relation to identified criteria or standards. In this study, the researcher aims to use SA as a process in which learners engage in the assessment and grading of their performance in terms of the aspects of good essay writing, using an adopted scoring scale as assistance.

Despite the recognition of student SA as a crucial element of formative assessment by the Assessment for Learning (AfL) movement and many experts over an extended period, its implementation in language classrooms is infrequent. For instance, a mere 23% of the 4,148 Canadian secondary school teachers surveyed reported never using SA, while 58% reported limited use of this assessment form (Taylor et al., 2012). Similarly, in a study by Lasonen (1995), only a small number of junior high school students in Finland (173 surveys) reported the presence of SA in their classrooms. In essence, the preference for teacher-controlled summative results remained dominant over student-led assessment practices.

Despite its underuse in comparison to traditional methods, student SA is widely believed to hold substantial benefits for learners. More specifically, SA has been shown to foster academic excellence among students by enabling them to reflect upon their own work, identify areas of strength and weakness, and revise their approach to learning based on social standards (Taylor et al., 2012). Furthermore, SA can activate learners' metacognitive competencies, including self-observation, self-judgment, self-reaction, task analysis, self-motivation, and self-control, which all play crucial roles in the self-evaluation process (Zimmerman, 2002). The development of self-regulation skills, such as target-setting, progress evaluation, and quality improvement, can also be enhanced through the use of SA (Bourke & Mentis, 2013). In addition to its benefits for learners, SA can also lead to improved motivation, engagement, and efficacy among raters, while also reducing their dependence on teachers (Takao & Maki, 2019). Finally, SA has been recognized as an approach that can reduce teachers' assessment workload while promoting student responsibility for tracking their progress and providing feedback (Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Sadler & Good, 2006). In short, student self-regulation is an invaluable tool that enables learners to foster their own development and meet social requirements.

SA can be defined as the process of evaluating one's own learning and integrating it into the learning process. Spiller (2012) made a concerted effort to expound on the usefulness of SA, which is presented below. Firstly, self-evaluation serves as the foundation for the development of learners' own learning, allowing them to identify what they need to learn. When learning progress is clearly defined, further learning can be encouraged. Secondly, SA facilitates learners' self-reflection, promoting their responsibility and independence in their learning. It can be argued that SA is the process in which learners become the proprietors of their own learning. Thirdly, SA moves learners from an imposed relationship to a partnership relationship. As a form of formative assessment, SA emphasizes the learning process, and because students learn and assess themselves, their readiness, experiences, and backgrounds are enhanced. Fourthly, SA is a shift from learning solely to please teachers to an emphasis on the quality of student learning. Lastly, learners' participation in the formulation of criteria for SA tasks provides them with opportunities to deepen their comprehension of what constitutes quality outcomes in a specific area. In summary, SA clearly benefits learners in a variety of aspects of their target language learning.

Therefore, in order to effectively implement SA in language classrooms, language teachers must pay attention to crucial steps. Firstly, before allowing students to freely practice self-evaluation on their own work, the teachers should have an initial conversation with them to explore the assumptions and principles underlying the SA process (Spiller, 2012). Next, the teacher can provide students with a sample paper to practice scoring and model the process as an example. Boud and Brew (1995) added that the implementation process of SA should include a clear rationale or purpose for the activity, explicit procedures that students understand what is expected of them, and ensuring that students honestly assess their own performance without fear of exposure or retribution for their evaluations. Furthermore, students should be made aware that cheating or collusion will not be tolerated. Spiller (2012) also suggested that students' SA may be more effective when they are involved in establishing the judging criteria.

Therefore, students must be aware of the standards of work they are aspiring to and be given opportunities to think about sample work in relation to these criteria. Additionally, it is essential to ensure that SA is appropriate for particular disciplinary contexts and can be used in conjunction with peer- and teacher assessment. According to Spiller (2012), most learning activities can be associated with SA, provided that students have opportunities to identify or reflect on their progress in relation to particular learning outcomes. Moreover, the author believes that students who understand the judging criteria well can be invited to monitor their progress in acquiring practical skills. Importantly, although students self-evaluate their performance, they cannot complete their mission without teacher mediation and coaching. However, Spiller argues that grading should be eliminated to enable SA to enhance learning effectively. In conclusion, in the current study, these steps should be followed carefully, one by one, to ensure the successful implementation of SA in language classrooms.

