PREPARING WRITING TEACHERS TO USE ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

Tanita Saenkhum*

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

This article presents a qualitative study that was derived from a course on teaching L2 writing at a U.S. institution and analysis of participants' experience designing and utilizing assessment rubrics. Primarily relying on narrative accounts, it aimed to demonstrate how an explicit approach to teaching issues in assessment, particularly the use of rubrics to assess student writing, can be incorporated into pedagogy courses on teaching writing. Data sources included participants' rubrics developed for various L2 writing contexts, including first-year composition, EFL reading-writing courses, and U.S. schools teaching Grades K–4. Participants' written reflections on rubric design and interviews about their rubric implementations were also examined. Results showed that explicit teaching about the use of rubrics as assessment tools could prepare writing teachers to use rubrics more effectively. The article concludes with recommendations for improving and reevaluating how the use of rubrics as writing assessment tools can be integrated into teacher education and teacher training programs so that teachers are better prepared in this area of instruction.

Keywords: assessment rubrics, assessment tools, L2 writing assessments, L2 writing teacher preparation, teacher training

The use of rubrics for assessing student writing has become a common practice in composition classrooms[1] (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010; Sundeen, 2014). As studies have shown, "Rubrics enhance and enrich assessment of student work" (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010, p. 18) and make teachers' assessment more reliable (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Silvestri & Oescher, 2006). In fact, it is essential that teachers know how to create rubrics and use them effectively. This is crucial because "Bad assessment practices can have a potent effect on students. The consequences of uninformed assessment can be losses for students in time, money, motivation, and confidence" (Crusan et al., 2016, p. 43). Yet, as Dempsey et al. (2009) contend, "Teachers often do not receive adequate training in writing assessment [. . .]" (p. 38). One reason, as pointed out by writing assessment specialists such as Weigle (2007), is because the topic of assessment is not often included in teacher education or teacher training programs, or, if a course on teaching writing *is* offered, "only a limited amount of time" is devoted to assessment (p. 194). With this in mind, I conducted a qualitative study that was derived from a course on teaching L2 writing at a U.S. institution and analysis of students' experience developing and utilizing assessment rubrics. Primarily relying on narrative accounts, this study aimed to demonstrate how an explicit approach to teaching issues in assessment, particularly using rubrics as assessment tools, can be incorporated into pedagogy courses on teaching writing.

Specifically, I present in this article the study's student participants—current and prospective teachers—whom I trained to design rubrics to assess writing and discuss the individual rubrics they developed for various L2 writing contexts, including first-year composition, EFL reading-writing courses in

_____

*Corresponding author: tsaenkhum@utk.edu

high schools, and U.S. schools teaching Grades K–4 contexts. Participants' written reflections on rubric design and interviews about their rubric implementation are also examined to delineate some challenges when putting rubrics into practice. To this end, the study argues for improving and reevaluating how the use of writing assessment tools, particularly rubrics, can be integrated into teacher education and teacher training programs so that teachers are better prepared to use them effectively with their students.

Literature Review

Writing teachers recognize the essential purpose of writing assessment, understanding that it plays a significant role in students' success (Sundeen, 2014), given the fact that good writing assessment tools can improve students' writing performance. As Yancey (1999) puts it, "Writing assessment has always been at the center of work in writing" (p. 483). Yet, the reality is that while "most students hate to be graded, *most teachers hate to give grades*. Everyone hates to talk about grades" (White, 2007, p. 73; emphasis mine). It is no surprise that many writing teachers feel unprepared to evaluate student writing and to discuss assessment with their students. Specifically, Crusan (2010) comments that "many teachers are unprepared to systematically establish and use criteria to assess writing" (p. 2). This might be because, as Weigle (2007) notes:

> [. . .] teachers often feel that assessment is a necessary evil . . . As a result, teachers sometimes avoid learning about assessment or, worse, delay thinking about how they will assess their students until they are forced to do so, a situation which unfortunately decreases the chances that assessments will be fair and valid. (p. 194)

Teachers, however, cannot avoid classroom assessment; it is an important part of writing instruction. A concern relating to classroom assessment is how best to communicate teachers' expectations of student writing to students. Research (Andrade et al., 2008) has shown that rubrics have been successfully used as a means to communicate specific writing expectations and evaluation requirements to students. As Sundeen (2014) argued in his study, "Effective writing instruction and assessment are essential elements for student success" (p. 75). This is evident from a result Sundeen reported in the same study, which showed that high school students' writing quality improved when students were provided "instructional rubrics," referring to "teaching students the rubric criteria or by providing them a copy of the rubric" (p. 83).

As rubrics are making grading more efficient and faster, teachers have adopted this evaluation means in their composition classrooms (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010; Sundeen, 2014); in particular, rubrics save teachers' time, "as they anticipate the most important criticisms and praise of student work, streamlining the response process" (Wilson, 2006, p. 28). Rubrics also make assessment of student writing more reliable (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007; Silvestri & Oescher, 2006). In addition, as Crusan (2010) observes, "Rubrics allow for more objective and consistent evaluation and provide feedback to teachers regarding instructional effectiveness" (p. 44). Thus, it is not too exaggerated to conclude that rubrics do make a difference when compared to other assessment means, such as cloze tests and multiple choice.

