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Challenging Assumptions
Looking In, Looking Out

Better Writing with a Writing Rubric

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The author of this article believes that writing skills should be emphasized equally with other communication skills, and that students should recognize writing as an important communication tool. This paper explores how to incorporate a simple writing assignment into a communication class, and how students can effectively use a writing rubric to guide their work. This paper also shows how a writing rubric helps teachers to objectively evaluate student writing. This article presents the results of surveys conducted to determine students' attitudes toward writing before and after the introduction of a writing rubric, and a sample of the writing rubric used in class. This simple academic rubric can be tailored to the needs of any English course.

多くの学生は、自分の読解能力、文書作成能力のほうが、会話能力(聞く力、話す力)よりも優れていると信じている。筆者は、教育の場で、文書作成能力も、会話能力と同じく重点を置くべきだと考えている。そして、学生には、書くことも、コミュニケーションを取る上でとても重要な道具である、ということも認識してもらいたいと思っている。この論文では、コミュニケーションの授業に、どのようにして、学生にごく簡単な文章を書かせる練習を取り入れられるかを考えた。そして、学生が、ライティングチェックリストを使うことによって、いかに効率良く文章を書くことができるようになるか、を考察した。また、ライティングチェックリストは、教師が客観的に学生の文章を評価する手助けにもなる。本論では、ライティングチェックリストとそれを使用する前後に行ったアンケートを調査した。その結果、学生の文書作成に対する態度、及び、ライティングチェックリストに対する態度も調べ、それらの概要と使い方を報告する。

Since the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science & Technology-JAPAN (MEXT) set new objectives for foreign language instruction in 2002, more emphasis has been placed on developing students' communicative competence, in particular, speaking and listening comprehension skills (Matsubara, 2001). MEXT has assumed that focusing on these skills will help students communicate successfully in the world arena. As a result, many educators and students shifted their focus onto listening and speaking.

However, after students graduate from college and start working in an environment where English is used, they often realize that they cannot avoid communicating with others through writing. E-mails are used regularly for communication between people in different countries, contracts are often made in

English, and Japanese companies are sometimes bought and run by foreign companies. Problems may arise due to misunderstandings. It soon becomes obvious that writing is an essential communication tool.

The subjects of this study were college students who majored in engineering (see Table 1 and the Results section of this paper for more background information), and took compulsory English classes taught by the author twice a week. They had gone through the education system mentioned above, and one of their common beliefs was that their reading and writing skills were better than their speaking and listening skills. Many Japanese students claim that this is due to the grammar-translation lessons they received in middle school. Even though they cannot understand spoken English well, nor speak English well, they believe that if they are given an article they can read it, and if given enough time, they can write well.

When given a writing assignment, some Japanese students of English try to use machine translation engines to convert something they have written in Japanese into English. They believe that these machine translations are capable of creating quality English prose.

Having searched for ways to deal with these assumptions, the author asked the following questions:

- 1 Can some simple writing assignments be incorporated into a regular communication class?
- 1 Can a Writing Rubric (see Figure 3) be effectively used for students to guide and objectively evaluate their work?

In order to answer these questions, three tools were introduced to students.

1. A Progress Record Sheet (Hisatsune & Baird, 2004) was used to incorporate writing assignments into an English communication class.
2. A Writing Rubric was given to students. Brookhart (1999, cited in Moskal, 2000) states, “Scoring rubrics are descriptive scoring schemes that are developed by teachers or other evaluators to guide the analysis of the products or processes of students’ efforts” and “Developing a predefined scheme for the evaluation process reduced the subjectivity involved in evaluating an essay” (p.2).
3. Two Questionnaires were administered to study students’ attitudes toward writing and the Writing Rubric.

These three tools are described in greater detail below.

Progress Record Sheet

A Progress Record Sheet (Hisatsune & Baird, 2004) was given to students at the beginning of the semester (see Figure 1). The purpose of the sheet was to clearly indicate to students that a number of supplementary activity types were incorporated in their communication class, and that these included writing assignments.