## **METHOD**

### **Research Design**

The current inquiry employed a rigorous experimental study with a mixed-methods design that sought to discern causal relationships between various variables. The principal goal of the researchers was to examine the impact of instructing students to use analytic rubrics for SA on their writing performance. The use of an experimental design is supported by numerous studies which recommend it as one of the most suitable designs for educational research aiming to investigate the effect of an intervention on learning outcomes (Ary et al., 2018). An experimental design allows for controlled manipulation of variables and rigorous measurement of outcomes, making it ideal for this study to determine the impact of training students to use analytic rubrics for SA on their writing performance. This controlled environment also aids in establishing a cause-effect relationship between the intervention and the observed outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The decision to complement the quantitative component of this study with a qualitative approach aligns with the principles of mixed-methods research, which suggests that such an approach can offer a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem (Creswell, 2014). By including qualitative data collection through semi-structured interviews, this study aims to understand the perceptions, experiences, and challenges of students related to the use of analytic rubrics for SA in EFL writing. This approach aligns with the recommendations of Plonsky and Gass (2011), who argued that qualitative data can provide valuable insights into learners' internal processes and offer rich contextual understanding which cannot be obtained through purely quantitative methods. Using an analytic rubric for SA is an innovative and promising approach. It gives students clear expectations and criteria for their writing, thus, fostering their metacognitive awareness and reflective thinking, which are critical for autonomous learning (Harris & Brown, 2013). However, the effectiveness of this approach heavily relies on the students' ability to understand and use the rubrics effectively, and this necessitates proper training (Panadero & Jonsson, 2013). This is the crux of the intervention, and the experimental design will allow the researchers to assess its impact systematically. In sum, the choice of an experimental mixed-methods design is well-grounded in the educational research literature and is most suitable to answer the research questions effectively and comprehensively.

### Participants

The study's participants consisted of 16 English-major students enrolled at a university situated in Southwest Vietnam. The participants' English proficiency level, as stated, was B2 according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). This level corresponds to an upper intermediate level of English proficiency. All students undertook a standardized set of writing modules, with the aim of refining their essay writing skills on various topics explored in the course. Throughout this module, the students were trained to use analytic rubrics, which had been adjusted from the rubrics used in the Jacobs et al. (1981) study, to facilitate self-evaluation. The specific details of the rubrics utilized are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Analytic Rubrics (Rubrics for Writing Performance Evaluation)

Student:	Date	Topic:	
Writing elements	Score Level	Criteria	Comments
Content	30-27	Excellent to very good: possessing profound knowledge; substantive and comprehensive development of writing; meticulously crafted to detail and highly relevant to the assigned topic.	
	26-22	Good to average: moderate understanding of subject matter; satisfactory scope; underdeveloped writing; somewhat relevant to the assigned topic, but lacks specificity.	
	21-17	Fair to poor: The assessment for fair to poor performance indicates a lack of knowledge about the topic, absence of substantive content, and insufficient development of the topic.	
	16-13	Very poor: The work does not demonstrate any discernible understanding of the subject matter, lacks any meaningful substance, and is not relevant to the given topic, rendering it insufficient for evaluation purposes.	
Organization	20-18	Excellent to very good: The writing exhibited a fluent and eloquent expression, with clear and well-supported ideas that were conveyed succinctly. The text was well-organized, displaying a logical sequencing of ideas and cohesive structure.	
	17-14	Good to average: The writing is moderately fragmented with a somewhat erratic flow. The organization is somewhat loose, but the main ideas are distinguishable. The support provided for the ideas is limited in scope. The writing is logical but lacks a comprehensive sequence.	
	13-10	Fair to poor: The expression is non-fluent, and the ideas are either confused or disconnected. The work lacks logical sequencing and development.	
	9-7	Very poor: This does not convey any meaningful message or ideas, lacks any sort of structure or organization, or is insufficient to make an evaluation.	
Vocabulary	20-18	Excellent to very good: This text demonstrates a sophisticated range of language skills, including effective selection and utilization of appropriate words and idioms, mastery of word forms, and appropriate register usage.	
	17-14	Good to average: The lexical range is sufficient, although some errors in word choice, usage, and idiom may occur occasionally. However, such errors do not impede the clarity of meaning.	
	13-10	Fair to poor: The range is restricted, and there are frequent errors of word/idiom form, choice, and usage that obscure or confuse meaning.	
	9-7	Very poor: The writing appears to be primarily a translation from another language, with very little demonstration of knowledge of English vocabulary, idioms, or word form. As a result, the piece is difficult to evaluate.	
Language use	25-22	Excellent to very good: Demonstrating effective and intricate sentence construction, this writing exhibits minimal errors pertaining to subject-verb agreement, tense consistency, number agreement, word order and function, article usage, pronoun usage, and preposition usage.	
	21-18	Good to average: The construction is effective, but it is simplistic. Complex constructions have minor issues. Although meaning is rarely obscured, there are multiple errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, and prepositions.	
	17-11	Fair to poor: The work exhibits significant issues with both simple and complex constructions. There are frequent errors in negation, agreement, tense, number, word	