Still, there continues to be opposition to the use of rubrics to assess student writing. Broad's work (Broad, 2000, 2003), for example, gives some weaknesses of writing rubrics. His main objection is that "A rubric supports the mistaken notion that evaluation consists in identifying characteristics to texts and assigning them relative values" (Broad, 2000, p. 247). It is worth noting that Broad's opposition to rubric use is situated in the context of a portfolio program/assessment. Earlier work by Elbow (1993) and Haswell (1998) also questions rubric use: Elbow points out that "Rubrics fail to fit many papers" (p. 192), while Haswell considers that "It is nearly impossible to find anchor essays that are true to the scale of quality pictured by the rubric" (p. 242).

Nevertheless, amid oppositions to and disagreements over the use of rubrics for writing evaluation, they have been widely used in both large- and small-scale assessment. This is mainly because, as Broad (2000) acknowledges, "The history of large-scale writing assessment makes it clear that rubrics help bring about agreeable and quick evaluation of students' writing" (p. 246). In small-scale assessment such as writing classrooms, despite that rubrics have been widely adopted as assessment tools, we do not always know how writing teachers are trained to use rubrics to assess student writing, as well as their knowledge of writing assessment itself, particularly the use of rubrics to assess writing. As Crusan (2010) points out, teachers "should be comfortable with the tools of writing assessment (rubrics, scoring guides, criteria)— among them holistic, analytic, primary trait, and multiple trait—and be able to create their own rubrics and to clearly articulate criteria for assignments" (p. 3). While teachers are able to design rubrics, not all of them are confident about the rubrics they produce. The survey by Crusan et al. (2016) revealed that 80% of respondents reported they were "unsure about how to design scoring rubrics" (p. 48), albeit they had expressed that they had knowledge about rubric use. Furthermore, as Weigle (2007) argues, teachers are not adequately trained in writing assessment, mainly because, for instance, "many graduate programs in TESOL and rhetoric/composition do not require students to take a course in assessment or evaluation, and courses on teaching writing often devote only a limited amount of time to the discussion of assessment" (p. 194). To remediate this lack of focus on the use of writing assessment tools and adequate teacher preparation in using rubrics to assess writing, I demonstrate how a course with an explicit approach to teaching writing assessment, particularly the use of rubrics, can prepare writing teachers to use rubrics as assessment tools more effectively. Below I discuss my course design.

Course Design

The course on teaching L2 writing has been offered by the English Department at this institution for more than a decade. I first taught it in Spring 2014, given my specialization in L2 writing and appointment as director of ESL. It is designed to prepare both preservice and inservice teachers to work with L2 students in different writing contexts and settings. The course covers various instructional and practical strategies, including course and assignment designs, teacher and peer response, classroom assessment, and error treatment. My course was modeled after that of Matsuda (2008); I added a teaching philosophy assignment and maintained Matsuda's weekly assignments: teaching context description, genre analysis, syllabus analysis and design, writing prompt, assessment rubric, peer response task, position statement on error correction, class observation report, and annotated bibliography. The assignments were sequenced, aiming to illustrate that assessment is a part of other tasks writing teachers have to take into consideration. While Matsuda's course required a final research project, mine required students to put together a teaching portfolio in which they included all weekly assignments and wrote a reflection on developing a teaching portfolio.

I used Ferris and Hedgcock's (2014) *Teaching L2 Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice* as the main textbook.[2] The class met twice a week over the course of 16 weeks; each class was held for 75 minutes. While Mondays were devoted to theory-based discussions, Wednesdays were set up as workshops in which students brought their weekly assignments to class for peer review and teacher feedback. The course enrolled 10 students, consisting of five doctoral students with different areas: medieval literature (two), creative writing (one), and ESL education (two); four master's degree-seeking students with two different areas: rhetoric, writing, and linguistics (RWL) (one) and ESL education (three); and one advanced undergraduate student specializing in teaching ESL/EFL. Five students with an ESL education were from the Department of Theory and Practice in Teacher Education, the other five students were from the Department of English.

Before class, students read Ferris and Hedgcock's (2014) Chapter 6, "Classroom Assessment of L2 Writing." In class, we covered assessment in general, including larger scale assessment, followed by a

focused discussion of writing assessment and the use of assessment tools[3]—particularly rubrics—in the classroom context. Topics included positive and negative washback, reliability and validity in L2 writing assessment, and approaches to scoring L2 writing. We then closely considered three main types of scoring rubrics given in our textbook—holistic, analytic, and primary and multiple trait—and the advantages and disadvantages of each. We also evaluated writing samples written by first-year L2 students, using the three scoring rubrics. This activity allowed them to understand how rubrics worked and to foresee some limitations of rubrics when using them in their own classrooms. On a workshop day, the students brought their designed rubrics to class—rubrics created based on writing prompts they previously designed. They also briefly reflected on purposes of the rubric, the genre for which the rubric was designed, contexts in which the rubric was to be used, and why they chose to include certain categories and not others in the rubric. The students exchanged their rubrics, getting feedback from both me and their peers.

Study Design

This study was designed to address the following inquiries: teachers' experience designing rubrics, challenges related to rubric implementations, and teacher preparation for the use of rubrics. Primary data for the study came from the graduate-level course on teaching L2 writing described above. In conducting the study, I collected three types of data: assessment rubrics designed by the participants; their written reflections on developing a teaching portfolio, focusing on rubric design; and interviews about their experience developing and using rubrics. Below, I introduce the participants, describe data sources and data analysis, present the reflections from their statements, and present and discuss results.