The table detailing daily activities at the top of the page showed scores relevant to the participation component of the final grade, such as speaking in class, doing vocabulary

Progress Record Sheet Name _____ Class number _____

Class participation 20%

- Complete Homework (HW) = 1 point Vocabulary Sheet (VS) = 1 point
- Participation Points (P) = 1 point CD Rom (CD) Points=3 points
- Bonus Points=10 points=Bring your writing assignment (Portfolio)

INTRO	P	HW	P	HW	P
DAY 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 7	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 13	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	HW VS P		HW VS CDR		HW VS P
DAY 2	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 8	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 14	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	HW P BP		P		HW P
DAY 3	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 9	<input type="checkbox"/> TEST 1	DAY 15	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	HW VS CDR		HW VS P		HW VS P BP
DAY 4	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY10	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 16	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	HW P		HW P BP		HW CDR
DAY 5	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 11	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 17	<input type="checkbox"/> x2 <input type="checkbox"/>
	HW VS P		HW VS CDR		
DAY 6	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 12	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	DAY 18	TEST 2

Attitude Total ___/80 --20%

Daily Quizzes 40%

QUIZ 1 ___/10	QUIZ 5 ___/10	QUIZ 9 ___/10	QUIZ 13 ___/10
QUIZ 2 ___/10	QUIZ 6 ___/10	QUIZ 10 ___/10	QUIZ 14 ___/10
QUIZ 3 ___/10	QUIZ 7 ___/10	QUIZ 11 ___/10	QUIZ 15 ___/10
QUIZ 4 ___/10	QUIZ 8 ___/10	QUIZ 12 ___/10	

Quiz Total ___/150 --40%

TESTS 40%

TEST 1 _____ + TEST 2 _____ = _____ Test Total ___/40%

Grand Total _____/100%

Figure 1: Progress Record Sheet

sheets, homework, CD-ROM exercises, and completing writing assignments. The writing assignments were called BP (Bonus Point writing) on the sheet.

Writing Rubric

A writing rubric was created with criteria suggested by Moskal (2000), and a sample of a writing rubric (Calhoun & Haley, 2003). The Writing Rubric used in this study was printed on an A4 sheet of paper, and had 16 questions in 4 categories. The categories were:

1. Organization and content
2. Style
3. Mechanics
4. Presentation of the paper

On the right hand side of the sheet, students self-evaluated their work on a scale of 1-5, 1 being *Inadequate* and 5 meaning *Meets expectations*. Students were told to circle 5 if they could confidently answer *yes* to the relevant question on the Writing Rubric, and they could keep changing their papers until they were satisfied with their own evaluations. The first category (*Organization and content*) had the largest category weight. The second category, *Style* had questions that students could only answer for themselves.

The Writing Rubric was self-explanatory and easy to follow. It was used for students to both plan their writing and as a self-evaluation tool once they had completed their work. It reduced the chance of forgetting to write necessary information such as titles and student numbers, and it reminded students to, for example, check their spelling

and pay attention to punctuation. By being asked rhetorical questions in the Writing Rubric, students were made to think about important aspects of writing an English paper. The students in this study were given specific instructions regarding what to write for each Bonus Point activity. The assignment for the excerpts shown in this paper was to write a fairy tale based on a story they already knew, using grammar and vocabulary that they learned in class. It was then typed onto A4 paper. The minimum word count for a story was 150 words and the maximum was 2000 words. The theme and content of the Writing Rubric could be changed to suit the needs of any English class.

The Writing Rubric had a slip attached called ‘Notes on Writing Rubric’. The notes explained how to use the Writing Rubric, and warned students not to use any on-line translation services.

Notes on Writing Rubric

Look at the Writing Checklist and plan your writing. After you finish writing, check if your story is written properly. Once completed, evaluate your writing with the Writing Checklist and add up the numbers. If you wish, re-write your story. Then clip the papers together, the Writing Checklist on top and your paper on the second page.