		order and function, articles, pronouns, and prepositions, as well as problems such as fragments, run-ons, and deletions. As a result, the meaning of the work is often confused or obscured.
	10-5	Very poor: The sentence mastery is inadequate, evidenced by the prevalence of significant errors, meaning that is unclear or nonexistent, or a lack of sufficient material to make an assessment.
	5	Excellent to very good: The standard conventions are exhibited with proficiency, with only infrequent mistakes in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraph structure.
	4	Good to average: This writing exhibits an exceptional grasp of writing conventions, with scant errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing.
Mechanics	3	Fair to poor: The writing shows significant deficiencies in mastery of conventions, with frequent errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. In addition, poor handwriting further complicates the communication of meaning, which is often confused or obscured.
	2	Very poor: The writing demonstrates a lack of mastery of writing conventions with numerous errors in spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing. In addition, the handwriting is illegible, making it difficult to evaluate the writing.

Based on the rubrics used in this study, there are five distinct features that the graders considered while assigning scores to written texts. These features are content (30%), organization (20%), vocabulary (20%), language use (25%), and mechanics (5%). Each of these features has a detailed description of the criteria that the assessors use to evaluate the essays and provide scores ranging from excellent to very good, good to average, fair to poor, and very poor.

The decision to use analytic rubrics from the Jacobs et al. (1981) study was based on several considerations. First, the rubrics have been widely recognized in the academic community as robust and effective tools for assessing writing skills, particularly within the context of English as a foreign language (e.g., Winke & Lim, 2015; Izadpanah et al., 2014). Their rubrics break down the task of writing into multiple components (e.g., content, organization, vocabulary, language use, mechanics), each with clear and detailed performance descriptors. This multidimensionality is in line with the complex nature of writing skills, which encompasses various sub-skills and aspects. Second, research indicates that the use of analytic rubrics can provide detailed, specific, and actionable feedback for learners (Brookhart, 2013), making them particularly suited for formative assessment, such as SA. Analytic rubrics can guide students in understanding what is expected from them in each aspect of the writing task, help them identify their strengths and weaknesses, and plan for improvements. Third, the rubrics from Jacobs et al. (1981) have been empirically validated and have demonstrated high reliability and validity in assessing EFL writing performance. These rubrics have been used and tested in numerous studies with EFL learners, showing good psychometric properties and a high level of consistency across different raters and tasks (Weigle, 2002). Moreover, the rubrics are flexible and can be adapted to suit different contexts and tasks, as was the case in this study. In this study, the rubrics were adjusted to align with the specific learning objectives and writing tasks of the students. As a result, the choice of analytic rubrics proposed by Jacob et al. (1981) was based on their multidimensionality, suitability for SA, empirical validity and reliability, and adaptability, which made them an appropriate choice for the research context and objectives.

The following protocol was implemented to recruit and select study participants. Initially, all enrolled students were apprised of the study's details, and their

participation was purely voluntary. They were provided with an option to opt-out if they encountered any adverse repercussions from the intervention. Subsequently, from the pool of 16 participants, eight learners were cherry-picked for an interview based on the differential mean score between their pre-test and post-test results. This selection criterion aimed to scrutinize the influence of the intervention on learners' acquisition from the perspective of both successful and unsuccessful cohorts. The interviewees were shortlisted based on their pre-test and post-test scores, emphasizing the ones who exhibited maximum and minimum enhancement. Table 2 encapsulates details regarding the interviewees, inclusion of their pre-test and post-test scores, and the mean deviation between them. By handpicking participants based on their performance on the pre-test and post-test, the researchers gained profound insights into the intervention's efficacy and its differential impact on distinct learner types.

Table 2  
Information of interviewees

Pseudonyms	Mean-pretest	Mean-posttest	Mean deviation
David	48.33	87.67	39.34
Daniel	66.67	91.67	25.00
Brian	54.00	78.33	24.33
Emma	56.67	78.00	21.33
Emily	86.33	91.33	5.00
Christopher	69.00	73.33	4.33
John	76.67	77.33	0.66
Jennifer	72.00	69.00	-3.00

Table 2 provides information on the participants who were selected for the interview. The successful group comprised of four learners (David, Daniel, Brian, and Emma), while the unsuccessful group included Jennifer, Emily, Christopher, and John. These are pseudonyms used to protect the participants' personal information.