Recruiting Participants

To recruit participants to take part in the study,[4] in November 2014, I sent an email invitation to the 10 students who completed the course in May 2014. The email invitation, in which a consent form was attached, briefly discussed the goal of the study and how their interviews, assessment rubrics, and other components of their teaching portfolios would be used in my research. In the end, five students agreed to take part in the study. Their backgrounds in teaching writing and assessment varied, ranging from no experience to one to two years of teaching mainstream composition, instructing ESL (four skills combined) in the United States and other countries, and working with L2 students in writing centers. I refer to my five participants using pseudonyms: Jamie, Jane, Lynn, Patty, and Sam. Table 1 shows their teaching contexts, writing prompts, and rubrics.

Table 1

Participants' Teaching Contexts, Writing Prompts, and Rubrics

Participant	Teaching Context	Writing Prompt	Rubric
Jane (ESL education)	high school, South Korea	compare and contrast	multiple trait
Sam (ESL education)	university, Saudi Arabia	technical report	multiple trait
Lynn (RWL)	university, USA	historical research	analytical
Patty (ESL education)	K2–4, USA	argumentative	multiple trait
Jamie (teaching ESL/EFL)	high school, Costa Rica	personal historical analysis	analytical

Participant Interviews

I conducted a semi-structured interview with each participant during the first week of December 2014. Before the interview, they were given a list of questions that focused on their experience designing and using assessment rubrics, including challenges encountered when putting rubrics into practice. I asked follow-up questions to encourage them to provide specific examples and to clarify some information that was not clear. We also discussed the rubrics they developed in my course; rubrics used in their current writing class (if they were currently teaching); written reflections on rubric design; and other components of their teaching portfolios, such as writing prompts. While the participants' rubrics and written reflections helped illustrate their thought process in rubric design, the interviews also elicited information about rubrics as assessment tools in general and their implementations of rubrics, including challenges, in particular.

Each interview, which was audio-recorded with participants' permission, lasted about 30 minutes. After they were transcribed, I coded the transcripts, specifically looking for emerging categories, and later sorted them based on the aforementioned three areas: teachers' experience designing rubrics as assessment tools, challenges related to rubric implementations, and teacher preparation for the use of rubrics. The rubrics obtained were used to triangulate data from the interviews. Specifically, I followed Prior's (1995) "triangulated, emergent design" to present data "grounded not only in a textual analysis, which could simply privilege the researcher's perspectives, but also in contextualized representations of the participants' perspectives gathered through semi-structured and text-based interviewing" (p. 321).

Study Results

In what follows, I present the study results, focusing on the established three inquiries: participants' experience designing rubrics, challenges related to rubric implementations, and teacher preparation for the use of rubrics.

Participants' Experience Designing Rubrics as Assessment Tools

This section presents the participants' experience designing rubrics and the rubrics they had created in my course. Before I give the detailed narrative accounts, I cite their previous experience with rubric use. Of the five, Jane and Sam, who had each worked as an English teacher in their home country, used rubrics to evaluate student writing. The rubrics Jane used when she taught in a high school in South Korea, she said, "were not complicated or elaborated." Similarly, Sam's rubrics, which were used in a college-level course in Saudi Arabia, were, he noted, "very simple. It was like a checklist. There were no marks, but students had a sense of what particular things I was looking for." Jamie, Lynn, and Patty, on the other hand, had no experience using rubrics as teachers, but they were familiar with rubrics as students. Lynn expressed that "A rubric is incredibly helpful. I know precisely what I was doing. When I received the grade and saw the rubric, it all made sense to me." For Patty, rubrics "were very complicated, and there were a lot of criteria to meet." However, she said, "It is good for me because I know teachers' expectations for the assignment." All five participants observed that it was their first time taking a course that integrated assessment into its core content. In what follows, I present the individual participants' designed rubrics and discuss their views about what made rubric design challenging and what teachers should know or do when designing rubrics.

Sam's rubric. Sam said that even though he never took any assessment class, he had read a few books on writing an assessment. But, he noted, "I did not know that there are certain kinds of rubrics. I did not have any ideas," he revealed. He planned to use the rubric he had created in my course (Appendix A) to evaluate a technical report assignment for EFL students at his institution's industrial college. The purpose of his multiple-trait scoring rubric was threefold: assessing students' ability to identity, describe, and evaluate a technical problem as well as propose solutions and recommendations to such problem;

assessing students' ability to use appropriate format, organization, and language; and assessing students' ability to summarize, paraphrase, and quote external resources to support ideas and claims.

His rubric comprised five scales (scores)—5, 4, 3, 2, and 1—and was organized into four categories: structure, content, language use, and mechanics. These categories were chosen to support the objectives of his writing prompt,[5] a technical report.

Jane's rubric. Jane's rubric (Appendix B) aimed to evaluate a compare-and-contrast assignment for EFL students in which students would be required to compare South Korea's and Taiwan's respective cultures. Jane modeled her rubric after a rubric she found on a website called ReadWriteThink (2004). Her version contained three scores—3, 2, and 1; this modification was made to meet the needs and level of her students, who would be 10th-graders. The four categories included in the rubric were designed based on her writing prompt of comparing and contrasting. Jane wanted her students to understand audience and purpose and convey messages effectively through meeting professional standards and focusing on the intended readership.

Jamie's rubric. Like Sam and Jane, Jamie designed a rubric to be used in an EFL context. Her rubric (Appendix C) would be used for an assignment asking students to write about a personal historical analysis of an object. She spoke of her process:

> I thought about my teaching philosophy and where I want to come from, so I put most of the points in the content and revision and little points for grammar, spelling, and vocabulary. The points were broken up into three stages: prewriting, rough (first) draft, and final draft. I thought about what I would want as a student, and how I would feel. The prewriting is important. The first draft has most of the weight, which I think would make students feel more comfortable to know that they are going to do well if they try. The final draft is like "Did you take my advice, did you look, did you consider?"