If you use an on-line translation service, you will automatically receive zero points.

Figure 2: Notes on Writing Rubric

Student and teacher evaluations

On the rubric in Figure 3, the students self-evaluate their work and circle numbers. If the teacher disagrees, the teacher crosses out the number and circles another number. The teacher changes the student’s evaluation only if she disagrees with it. Students receive their points out of the maximum available 100 points, which is later converted into x/10 for their Bonus Point writing points.

Excerpts from student work

Student A -- This student evaluated his own writing modestly, shown in the rubric in Figure 3. The words added by the author are in parentheses. The mistakes are crossed out with corrections in italics.

Unit 13 Create your own original fairy tale based on a story you know.	
Class _____ Name _____	
Writing Checklist	
(1=Inadequate, 2=Needs Improvement, 3=Fair, 4=Adequate, 5=Meets expectations)	
1. Organization & Content	
Does your paper have a title?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
The story is easy to follow.	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Major points are stated clearly and are well supported.	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
My story has a flow.	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Subtotal	14 20 x 2 = 28 40
2. Style	
Does your paper express your opinion?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Was your choice of words good (Did you use the dictionary)?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Did you use new words you learned in class?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Did you begin your sentences with different words?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Is the structure of your paper clear and easy to follow?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Subtotal	18 20
3. Mechanics	
Did you use the new grammar learned in class?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Did you use the grammar learned in previous classes?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Is the spelling correct?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Is the punctuation correct (period, comma, question mark, etc)?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Subtotal	20 18
4. Presentation	
Does your paper have your name and the student number?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Is your paper typed?	(1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Is your paper creative?	(3 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5)
Subtotal	11 13
Total	77 91 / 100
Be careful! If you use any on-line translation service, you will receive 0 points!	
Note: The students self-evaluate their work and circle numbers. If the teacher disagrees, the teacher crosses out the number and circles another number.	

Figure 3: Writing Rubric

The rice fairy

There are one hundred fairies in one (bowl) of rice. When you eat some rice, one hundred fairies come to you. When there are one hundred fairies with you, you get one hundred percent happiness. But when you ~~left rice of meal~~ *leave a grain of rice* even once, a ~~fairy~~ *one of the fairies* doesn't come to you next time. So there are only ninety nine fairies next time. You repeat this (process and) ~~to decrease~~ the number of ~~fairy~~ *fairies decreases*. ~~It's to decrease~~ *It also decreases* happiness. And it never increases again. Therefore you ~~don't~~ *shouldn't* leave rice. But everyone has left ~~rice of meal~~ *a grain of rice* once. So ~~there is never~~ *people nobody* has one hundred percent happiness. ~~The life~~ *Life* is also similar. When you are ~~leaving rice of meal~~ *leave a grain of rice* your parents are angry ~~to~~ *with* you. Because they hope (you) don't decrease your happiness. They were also taught ~~it~~ *the same thing* by their parents. In the past they had a lot of happiness and they married. They think (they) want to give you this happiness. Mostly parent(s) and child(ren) are repeating this, and such parent(s) and child(ren) have a lot of happiness and lives happily. The number of ~~the rice~~ *fairies is the number of your happiness*. How many ~~rice of~~ *fairies* are ~~they~~ *there in* your surroundings?

Student B -- This is an example of a sentence that was created using on-line translation software. Each sentence is exceptionally long, with relative clauses and passive voice used excessively. These sentences appear to be smooth but they are incomprehensible.

Once upon a time a door to tie the world of Satan that God world and a devil group lived for where God group lived in the human world where a human being lived suddenly to appeared, and magic was brought in the human world.