#### **Data Collection Instruments**

The research conducted utilized a pair of writing tests as the primary means of gathering data, specifically the pretest and posttest. These assessments necessitated that the students produce a 250-word essay within one hour, with both tests containing the subject matter of "Music". A research team member with more than three years of writing instruction experience devised the tests' requirements and structure. The uniformity of the writing activities throughout the teaching process was critical to ensure consistency. Moreover, to minimize the likelihood of extraneous variables, such as the students' memorization abilities or their previous knowledge or practice of the essay topic, affecting the test results, the pre-test and post-test were identical in structure. However, the essay prompts differed to avert students' reliance on their memory, thereby safeguarding the dependability of the test results.

The study utilized semi-structured interviews as an additional data collection method. The research team purposefully selected participants for the interviews, and the questions used in the interviews were focused on eliciting the students' perspectives regarding the impact of using analytic rubrics to assess their peers on their writing

performance, particularly in essay writing. The interview protocol was developed after extensive discussions within the research team and consultation with experts in languages who had considerable research and publication experience (Le et al., 2023; Phan & Phuong, 2014). The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese, the mother tongue language of both the interviewer and the interviewees, to facilitate accurate responses from both of them. To avoid distractions, each interview was typically conducted in a quiet location and lasted between one and one and a half hours. Before each interview, the research team sent a list of key questions via email to the interviewees to provide them with an overview of the interview's content. Additionally, the research team sought permission from the interviewees to record the interview for later analysis.

### **Data Analysis**

The process of data analysis in this study comprised of several steps. Initially, the teacher in charge of the intervention, along with two other writing instructors, assessed the essays written by the students. These instructors used the same analytic rubrics that were derived from Jacobs et al. (1981) and are presented in Table 1. Subsequently, the pre-test and post-test results of the entire group were evaluated to obtain an overall perspective on the intervention's impact on the students' writing abilities. Moreover, the Pair-Sample t-tests were utilized to compare the results of all five characteristics with the same total score. Statistical significance was considered for p-values less than .05. Afterward, the score of each student on the pre-test was juxtaposed with their score on the post-test to investigate the intervention's impact on their writing performance.

Subsequently, the qualitative data gathered from the semi-structured interviews underwent an analysis according to the ensuing procedures. Firstly, the research team perused the transcripts scrupulously to acquaint themselves with the data. In the process, if any ambiguities arose from the interviewees' responses, the research team would resort to telephone conversations to clarify their doubts. Following this, all team members undertook the task of analyzing the transcripts by encoding relevant excerpts and themes pertaining to the reasons behind the mean differences in each feature of the rubrics between the pre-test and post-test. After two weeks of qualitative data analysis, the research team compiled and juxtaposed their analyses. The analyses deemed appropriate were retained, while others were reviewed with the assistance of an expert in qualitative data analysis. The process started with preparing the raw data, which involved transcription and formatting for consistency. The expert then coded the data by assigning meaningful tags or labels based on themes, concepts, and ideas, using a mix of pre-determined and emergent codes. Once the coding was done, the expert assisted the team in interpreting the data by identifying patterns, trends, and relationships that answered the study's objectives. To maintain the analysis's reliability and validity, the expert ensured consistent coding, verified interpretations against the data, and checked the alignment of different data sources. Finally, the expert was instrumental in organizing and presenting the findings clearly and coherently, supported by direct quotes from the data. Throughout these steps, the expert encouraged discussions within the research team to refine the analysis and resolve any discrepancies in interpretation.

In conjunction with the expert, the research team deliberated on refining the analysis to account for any variations amongst the research team members.

### **Procedures**

The study encompassed three distinct phases, namely the pre-intervention phase, the intervention phase, and the post-intervention phase.

#### *Pre-Intervention*

During this initial phase, the research team undertook a comprehensive review of the literature to develop a conceptual framework for the study. Concurrently, the team scrutinized analytical rubrics from previous investigations to determine the most appropriate one for the context of the study. Ultimately, the rubrics adapted from Jacobs et al. (1981) were deemed to be the most suitable despite being dated. Once the framework had been established, the team commenced developing the data collection instruments, namely the tests and interview questions. Simultaneously, the team requested permission from the administration of a language school in Southwest Vietnam to carry out the study in one of their writing classes. Following the school's approval, the team approached three essay writing teachers to serve as research collaborators in the experimental class. After one of the three teachers, Mike (pseudonym), agreed to participate, his class was selected for the study. The research team subsequently briefed Mike on the research's aims, methods, and implications, and sought his consent to participate. The team then approached the students in Mike's class, which comprised 16 English-major students who voluntarily agreed to participate. These students were then required to take the pre-test, as outlined in the data collection instruments section, officially commencing the experimental phase of the study.