Jamie included the writing stages because she wanted to "emphasize that writing is steps and to encourage revisions. The first draft is not over." Ultimately, Jamie believed this approach would encourage students to write comfortably.

Lynn's rubric. For Lynn, her rubric (Appendix D) would be used for a historical research assignment in her future first-year composition class, designed for both native and non-native English students. She preferred to assign specific point values over letter grades, because "for letter grades, there is so much of a range in that." In writing descriptions for each category, she recalled that "What I wrote in the description was what an A would look like in each category." Her rubric also had a space for comments. "I wanted to be able to give a rationale for all of my grades for each student," she observed.

Patty's rubric. For Patty, her rubric (Appendix E) was her very first one, and she planned to use it for an argumentative writing assignment in a U.S. K–4 context. Working on this rubric, she said, "was challenging." She saw, however, the benefit of creating it, explaining that "I think if you are letting the students see the rubric and having them with the writing task, it is transparency. It is a lot more literal."

Challenges Related to Rubric Design

The participants agreed that rubric design work was challenging, and they explained what made it so, including the following categories: dividing a rubric into different scoring (Jane), giving clear descriptions of each scale or category (Sam and Lynn), being objective (Patty), and figuring out the correct genre that rubrics belong to (Jamie). Table 2 presents some interview excerpts focusing on these categories.

Table 2

What Made Rubric Design Challenging

Participant	Responses
Jane	[. . .] to <u>*divide the rubric into different scoring*</u>, *at several levels. I wanted to make it clear but sometimes that's difficult. What makes the scales of 1 and 2 different?*
Sam	<u>*Giving clear descriptions*</u> *of the five scales, particularly the scales of 3 and 4, was the most difficult part. The descriptions of scales of 1 and 5 are very clear. You can see the differences between them. I found it difficult to distinguish between the ones in the middle.*
Lynn	<u>*Making the sections and describing each category as specific as possible was challenging.*</u> *What I found specific was not specific to someone else. Designing point values is also a challenge.*
Patty	<u>*It is hard being objective*</u> *when creating a rubric. It is still subjective to a certain level.*
Jamie	[. . .] <u>*to figuring out what is the correct genre*</u> *technique to get this down on paper. Then, what do I really want to grade them on? Where do I want my focus to be?*

Note: The <u>underscoring</u> highlights the categories of what made rubric design challenging for participants.

Challenges Related to Rubric Implementations

Of the five participants, Lynn and Patty had opportunities to implement their designed rubrics (with some adjustments to the originals) in their own classrooms. In what follows, I discuss their thoughts on rubric implementations and some challenges they faced. Lynn chose to discuss the rubric (Appendix F), in which she had modified the rubric (Appendix D) she designed in my class, to assess an informative analysis of a debate assignment. Lynn recalled:

> What I did is I made some subcategories. For the first category of debate evidence and discussion of arguments (35 points), I broke [them] down further and designed each specific section (types of argument = 20 points, development and support = 15 points).

Lynn added that her rubrics worked well for her students, which they appreciated. The adjustments she made reflected the issues we had discussed in my course, especially when we analyzed different types of scoring rubrics. She revealed, however, that her biggest test was designing point values and breaking up subcategories. "How to be specific was the most challenging part," she said. Lynn also highlighted in bold all elemental writing information, such as a thesis statement, style, and coherence, hoping that her students would pay close attention to these points. When using rubrics in her classrooms, Lynn first had a discussion with students about their different aspects and informed the students that she would be using them to evaluate every assignment. She returned each paper to its student creator with comments and point values on the rubric. One practice she liked about this type of assessment was that she and her students made rubrics together. She believed that students should have agency in this process, emphasizing that "it is important that students feel the ownership of the way they are being graded." For each assignment, Lynn brought her working rubric model to class and invited her students to add criteria to the rubric. Then they discussed the criteria, made some adjustments, and finalized the rubric together:

When we designed the rubric together, I asked a few questions, like have they used rubrics before and why rubrics. I just wanted to make sure that I do rubrics for their own benefit. They felt intimidated, but I told them that they only have to tell me what the most important categories are. This is very helpful, especially when assigning point values to each category and subcategory.

In sum, Lynn found using rubrics to assess writing advantageous. She explained that "A rubric helps me to hold my students to the same standard. Keeps everything very fair." Lynn added that sometimes teachers got hung up with one part of a paper, and rubrics helped reduce this common problem by allowing teachers to look at the whole picture of a paper.

Patty did her internship at an elementary school for Grades K–4, where she taught first- and third-grade ESL classes. The rubric she used with her first-graders for a science project (Appendix G) was modified based on the rubric she had created in my course (Appendix E). When she introduced Appendix G to her students, she told them, "A rubric is something that teachers use to grade you. That is how I am going to be grading your projects. I would be looking at different parts of your projects." Patty recognized that the concept of a rubric was still new to her students, explaining, "This is probably their first time using the rubrics. They were not really sure how to take it. They were surprised." With this in mind, she noted, "I have to make the language a lot more student-friendly, using kids' friendly language and bringing the language down to their level." When using the rubric of Appendix G, Patty found objectivity the main challenge. "We are human; we are going to be subjective," she said. Another challenge was that it was difficult to differentiate, for example, "what a 3 paper looks like or what a 2 paper looks like." Nevertheless, she found rubrics helpful for the elementary level—though, she said, "We are not very severe with grading. But rubrics can be good. My students know beforehand my expectations, and what they need to put in. They get a pretty good picture of what I want, and everyone is on the same page."