Student B was encouraged to write his story again. He would otherwise have received no points. Here is the revised work (The words added by the author are in parentheses. The mistakes are crossed out with corrections in italics.):

THE GATE OF DIFFER(ENT) WORLD(S)

Once upon a time, a big door appeared suddenly in the sky. The door ~~link~~ *linked* the world of Satan and the heavens, and magic was brought into the human world.

Student C -- This student did not use an on-line translation service, but it was easy to see this story was not his own. The sentences are too colloquial and have no mistakes. The underlined sentences stand out, since non-native speakers, especially the students in this study, could not have produced these kinds of expressions. Although this story was perfect, student C received no points and he did not protest.

Once upon a time, there was a hungry “Harry”, a fat cat. He looked for food in the forest. But he did not find anything. He walked around and saw a big tree. He looked up and found a bird’s nest on the top. “I can eat some birds!!” he said. He carefully climbed up the tree. In the nest, he did not find any birds but he found 5 eggs. “GOOD!!!” He smiled. Just then, he thought “Hummm... Wait a minute... These 5 eggs are not enough for me... I have a good idea...” He did not eat the eggs and climbed down the tree.

After 2 weeks, Harry came back to the forest. He climbed up the same tree and found 5 baby birds in the nest. “Hehehe hello, baby. Be my dinner!!!!” He slowly walked to the nest. But he stopped. “Let’s see... I can wait another 2 weeks then....” He smiled and climbed down the tree. Harry waited another 2 weeks and then came back. “I can eat a big dinner today!!!! Yahoo!!!!” He ran up the big tall tree. “Whaaaaat happened!!!!??” He saw no birds in the nest. Harry looked up crying and found 5 little birds in the sky.

“.....NOOOoooooooo!!!!”

Student D -- There were some students who seemed to use an on-line translation service for a part of their writing. The following is one of the difficult cases to judge whether the student used the translation service or not, and if so, whether they should receive no points for all of the writing including some of the sentences that the student actually produced.

~apple man~

Long, long ago in a certain place there was an apple man born from an apple.

The apple man dislike an apple. Because there was a strawberries world.

The apple man was troubled why only oneself was an apple though all were strawberries.

On such one day, the world of the strawberry collapsed by a monster.

The apple man decided to fight a monster.

The apple man killed a monster and became the star of the strawberry world.

The apple man had a friend recognize it from strawberries. And didn’t dislike oneself.

A happy ending.

The questionnaires

A pre-writing questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the course, and a post-writing questionnaire was administered at the end of the course. The purpose of the questionnaires was to study students’ attitudes toward writing and the Writing Rubric.

A survey (group-administered questionnaire) was chosen as the tool for gathering information. Brown (2001) suggests that the best way to determine opinions regarding any aspect of a language program is to ask students directly in an interview or through a questionnaire. The steps to create a questionnaire suggested by Brown (2001) were used.

1. Brainstorming to decide question items to be given
2. Drafting a preliminary version
3. Getting feedback on the questionnaire
4. Incorporating the feedback into a final version of the questionnaire

A pilot study was conducted in the fall of 2005. Numerous changes were incorporated between the fall of 2005 and the spring of 2007 in an attempt to make the wording of the questions clear and the responses accurately reflect the opinions of the participants (Nunan, 1992). Likert-scale questions were used, as this method is commonly used to investigate how respondents feel about a series of statements (Brown, 2001). Convenience sampling (Dórnyci, 2003) procedures were adopted. The students were of similar age, gender, ethnicity, academic ability, educational background, social class, and socioeconomic status and were all taught by the author. The questionnaires were administered in both English and Japanese.

Pre-writing questionnaire

A revised version of the Writing Apprehension Survey (Cornwell & McKay, 1999) was used as a pre-writing questionnaire from the spring of 2005 (Figure 4). It had 20 questions regarding student demographics, writing experiences, and general feelings toward writing. The pre-writing questionnaire and the Writing Rubric were given before students received their first writing assignment.

Writing Rubric Questionnaire (Before writing)

Answer the following questions.