#### *Intervention*

The intervention period spanned 17 weeks, during which students were subjected to a 150-minute per week regimen, equivalent to three periods as per the institutional norms. The intervention was bifurcated into two sub-phases. The first two weeks involved imparting training to the students to equip them with the proficiency to use analytic rubrics and comprehend the art of essay writing. Subsequently, the remaining 15 weeks comprised of the experimental phase where the students' analytical abilities were put to test as they were required to evaluate their own performances using the analytical rubrics.

Throughout the initial two-week period of the intervention, Mike employed a methodical approach to instruct his students in the use of analytic rubrics. To accomplish this, Mike provided the students with writing samples that he had evaluated utilizing the rubrics in the question. Subsequently, Mike published the corresponding test scores, which the students could scrutinize alongside their own evaluations of the sample papers. During this process, Mike meticulously explained the rubrics and the rationale behind the scores awarded to the sample papers. This methodical two-week pedagogical exercise instilled the research team with full confidence in the students' ability to comprehend and apply the analytic rubrics effectively, thereby facilitating the readiness of the students for the second phase of the intervention.

In the second phase of the study, Mike meticulously followed the lesson plans devised by the research team, which were divided into four segments, namely, Warming up, Pre-writing, While-writing, and Post-writing. The Warm-up session was employed to grab the students' attention, introduce the lecture or enhance the learning atmosphere, depending on the session's requirements. During the Pre-writing stage of the lesson plan, the teacher, Mike, facilitated the students' writing process by introducing the writing topic and supplying appropriate materials for comprehension and brainstorming. For each session, students were given reading passages relevant to the essay topic, which they were to analyze and discuss. These passages ranged from academic articles to newspaper reports and excerpts from literature, depending on the complexity of the topic and the students' proficiency level. Along with these readings, Mike used various other instructional materials to further prepare the students for the writing task. For instance, he shared visual aids, such as infographics and concept maps, to help students understand the main ideas and subtopics related to the essay prompt. He also played audio tracks of experts discussing the topic to expose students to different perspectives and argumentative structures. In addition, Mike taught vocabulary and grammar rules pertinent to the writing topic. He introduced new words and phrases, explained their meanings and usages, and encouraged students to incorporate them into their essays. He also reviewed relevant grammar rules, with a particular focus on sentence structures and tenses that the students might need to employ in their essays. To guide students in the organization of their essays, Mike provided a structural framework based on the genre's functions. This included the general structure of an essay, with an introduction, body, and conclusion, as well as more specific advice on how to develop a thesis statement, support arguments with evidence, and craft a compelling conclusion. Through these diverse instructional inputs, Mike aimed to equip the students with the knowledge and skills necessary to tackle the writing task. This pre-writing stage was crucial in preparing the students not only for the actual writing but also for the subsequent SA, as it helped them gain a deeper understanding of the topic and the criteria for good writing. Subsequently, students had a 40-minute window to pen their compositions, which were later swapped for peer assessment. The students were then required to grade their peers' writing using the analysis rubrics and provide an explanation for their rating. While the students were evaluating their peers' compositions, Mike would move around the classroom, scrutinizing and monitoring whether they were utilizing the analysis rubrics correctly. If he noticed any errors, Mike would immediately rectify them to ensure the students had a better understanding of the rubrics.

#### *Post-Intervention*

After the 15-week intervention, which involved learning to write and using analytic rubrics to evaluate students' own writing, a post-test was conducted to evaluate the effects of the intervention. The impact of the intervention was assessed using a Pair-sample t-test to ascertain if a significant difference existed between the pre-test and post-test results. Furthermore, based on the results of each participant, six students were interviewed by the research team. Among these six students, three exhibited the most progress while the other three showed the least amount of progress based on the mean deviation. The results are detailed below.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Table 3 below elucidates the nuances of modifications in writing aptitude exhibited by the students who underwent the aforementioned treatment.