What Teachers Should Know or Do When Designing Rubrics

Given their experience designing the rubrics, I asked the participants to consider what teachers should know or do when designing rubrics. Their responses indicate that teachers should consider course goals and writing assignment objectives and that the rubrics can be understood by the students (Sam); teachers should look at different examples of rubrics (Patty); and teachers should understand the genre of rubrics (Jamie). Table 3 presents these interview excerpts.

Table 3

What Teachers Should Know or Do When Designing Rubrics

Participant	Responses
Sam	*You have to design rubrics based on the set goals and objectives of the course. Teachers should make sure that their rubrics are easy for students to understand.*
Patty	*Teachers might need to look at different examples.* Then they will be able to figure out how they want to assess with their own assessment tools.
Jamie	*Teachers should first understand the genre of rubrics* by looking at successful rubrics and components of what good rubrics have.

Note: The underscoring highlights participants' suggestions on what teachers should know or do when designing rubrics.

Teacher Preparation for the Use of Rubrics

Based on their experience taking my course, which integrated issues related to assessment, together with their experience designing and implementing their rubrics, in the study I asked the participants to discuss ways in which writing teachers' knowledge about rubrics could be developed. Specifically, they considered the following prompt: why incorporating issues in assessment, particularly the use of rubrics, in courses on teaching writing is essential. The participants' responses were: more writing assessment courses are needed (Sam), writing assessment courses should provide students with authentic sample rubrics and allow them to practice creating their own rubrics and assignments (Jane and Patty), and writing assessment should be part of new TA training (Lynn). Table 4 presents these interview excerpts.

Table 4

How Writing Teachers' Knowledge about Rubrics Can Be Developed

Participant	Responses
Sam	[. . .] <u>there should be more assessment classes, workshops, and training</u> *focusing on how to design different types of rubrics and issues in assessment rubrics.*
Jane	[. . .] <u>*pedagogy courses on teaching writing should provide both preservice and inservice teachers with authentic examples of rubrics and writing samples*</u> *. . . so that teachers can use them when discussing writing assessment with their students.*
Patty	[. . .] *taking a class where preservice and inservice <u>teachers get practiced [in] creating their own assignments, assessment rubrics</u>, and all would be helpful.*
Lynn	<u>[. . .] *new TAs always wanted more help on how to evaluate students*</u>. *Coming in as new teachers, we want to be . . . ok what is so hard about grading? What are some tricks? How to be fair? How to be objective?*

Note: The <u>underscoring</u> highlights how participants suggest that writing teachers' knowledge about rubrics can be developed.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results demonstrate that explicit teaching about writing assessment, particularly the use of rubrics as assessment tools, could prepare writing teachers to design and modify rubrics more effectively. As shown in this study, instruction on how to design rubrics was incorporated as a part of sequential tasks that the participants were assigned to complete. They were required to consider their current or future teaching context, analyze a genre of writing, work on a writing prompt, and design a rubric based on the previously created writing prompt. As a result, they were able to see how beneficial rubrics were for both teachers and students. As Crusan (2010) points out, "Rubrics can be powerful tools when they are *created specifically for each assignment . . .*" (p. 44; emphasis is in the original). Having a particular assignment in mind while working on rubrics is a practice Crusan recommends; specifically, she believes that "[. . .] when creating an assignment for students, teachers should take great care to create a rubric that exactly matches the criteria for the assignment" (p. 44). This resolve could lead to specific and explicit evaluation criteria. Drawing on my findings from the study, I note that contexts themselves—including institutional settings, student characteristics and proficiency level, and types of classes—are also central considerations when implementing any kind of assessment rubrics.

When the participants implemented their designed and modified rubrics in their actual writing courses, they encountered some challenges that came with assessment rubrics territory. Incorporating what they learned in my course, the participants were able to manage such challenges. To illustrate, they modified their rubrics to meet the level of their students and included students in the process of rubric design. The latter was evident in the case of Lynn, who was an advocate for student agency in a way that involves them in the process of how they were graded. The participants also agreed that courses on teaching writing focusing on writing assessment, particularly the use of rubrics as assessment tools, and workshops on and training in rubric design were all necessary for developing teachers' knowledge of writing assessment. This belief is crucial in implementing teacher training, because writing teachers, especially new TAs, feel unprepared to discuss issues related to writing assessment with students. Having adequate knowledge of assessment rubrics, including how to design and implement them and how to be prepared to handle some issues with students when putting rubrics into practice, would be really helpful, as Lynn pointed out. Finally, the results of the study suggest that rubrics are notoriously hard to design and require extensive knowledge, training, and practice. This echoed what was found in the survey by Crusan et al. (2016): although respondents said that they had some knowledge about rubric use, the majority of them were concerned about their own creation and use of rubrics.