Student Background

1. Age a.18 b.19 c.20 d.21 e.22 f. Over 23
2. Sex a. Male b. Female
3. Major a. Engineering b. Architecture c. Informatics and Human Communication d. Other
4. Academic year a. 1 b. 2 c.3 d.4
5. Have you ever been to an English speaking country? a. Yes b. No
6. My reading and writing abilities are better than my speaking and listening abilities.
 - a. Yes b. No
7. How long did you study English in high school?
 - a.1 year b. 2 years c.3 years
8. In high school what stage of composition did you write in English?
 - a. Sentences b. Paragraphs c. Essays
9. Do you have your own writing methods? a. Yes b. No
10. It would be helpful if I had a writing checklist when I write in English.
 - a. Yes b. No

In order to understand how you feel about writing, please answer the following questions on a scale of a to e.

- a. Strongly agree b. Agree c. Uncertain d. Disagree e. Strongly disagree
11. I avoid writing in English.
12. I am afraid of writing essays in English when I know they will be evaluated.
13. Handing in an English composition makes me feel good.
14. My mind seems to go blank when I start to work on a composition in English.
15. I like to write my ideas down in English.
16. I feel confident in my ability to clearly express my ideas in English in writing.
17. I like to have my friends read what I have written in English.
18. Writing in English is a lot of fun.
19. Discussing my English writing with others is an enjoyable experience.
20. It's easy for me to write good compositions in English.

Figure 4: Pre-writing Questionnaire

Writing Rubric Questionnaire (Post writing)

1. My writing is most successful when I have a writing checklist.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Uncertain
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
2. A writing checklist is useful to organize my ideas before I write.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Uncertain
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
3. A Writing Rubric is useful in keeping my thoughts organized.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Uncertain
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly Disagree
4. I was able to turn in the writing assignment on time.
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
5. How much time did you spend to complete the writing assignment?
 - a. 30 minutes
 - b. 1 hour
 - c. 1.5 hours
 - d. 2 hours
 - e. Over 2.5 hours
6. Did you use a dictionary?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
7. Did you use an on-line translation system such as ‘excite’?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
8. Did you enjoy writing with a writing checklist?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Figure 5: Post-writing Questionnaire**Post-writing questionnaire**

A revised version of the Writing Observation Form (Calhoun & Haley, 2003) was used as a post-writing questionnaire from the spring of 2005 (Figure 5). It required students to reflect on their attitudes toward the effectiveness of the Writing Rubric. There were 8 questions. The post-writing questionnaire was administered immediately following completion of their final writing assignment. As papers

and the Writing Rubrics were returned to students, micro-counselling about the teacher’s feedback on the Writing Rubric was optional.

Questionnaire Results

The participants of this study were 211 Japanese students majoring in engineering at a university in north-western Japan. The pre-writing questionnaire, completed in a 60-minute class, was distributed before students were given their first writing assignment. Each group had from 17 to 20 students. The data was collected from the spring of 2005 to the fall of 2007.

The answers to questions 1 to 10 are shown in Table 1, and provide background information on the subjects of the study.

The students ranged in age between 18 to 23 years old, and 93% were male. Eighty-one percent had never been abroad.

Sixty-three percent of the students believed that their reading and writing abilities were better than their speaking and listening abilities, although 63% had experience of writing only one sentence at a time, approximately 91% of the students claimed not to have their own writing methods, and 96% of the students stated that they would benefit from a writing checklist.

The answers to questions 11 to 20 are shown in Figure 6, and relate to students’ writing experiences as well as their attitudes toward writing. Answers to these questions were scored on a scale of “a” to “e,” where “a” corresponded to “Strongly agree” and “e” to “Strongly disagree.” a scale of “a” to “e,” where “a” corresponded to “Strongly agree” and “e” to “Strongly disagree.”