Table 3

Elucidation of modifications in writing aptitude of students undergoing treatment

Variables	95% CI	Pre-test	Post-test	N1/N2	t-value	p-value	Effect size
		Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)				
Content	-6.36, -1.79	20.70 (3.66)	24.79 (3.96)	16	-3.80	.002	.47
Organization	-4.46, -1.45	14.06 (2.67)	17.02 (1.49)	16	-4.19	.001	.56
Vocabulary	-3.12, -.74	14.75 (2.08)	16.68 (1.06)	16	-3.46	.003	.50
Language Use	-5.92, -2.74	17.27 (3.42)	21.60 (1.50)	16	-5.81	.000	.63
Mechanics	-.71, -.12	4.24 (.49)	4.66 (.40)	16	-3.02	.009	.41
Total	-19.46, -7.98	71.04 (10.46)	84.77 (7.80)	16	-5.09	.000	.59

The results of the Paired samples t-tests overall show that there was a significant difference in the mean scores between the two testing times in favor of the posttest (Mpre=71.04; Mpost=84.77; p=.000) implying that students markedly advanced their essay writing performances through the use of the analytic rubric for self-evaluating their own essays after the treatment. To be specific, the results revealed significant differences between the Pre-SA and Post-SA on the sub-scores of content (Mpre=20.70; Mpost=24.79; p=.002), organization (Mpre=14.06; Mpost=17.02; p=.001), vocabulary (Mpre=14.75; Mpost=16.68; p=.003), language use (Mpre=17.27; Mpost=21.60; p=.000), and mechanics (Mpre=4.24; Mpost=4.66; p=.009). Therefore, it can be concluded that the learners made notable enhancements in the aspects of content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics of their compositions during the treatment period.

Multiple conceivable factors could have contributed to the observed positive changes in learners' essay writing performances. Firstly, statistical findings indicated enhancements in almost all aspects of essay writing, particularly in organization (Mpre=14.06; Mpost=17.02; p=.001), vocabulary (Mpre=14.75; Mpost=16.68; p=.003), and language use (Mpre=17.27; Mpost=21.60; p=.000). These quantitative outcomes were consistent with qualitative data from learner interviews, suggesting that the use of analytic rubrics for self-assessment improved their ability to recognize and rectify subconscious writing errors, such as incorrect word usage, form, agreement, tense, and syntax. The students reported improved proficiencies in vocabulary, grammar structures, and linking essay components. David and Brian shared similar sentiments about self-improvement through analytic rubrics for SA as follows:

Through SA of my essay, I identified and corrected errors in structure, grammar, and vocabulary. This equipped me with the necessary skills to produce a well-crafted essay in the future. (David)

While writing my essay, I made mistakes that affected coherence and cohesion. However, SA helped me identify and correct these mistakes, improving the essay's quality and flow of ideas. (Brian)

SA, a metacognitive self-appraisal, critically examines one's writing prowess, targeting deficiencies like structural, grammatical, or lexical lapses. This introspective process hones literary acuity, yielding sophisticated, criterion-compliant compositions. Self-regulation, error mitigation, and revisionist proclivities emerge, augmenting writing proficiency. Previous studies (e.g., Bourke & Mentis, 2013; Wunische, 2019; Takao & Maki, 2019) substantiate SA's efficacy in fostering self-awareness, pedagogical need recognition, goal establishment, self-accountability, profound learning, long-term retention, and compositional refinement. Consequently, SA emerges as an invaluable tool for bolstering writing skills, particularly concerning metacognition and self-regulation.

The improvement in the caliber of students' written works can be attributed to the inherent nature of the content, which tends to command the authors' attention during the composition process ( $M_{pre}=20.70$ ;  $M_{post}=24.79$ ;  $p=.002$ ). All participants concurred on the advantages of SA in identifying their pedagogical requirements, thus facilitating the enhancement of their essay writing. Two of their testimonials, as expressed by Daniel and Emma, are exemplified as follows:

I endeavoured to enhance the quality of my writing without being overly prolix or digressive. The rubric facilitated the amalgamation of relevant sections essential to my essay's coherence and lucidity. (Daniel)

Using the rubric, I identified areas to improve in my writing, such as developing more complex arguments and using sophisticated vocabulary. It also helped me generate ideas for essay topics and expand my thinking beyond the classroom. This led to more interesting and reflective essays. (Emma)