Building on its findings, this study argues for the need to improve and reevaluate how the use of rubrics as assessment tools can be integrated into teacher education and teacher training programs. Such active advocacy is essential, because, as noted above, assessment affects students to a great degree (Crusan, 2010; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Sundeen, 2014; Weigle, 2007); specifically, teachers must be prepared to create and offer writing assessment tools with confidence. Drawing on these findings, the study offers three recommendations for reevaluating or improving the teaching of writing assessment and the use of rubrics as assessment tools. First, institutions, departments, or programs may want to consider identifying writing teachers' perceptions of writing assessments and the use of rubrics and what support and resources they need to assess writing more effectively. This can be done in various forms, including teacher surveys, interviews with writing teachers, and focus groups. Second, institutions, departments, or programs that have already offered such courses, workshops, and training may want to consider conducting a follow-up study to analyze how effective their teaching and training is. Third, it would be helpful if students' perspectives on the use of rubrics in writing assessment could be included in the discussion. Obtaining perspectives from students, who are central to the assessment process, would allow us teachers to better the serve their needs.

This qualitative study took place at a single institution and was conducted with a relatively small number of participants. While its findings cannot be generalized, the study does provide insightful perspectives of current and prospective writing teachers on the use of rubrics as well as issues and challenges when putting assessment rubrics into practice. More studies are needed to develop teacher education and preparation and to inform our practices and pedagogies. Future research can be done in various forms, such as "conceptual replication studies and through larger-scale, multi-institutional surveys" (Matsuda et al., 2013, p. 82), for example, that closely examine teachers' use of assessment rubrics with their students.

References

Andrade, H., Du, Y., & Wang, X. (2008). Putting rubrics to the test: The effect of a model, criteria generation, and rubric-referenced self-assessment on elementary school students' writing. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 27*(2), 3–13.

Broad, B. (2000). Pulling your hair out: Crises of standardized in communal writing assessment. *Research in the Teaching of English, 35*(2), 213–260.

Broad, B. (2003). *What we really value: Beyond rubrics in teaching and assessing writing*. Utah State University Press.

Crusan, D. (2010). *Assessment in the second language writing classroom.* The University of Michigan Press.

Crusan, D., Plakans, L., & Gebril, A. (2016). Writing assessment literacy: Teachers' knowledge, beliefs, and practices. *Assessing Writing, 28*, 43–56.

Dempsey, M. S., PytlikZillig, L. M., & Bruning R. H. (2009). Helping preservice teachers learn to assess writing: Practice and feedback in a web-based environment. *Assessing Writing, 14*(1), 38–61.

Elbow, P. (1993). Ranking, evaluating, and liking: Sorting out three forms of judgment. *College English, 55*(2), 187–206.

Ferris, D. R., & Hedgcock, J. S. (2014). *Teaching L2 composition: Purpose, process, and practice*. Routledge.

Haswell, R. H. (1998). Rubrics, prototypes, and exemplars: Categorization theory and systems of writing placement. *Assessing Writing, 5*(2), 231–268.

Jonsson, A., & Svingby, G. (2007). The use of scoring rubrics: Reliability, validity and educational consequences. *Educational Research Review, 2*(2), 130–144.

Matsuda, P. K. (2008). Teaching second language writing [Course syllabus]. Department of English, Arizona State University, Tempe.

Matsuda, P. K., Saenkhum, T., & Accardi, S. (2013). Writing teachers' perceptions of the presence and needs of second language writers: An institutional case study. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 22*(1), 68–86.

Prior, P. (1995). Tracing authoritative and internally persuasive discourses: A case study of response, revision, and disciplinary enculturation. *Research in the Teaching of English, 29*(3), 288–325.

ReadWriteThink (2004). Retrieved July 13, 2020, from http://www.readwritethink.org/files/resources/lesson_images/lesson407/rubric-writing.pdf

Rezaei, A. R., & Lovorn, M. (2010). Reliability and validity of rubrics for assessment through writing. *Assessing Writing, 15*(1), 18–39.

Silvestri, L., & Oescher, J. (2006). Using rubrics to increase the reliability of assessment in health classes. *International Electronic Journal of Health Education, 9*, 25–30.

Sundeen, T. H. (2014). Instructional rubrics: Effects of presentation options on writing quality. *Assessing Writing, 21*, 74–88.

Weigle, S. C. (2007). Teaching writing teachers about assessment. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 16*(3), 194–209.

White, E. M. (2007). *Assigning, responding, evaluating: A writing teacher's guide*. Bedford/St. Martin's.

Wilson, M. (2006). *Rethinking rubrics in writing assessment*. Heinemann.

Yancey, K. B. (1999). Looking back as we look forward: Historicizing writing assessment. *College Composition and Communication, 50*(3), 483–503.

Notes

[1]The focus of this study is on writing assessment in the context of classrooms, which is small-scale assessment. A discussion of larger scale assessment, such as standardized testing, is beyond the scope of the study; therefore, it was not included in the Literature Review section. However, I did cover types of larger scale assessment in my course. Please refer to the Course Design section for details.

[2]I chose this text because it provided comprehensive theories and practices in teaching L2 writing.

[3]We also discussed other assessment tools, including portfolios, but they are beyond the scope of the study.

[4]The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the institution where the study took place.