Table 1: Pre-writing Questionnaire Questions 1 to 10 Results

Q1	Age	18 yrs old 1%	19 yrs old 61%	20 yrs old 32%	21 yrs old 5%	22 yrs old 1%	23 yrs old 0%
Q2	Sex	Male 91%	Female 7%				
Q3	Major	Engineering 55%		Architecture 26%		Informatics 19%	
Q4	Academic year	1st year 3%		2nd year 91%	3rd year 5%	4th year 0%	
Q5	Been to English speaking country				Yes 19%	No 81%	
Q6	Reading & writing better than speaking and listening					Yes 63%	No 37%
Q7	Years of English in High School				1 year 1%	2 years 8%	3 years 91%
Q8	Writing Experience			Sentences 63%	Paragraphs 31%	Essays 6%	
Q9	Have own writing methods			Yes 9%	No 91%		
Q10	Writing checklist would be helpful				Yes 96%	No 4%	

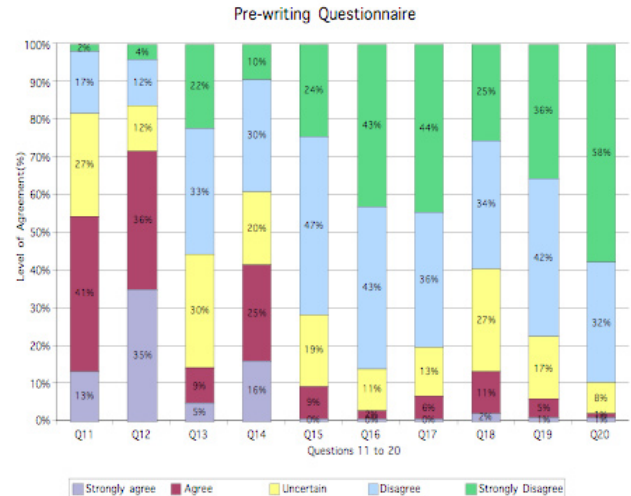


Figure 6: Pre-writing Questionnaire Results, Questions 11 to 20

Question 11: 114 (54%) of the students strongly agreed or agreed that they avoided writing in English.

Question 12: 150 (71%) admitted that they were afraid of writing essays when evaluated.

Question 13: 30 (14%) said handing in an English composition made them feel good.

Question 14: 87 (41%) stated they went blank when they wrote an English composition.

Question 15: 150 (71%) of the students disliked writing their ideas down in English.

Question 16: Only 4 (2%) felt confident in expressing their ideas in English.

Question 17: 13 (6%) liked to have their friends read their writing.

Question 18: 27 (13%) thought writing in English was fun.

Question 19: 13 (6%) enjoyed discussing their English writing with others.

Question 20: Only about 4 (2%) believed it was easy to write good compositions in English.

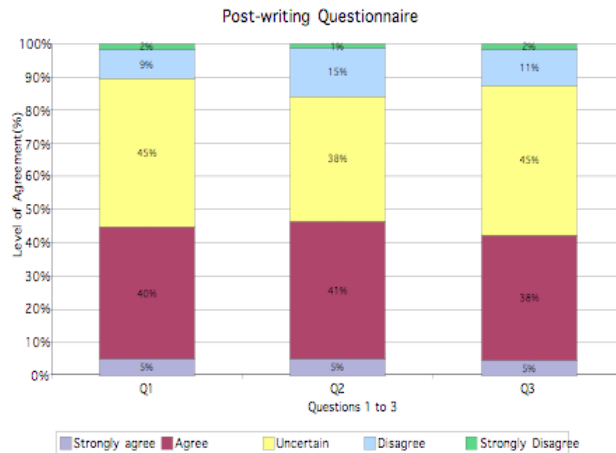


Figure 7: Post-writing Questionnaire, Questions 1 to 3

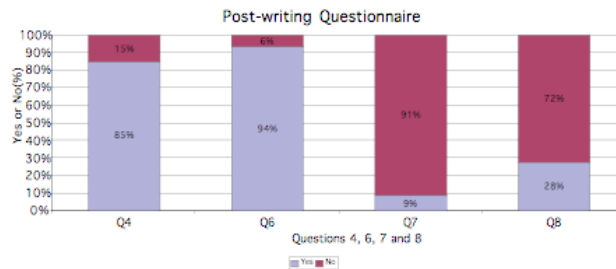


Figure 8: Post-writing Questionnaire, Questions 4, 6, 7 and 8

Figures 7 and 8 show student feelings about the Writing Rubric and some information about how they completed their writing assignments, from the post-writing questionnaire.