Per the students' admission, their essay was cumbersome and lacked clarity. Their aim was to refine their prose while maintaining structure and brevity. The evaluation rubric offered a framework to distill essential elements and excise superfluous content. Through SA, they identified opportunities to enhance writing by focusing on salient points. Adhering to the rubric and conducting scrupulous analysis, they streamlined their essay, making it succinct and impactful. Studies by Bourke (2018) and Takao and Maki (2019) support rubric-based SA's efficacy in identifying composition improvements and increasing motivation and participation. Pireh (2014) found rubric-based SA effective in bolstering writing conciseness and impact. The rubric also served as a grading tool with predetermined benchmarks, enabling students to pinpoint areas needing improvement and directing their educational efforts, such as creating intricate arguments and utilizing sophisticated vocabulary. Bourke (2018) concluded that SA participants were more inclined to identify and address composition improvements, resulting in better writing. The rubric provided a clear framework for essay topics, fostering innovative and insightful ideas and facilitating engaging, introspective, and original essays. Takao and Maki (2019) and Pireh (2014) found rubric-based SA to motivate and engage students, streamline writing, and inspire creativity. In summation,

rubric use enhanced writing quality and skills development. The rubric's content component, representing 30% of the total score, incentivized exceptional content performance, indicating the composition's content as a critical focus area, leading to a marked improvement in content quality.

Despite the Mechanics section accounting for only 5% of the overall score, students exhibited improvement subsequent to the intervention, a development that can be attributed to the benefits of SA ( $M_{pre}=4.24$ ;  $M_{post}=4.66$ ;  $p=.009$ ). Christopher mentioned:

SA improved my writing skills, especially mechanics. Before using it, I overlooked small mistakes like typos and punctuation errors, but SA made me more aware of these mistakes and their impact on the quality of my writing. (Christopher)

This excerpt implies that SA serves as a potent catalyst in honing writing acumen, specifically concerning mechanics. Christopher's pre-SA negligence of minor errors, such as typographical, grammatical, and punctuation inaccuracies, diminished upon SA incorporation, fostering self-awareness and enabling recognition of strengths and weaknesses. Research by Taylor (2014) and Wunische (2019) corroborates SA's efficacy in facilitating comprehension of pedagogical imperatives, goal-setting, self-accountability, and deep, long-term learning. Bourke's (2018) study further supports SA's potency in enhancing self-awareness, enabling identification and rectification of compositional deficiencies, thereby elevating writing proficiency.

Moreover, Brian affirmed that the act of SA bolstered their learning drive, albeit acknowledging the duality of this approach. Specifically, Brian reported:

I believe the SA approach worked well for me, but it may not be suitable for everyone. Some students may become emotionally distressed by unsatisfactory outcomes. However, for those who recognize areas for improvement and work towards enhancing their writing, SA can gradually improve their essay scores. (Brian)

SA proved advantageous for students, but may not yield identical benefits for others encountering demotivation due to harsh self-assessment. Students conceded that identifying weaknesses and diligently improving could incrementally enhance writing scores. This excerpt emphasizes self-awareness and self-regulation in SA. Taylor et al. (2012) found SA participants exhibited self-regulation, social comparison, and revision aptitudes, while Zimmerman (2002) and Susantini et al. (2021) stressed SA's potential to activate metacognitive self-regulation, bolstering learners' capacity to set goals, gauge progress, and ameliorate learning outcomes. Students observed that suboptimal performance would incite intensified effort for superior results, aligning with prior research underscoring feedback's role in stimulating motivation and engagement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019). High-level performance, conversely, motivated maintaining standards and confirming competence, highlighting motivation's role in SA and its dependence on performance level.

It is vital to note that SA may not be efficacious for all learners, as certain individuals may lack self-efficacy or become disheartened when subjecting themselves to critical evaluation. John remarked,

Two types of motivation are negative and positive. Negative motivation occurs when individuals perceive their performance as poor and strive to improve, while positive motivation occurs when individuals believe they perform well and strive to maintain their perceived level of competence. (John)

As a result, it is imperative that educators provide guidance and support during the SA process to ensure that its advantages are wholly realized (McCarthy et al., 1985; McIver & Murphy, 2023). Nevertheless, it is crucial to consider that individual traits and learning styles can impact how learners respond to feedback (Mortimore, 2008; Ratminingsih et al., 2018). Consequently, educators must take into account the diversity of their learners and tailor their feedback approaches accordingly.