[5]The five participants' writing prompts can be found here: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1o-J-ev3laqJQdU4OGBU8Z64SbvVt6nOl/view?usp=sharing

APPENDIX A
Sam's Multiple-Trait Scoring Rubric for a Technical Report Assignment

Score	Structure	Content	Language Use	Mechanics
5	The report is well organized, contains all parts of TRW; sections are organized logically and contain only relevant information; required page formats are correct and consistent throughout the whole report; citations are consistent.	Enough background information is provided; problem is explicitly and clearly stated; theoretical background is discussed; problem-solving procedure is logically organized with sound supportive details; summary and recommendation are thorough, new and significant; use a variety of sources types; correctly integrate quotes.	Language is clear, direct, informative, and generally accurate; words choices are varied and suitable for topic and audience; transitions are appropriate and connect the ideas; correct use of different types of sentences.	Sentences are well written; grammar and usage are correct; spelling and punctuation errors are minimal.
4	The report is reasonably organized; most parts of TRW, especially main components, are included; required formats are generally followed most parts of the report; some minor problems with citations.	Background information, theoretical perspective, procedure for solving problem, conclusion, and recommendation are provided but may not be supported with enough details; relevant resources are used but quotes are inadequately used in some text.	Language is clear in most parts; vocabulary is adequate, appropriate transition words are used correctly in most parts; good control of different sentences is demonstrated.	Adequate clarity of sentences; minor inconsistent grammar, spelling, and punctuation; minimal editing for paper is required.
3	The report lacks origination in some parts, some parts of TRW are missing; formats are not followed most parts of the report; some problems with citation format, but not completely wrong.	The content of some parts of the report is missing or irrelevant to the discussed topic; resources and quotes are included, but some are not directly related to problem discussed.	In some parts, language is not clear; lack of varieties in vocabulary; satisfactory use of different types of sentences; unsuitable use of some transitions.	Some inadequately written sentences; some grammar, spelling, and punctuations errors lead to misunderstanding. Paper usually needs some editing.
2	The report lacks organization; important sections of TRW are not included; information is not logically organized in most sections; the required page formats and citations are incorrect.	Background information is not clear; problem is not stated clearly; lack of logical organization in most parts; no enough supportive details; citations or references are included but not directly related to topic.	Sentences are obscured in some parts; frequently use of fragments and some incomplete sentences; no variety in sentences; limited words choice	Some major grammar and spelling errors; punctuation is sometimes missing or incorrect; paper needs some extra editing.
1	The report doesn't follow TRW guidelines; the required formats and citations are incorrect.	Statements of the problem and background information are not included; ideas are not logically organized; details are not supportive or irrelevant; no citations or references are included.	Language is unclear in most parts; sentence structures are mostly incorrect; inappropriate word choice; transitions are missing or incorrect.	Major grammar errors; numerous spelling errors on common words; punctuation is often missing or incorrect; paper needs extensive editing.

Jane's Multiple-Trait Scoring Rubric for a Compare-and-Contrast Assignment

	3	2	1
Organization and structure	The paper divides the information into block or point-by-point organization. It follows a consistent order when discussing the comparison.	The paper divides the information into block or point-by-point organization, but does not follow a consistent order when discussing the comparison.	The paper shows no organizational patterns. Many details are not in a logical or expected order.
Supporting details	The paper uses specific examples and details to illustrate the comparison, and includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	The paper uses general supporting information and includes only the information relevant to the comparison.	The paper uses incomplete supporting information, and may include information that is not relevant to the comparison.
Transitions	The paper moves smoothly from one idea to the next and uses transition words to show relationships between ideas.	The paper moves from one idea to the next, but lack or misuse some transition words to show relationships between ideas.	Connections between ideas are unclear. The transitions between ideas are unclear or nonexistence.
Grammar, spelling, and word choices	The writer makes 0–2 errors in grammar, spelling or word choices.	The writer makes 3–5 errors in grammar, spelling, or word choices.	The writer makes more than 5 errors in grammar, spelling, or word choices.

Your score: _____/15   Modified from ReadWriteThink (2004)

APPENDIX C
Jamie's Analytical Scoring Rubric for a Personal Historical Analysis About an Object Assignment

Prewriting	First Draft	Final Draft
Object—5 points Write a simple sentence stating your object ____Object total **Historical Evidence—10 points** Brainstorm possible events that you could write about Bullet point form is ok! *5 events: 2 points each* _____ Evidence total **Larger context—2 points** Brainstorm possible implications about what it means about you (*Silly, determined, etc.*) Bullet point form is ok! *2 options: 1 point each* ____Connection total **Total** ___(out of 17)	*Totals will be based on how well you complete the given bullet points for each category:* **Content—35 points** • Introducing your object • Integrating your personal experience to convince reader of object's importance • Describing what it means to you • Making it interesting to the reader _____ Content total **Conclusion—3 points** Concluding paragraph should summarize what your essay stated in a new and creative way ____Conclusion total **Grammar—10 points** • Consistence in tense • Correct use of "person pronouns" (I, she, we, they) • Understandable sentence structures • Transitions between "sections" _____Grammar total **Spelling— 5 points** *Total based on how well you complete the following bullet points* • Capitalizing proper nous • Spelling _____Spelling total **Vocabulary—5 points** • Correct use of vocabulary • Variety _____Vocabulary total _____ **First Draft total** (out of 58)	**Revision—20 points** Obvious revision; changes will be compared to first draft and peer edits ___Revision total **On time—5 points** Turn paper in on assigned due date _____ **Final Draft total** (out of 25) **FINAL GRADE** _____% (out of 100)