Question 1: 95 (45%) of the students said they felt their writing was more successful because of the writing checklist.

Question 2: 97 (46%) stated that having the writing checklist before they started writing was useful.

Question 3: 91 (43%) agreed that the writing checklist was useful in keeping their thoughts organized.

Question 4: 179 (85%) succeeded in submitting the writing assignments on time.

Question 5: 135 (64%) spent 1.5 to 2 hours to complete each writing assignment.

Question 6: 198 (94%) used a dictionary for the writing assignments.

Question 7: Only about 19 (9 %) of the students admitted that they used on-line translation software.

Question 8: 59 (28%) of the students said they enjoyed writing with a writing checklist.

Limitations

There were some difficulties in having the students create an appropriate mind-set before the Writing Rubric could be introduced. There was no way of knowing if the students answered the questionnaires honestly, for example, whether they used on-line translation software or not, or how much time they had spent writing an English essay. Although students were constantly warned that the sentences translated

by on-line translation systems were unreliable, they still used them. Although it was usually easy to tell if students had used a translation service, sometimes it was not. As a result, points were rewarded to students who may not have deserved any credit. This may have resulted in unfairness to students who really tried their best but failed to produce proper English sentences. Sometimes students confronted the teacher when they received no points for using on-line translation software.

Another problem was that some students liked to use the choice *uncertain* for any and every question that appeared on the questionnaire. For further research, eliminating the neutral choice *uncertain* is preferable.

Discussion and Conclusions

The data collected in this study shows that the Writing Rubric and the pre- and post-writing questionnaires seem to have served as sufficient tools to guide student writing and to help them reflect on their efforts as well as performance. It also gave students the chance to objectively evaluate their writing.

The Progress Record Sheet was introduced to students on the first day of class so that they would know the range of tasks and activities they were expected to complete in their communication course, including some writing. It also showed how writing practice can be incorporated into a regular communication class.

The questionnaires discovered students' general fear toward writing and the necessity for an aid such as the Writing Rubric. The questionnaire results indicated that

only 9% of the students used on-line translation software. However, it appears that a much larger percentage of students used it, perhaps because the students lacked the ability to judge the accuracy of the English translated by these services.

According to the pre-writing questionnaire, the majority of students were afraid of writing essays, disliked writing their ideas down in English, and were not confident in expressing their ideas in English. However, the Post-writing questionnaire revealed that 45% of the students felt that their writing became more successful because of the writing checklist. Another 45% reported that they were uncertain, possibly because they had not experienced writing without the Writing Rubric. Therefore, the introduction of the Writing Rubric can be considered to have been successful among students who had almost no confidence in writing an English essay at the beginning of the semester.

Reflecting on one's own efforts is an essential part of language learning. However, it does not always occur spontaneously. It is vital for teachers to provide students the chance to evaluate their performance as well as to give them opportunities to openly discuss their performance with their teachers.

The writing rubric introduced in this study can facilitate students by providing the steps necessary to write a simple English essay. It can help students gain some knowledge about how to write an English essay and to be more confident in writing in English. Knowing some simple measures to improve their writing, hopefully means that students walk out of the class feeling better equipped for future writing opportunities.

Ayako Hisatsune is an Assistant Professor at Kanazawa Institute of Technology, Ishikawa, Japan. Her research interests include learner motivation and autonomy, student-centered learning and evaluation, and learning strategies.

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