### **CONCLUSION**

This study, conducted in the context of EFL in Vietnam, examined the impact of analytic rubrics for SA on students' writing skills. In the backdrop of challenges faced in teaching and assessing English writing skills, alternative assessment methods such as SA were considered, particularly in formative assessment. The present inquiry employed a rigorous experimental mixed-methods design to scrutinize the impact of instructing students to employ analytic rubrics for SA on their writing aptitude. The researchers utilized a standardized set of writing modules with 16 English-major students enrolled in a university located in Southwest Vietnam. The study incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods, encompassing pre-test and post-test writing assessments and semi-structured interviews. The study found strong evidence supporting the effectiveness of using analytic rubrics for self-assessment in enhancing students' writing performance. Particularly, the findings of this study clearly demonstrated the effectiveness of employing analytic rubrics for SA in enhancing students' writing performance. After the introduction of the analytic rubrics for SA, a marked improvement was seen in students' mean writing scores, reflecting their improved writing competency. Furthermore, the qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews revealed a positive student perception towards the use of analytic rubrics. The students found these rubrics helpful in providing a structured approach to self-evaluate their writing skills, allowing them to identify areas of strength and weakness more accurately. Therefore, these findings strongly indicate that the use of analytic rubrics for SA can serve as an effective tool in enhancing students' writing abilities in EFL context. The conclusions drawn from this research study underline the potential of analytic rubrics as valuable SA tools in the teaching and learning process, specifically in improving English writing skills among EFL students. Therefore, the findings are especially significant considering the crucial role English plays in global economic integration and development.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

The findings of this study have important implications for the teaching and learning of writing skills in higher education. The use of analytic rubrics for SA can be a valuable tool for students to improve their writing performance. Educators can incorporate the use of analytic rubrics in their instructional strategies to enhance students' writing skills. The results of this study also highlight the importance of providing students with

feedback on their writing, as it can positively impact their writing proficiency. Moreover, the positive perception of the students towards the use of analytic rubrics for SA suggests that this strategy can be easily implemented and accepted by students. Future research can build upon this study by investigating the long-term effects of using analytic rubrics for SA on students' writing proficiency and exploring its applicability in different educational contexts.

Another important implication is that educators can use analytic rubrics as a tool to enhance their students' writing performance. The study showed that instructing students to use analytic rubrics for SA can have a positive impact on their writing competence, which suggests that educators can incorporate this practice into their teaching to improve their students' writing skills.

Last but not least, the use of analytic rubrics can enhance students' critical thinking and self-reflection skills. By requiring students to analyze their own writing and evaluate it against a set of criteria, analytic rubrics can help students become more conscious of their strengths and weaknesses as writers. This process can lead to a more effective learning experience and ultimately improve their overall writing abilities.

### **LIMITATIONS**

Whilst the investigation employed a stringent experimental mixed-methods design that facilitated the manipulation of a solitary variable whilst controlling for confounding factors, there exist certain restrictions that warrant consideration. To begin with, the study had a diminutive sample size of 16 English-major students from a solitary university in Southwest Vietnam, which may impede the generalization of the findings to other contexts. Furthermore, the study was conducted over a comparatively brief period of 17 weeks, which may not be sufficient to discern the long-term effects of the intervention on learners' writing performance.

Moreover, the utilization of writing tests as the primary means of acquiring data may not provide a comprehensive depiction of learners' writing performance, given that writing is a multifaceted process that involves multiple skills. Additionally, the study only focused on the influence of instructing students to use analytic rubrics for SA on their writing performance, without considering other potential factors that may impact writing performance, such as students' motivation or prior writing experience.

Finally, the study's dependence on self-reported data from semi-structured interviews may also be prone to social desirability bias, as participants may feel obligated to furnish responses that they perceive as favorable or anticipated by the researchers. Despite these limitations, the study's findings offer valuable insights into the potential benefits of instructing students to use analytic rubrics for SA in augmenting their writing performance.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

By addressing the aforementioned limitations, upcoming studies could advance the present research and provide a more nuanced comprehension of the effects of instructing students to use analytic rubrics for SA on their writing performance. Hence, the following are recommended for further studies. Firstly, future research could

increase the sample size to boost the generalizability of the findings, through recruiting participants from multiple universities and diverse backgrounds to augment the external validity of the study. Secondly, future investigations could delve into the long-term outcomes of training students to use analytical rubrics for SA on their writing performance. A protracted study duration could offer a more thorough and comprehensive understanding of the intervention's impact. Thirdly, future research could employ a multifaceted assessment approach, such as using observational measures or task-based evaluations, to obtain a more comprehensive illustration of learners' writing performance. Such an approach could offer a more holistic understanding of the benefits of using analytical rubrics for SA. Fourthly, future studies could scrutinize the effects of other potential factors, such as motivation or prior writing experience, on learners' writing performance, thereby enhancing our knowledge of the intricate nature of writing. Finally, future studies could utilize various data collection methods, such as peer reviews or expert evaluations, to verify self-reported data. This approach could decrease the possibility of social desirability bias and heighten the dependability of the findings.

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