APPENDIX D
Lynn's Analytical Scoring Rubric for a Historical Research Assignment

Debate evidence and discussion of arguments: The issue being debated is introduced and the **thesis** identifies the overall state of the debate—the degree of disagreement and consensus across the various works. The paper describes accurately **multiple types of argument** within the debate over matters of fact, definition, quality, and policy. ____**/20** **Development and support:** The assigned articles are discussed in depth without being redundant. Examples and explanations of the types of argument are offered. ____**/15**	**Comments:**
Organization/Structure: The **introduction** provides an overview of the debate at hand, and the writer introduces each debater and the article. ____**/5** The paper is **focused and organized,** maintaining a sustained analysis and evaluation throughout; the essay's structure enhances the analysis. ____**/15** The **conclusion** reminds readers of the paper's important points and explains the significance of these points. ____**/5**	**Comments:**
Style: The paper employs **word choices and tone** that are appropriately formal and reasonable for the audience. ____**/5** The paper is **coherent and cohesive,** with no awkward sentences or wordiness, smooth transitions within and between paragraphs, and clearly stated points. ____**/5**	**Comments:**
Grammar: The paper has sparse **grammar, punctuation, and spelling** errors. The paper meets **length** requirements. ____**/10**	**Comments:**
Annotated Bibliography/MLA Citation: The paper adheres to MLA formatting requirements: 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman font, proper header, essay title, page numbers, correctly formatted in text and works-cited citations. The writer cites both direct quotations and paraphrases from the texts. ____**/10** The final draft of the annotated bibliography is formatted correctly according to the MLA standards outlined in the *Writer's Harbrace Handbook,* and the annotations describe the author's purpose, state the author's argument, and include a comment on the author's place in the debate. ____**/10**	**Comments:**

APPENDIX E
Patty's Multiple-Trait Scoring Rubric for an Argumentative Essay Assignment

Score	Rhetorical Argument	Use of Evidence	Mechanics
5	The argument is clearly stated, takes an evident position, and is fully developed	References are abundant and go into full detail; evidence is relevant to the argument	The language is strong and varied; very few errors persist in the paper and do not detract from its focus
4	The argument is clearly stated, takes a good position, and is strongly developed	The number of references provided are plentiful and relevant; examples go into good detail	Language is highly developed and contains much variety; several errors may persist in the paper, but the writer's overall meaning and ideas remain clear
3	The argument is stated, but does not take a definite position; its development is adequate, but could be strengthened	References are adequate; the author could provide a greater number of supporting details; the paper's evidence needs to become more fully developed and cover more depth	The writer is able to communicate his/her thoughts; the language is simple, lacking variety and a strong vocabulary; errors persist in the paper, sometimes compromising the clarity of the writer's argument
2	The argument is hard to find; it does not take a clear position and lacks proper development	The writer needs to include more evidence; it needs more support; details appear irrelevant and shallow in its presentation	The language is simple and repetitive; certain words may not be appropriate for the context of the paper; multiple errors distract the reader from understanding the paper's overall meaning
1	The writer has not developed a complete argument; there are fragments of an idea, but the thoughts are disconnected and incoherent	References are barely existent, if at all; supporting details are neither developed nor relevant	Language is weak; vocabulary is repeated multiple times; vocabulary usage may be incomprehensible and/or academically inappropriate (i.e., slang, contractions); the paper is plagued with errors that compromise the paper's premise

APPENDIX F
Lynn's Modified Rubric for an Informative Analysis of a Debate Assignment

Debate evidence and discussion of arguments: The issue being debated is introduced and the **thesis** identifies the overall state of the debate—the degree of disagreement and consensus across the various works. The paper describes accurately **multiple types of argument** within the debate over matters of fact, definition, quality, and policy. ____**/20** **Development and support:** The assigned articles are discussed in depth without being redundant. Examples and explanations of the types of argument are offered. ____**/15**	**Comments**:
Organization/Structure: The **introduction** provides an overview of the debate at hand, and the writer introduces each debater and the article. ____**/5** The paper is **focused and organized,** maintaining a sustained analysis and evaluation throughout; the essay's structure enhances the analysis. ____**/15** The **conclusion** reminds readers of the paper's important points and explains the significance of these points. ____**/5**	**Comments**:
Style: The paper employs **word choices and tone** that are appropriately formal and reasonable for the audience. ____**/5** The paper is **coherent and cohesive**, with no awkward sentences or wordiness, smooth transitions within and between paragraphs, and clearly stated points. ____**/5**	**Comments**:
Grammar: The paper has sparse **grammar, punctuation, and spelling** errors. The paper meets **length** requirements. ____**/10**	**Comments**:
Annotated Bibliography/MLA Citation: The paper adheres to MLA formatting requirements: 1-inch margins, 12-point Times New Roman font, proper header, essay title, page numbers, correctly formatted in text and works-cited citations. The writer cites both direct quotations and paraphrases from the texts. ____**/10** The final draft of the annotated bibliography is formatted correctly according to the MLA standards outlined in the *Writer's Harbrace Handbook,* and the annotations describe the author's purpose, state the author's argument, and include a comment on the author's place in the debate. ____**/10**	**Comments:**

APPENDIX G
Patty's Modified Rubric for a Science Project Used with First-Graders

Score	Scientific Knowledge	Voice and Details	Writing	Mechanics
3	My writing has scientific information. I use many facts.	I use my own examples in my writing. I use several different examples.	I use long sentences. My sentences do not look the same.	I start each sentence with a capital letter. I put periods at the end of each sentence.
2	My writing has scientific information. I use some facts.	I use my own examples in my writing. I use some examples.	Some of my sentences are long. Some do not look the same.	I start most of my sentences with a capital letter. I put periods at the end of most of my sentences.
1	My writing has scientific information. I use a few facts.	I use two examples in my writing.	Most of my sentences look the same. They are shorter.	I start some of my sentences with a capital letter. I put periods at the end of some of my sentences.