

# Developing Writers' Communicative Writing Skills Through Standard-based Rubrics: A Case Study of Qassim University Students

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## Abstract

The use of rubrics to assess quality performance and progress across educational fields is gaining prominence, as it mainly assists in targeting essential complex components in writing. This study suggests that standard-based rubrics inspire writers to become proficient communicators. Rubrics identify the gaps that need to be addressed based on the alignment of learning goals and precise writing standards underpinned with clear guidance. A mixed qualitative-quantitative approach was used. The participants were 60 students from Qassim University's College of Science, divided into experimental and control groups. A pretest was administered to both groups. Next, intervention pertinent to standard-based rubrics was made to train the experimental group to perform several writing tasks. Then, a posttest was conducted by both groups to validate the study hypothesis, gauge students' progress, and verify performance. A questionnaire was distributed to detect the experimental group's perceptions and any changes that resulted from the process. Significant results have been obtained, and the findings will benefit education and research.

**Keywords:** communicative, writing skills, standards-based rubric, intervention

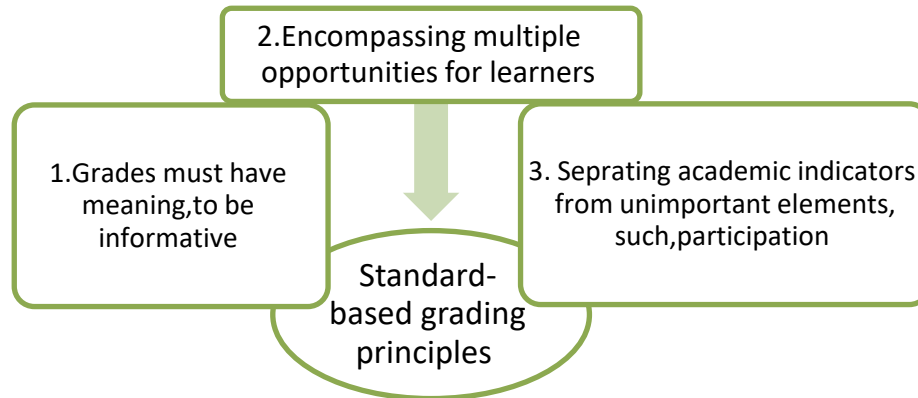
## 1. Introduction

In today's world of rapid changes and social shifts, writing plays a significant role in successful effective communication throughout disciplines. (Larreategui & Jenifer, 2024). Writers, therefore, need to rethink proficiency to match the current changes. Maintaining Development and access to quality writing is problematic in an EFL educational setting, partially, because of internal factors that pertain to the learners, their incompetence, and native tongue interference. (Ahmed, 2019; Hidayati, 2018). Likewise, they encounter linguistic difficulties in EFL grammar, vocabulary, and organizing ideas. (Phung, 2024&Ahmed, 2019). Added to that writing conventions create significant challenges to the learners. (Baresh, 2024& Ahmed, 2019). Lack of motivation among EFL learners poses another issue. (Ahmed, 2024; Hidayati, 2018). A further obstacle is the inappropriateness of the contexts in which EFL writing is learned and the class time allotted for writing. (Hidayati, 2018). Furthermore, the situation is made worse by traditional grading methods that have been in use for more than a century, without any substantial research findings to validate them. Traditional grading is an inadequate letter, points-based method of assessing students that "keeps track of percentages scores across various categories of performance and behavior and then translates the average percentage score into a letter grade or simply report the average percentage score" (Marzano& Heflebower, 2011: 34). It is a high-stakes assessment, is not based on specific standards, and doesn't assess the learning progress of the individual student, due to the lack of 'redoes' and 'retakes' to essential learning practices. (Wormeli, 2011). Therefore, the method used for this study is process-oriented. The advocates of the process theory of composition have come with different postulates, for example, Emig (1968) and Sommers (1979). Emig focused on the writing process's developmental sequence, using various tools and activities to create text. While Sommers believed that incorporating theoretical perspectives from disciplines like linguistics offers a better understanding of writing and effective teaching methods. Standard-based rubrics (SBRs) assess students' writing mastery using agreed-upon standards, also known as "outcomes". (Partnership, Great Schools, 2014). A writing rubric with clear, strong standards improves students' writing through peer assessment, self-perception, and reflection. Therefore, teachers can devise writing standards-based rubrics to upgrade students' writing skills using the obtained data. The study used a quantitative-qualitative method to get authentic data from participants' paper and pen written work during class time by applying standard-based rubrics. (See Appendix 1, 2). After being acquainted with the rubric and the relevant goal-oriented subject matter during brief online classes, the participants willingly conducted assignments in the natural classroom setting, as they had already officially confirmed their participation. The experimental group performed 5 assignments (3prompts, pretest, post-test), while the control group conducted only the pretest and post-test. Participants received a consent form approved by their institution, with detailed information to participate or dismiss.

The primary purpose of the study is centered around the following: First, to examine the effectiveness of standards-based rubrics in improving writers' communicative writing skills. Second, to explore the perceptions and experiences of writers in the use of standards-based rubrics. Third, standards-based rubrics and traditional grading methods should be compared to enhance writing skills. Fourth, to provide evidence-based implications that motivate introducing standards-based rubrics into writing curricula.

1.1 Standards-Based Rubrics

Rubrics are commonly used to rate learners' authentic work qualitatively. (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007). They can also be quantitatively used when they target assigning numbers. Standards-based rubrics are tools that can be used to develop communicative writing skills. The main structural elements of SBR are statements that describe the behavior or performance and criteria to measure levels of achievement. Rubrics can be designed in different forms for different purposes. "Rubrics may be customized to meet certain assessment goals; in formative assessment, emphasis is given to learning facilitation, whereas in summative assessment, fairness, reliability, and validity take precedence". (Ling, 2024, abst.). Task-specific rubrics align the grading criteria with specific language aspects per the assignment prompt. Generic rubrics can be holistic or analytic forms, a holistic rubric provides a single score, such as letters (A, B, C, D) or numbers of evaluation. This study used an analytic rubric that assigns different criteria or traits in writing. It breaks scores according to gradation of quality (Andrade, 2000) to align with aspects of students' performance. Grounded on three principles outlined by Beatty (2013), standard-based rubrics (SBR) effectively meet the writing assessment expectations. (See Figure1)



As shown in Figure 1, Beatty's (2013) standard-based grading principles

The use of standards entails that teachers should be competent in: "(1) choosing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions, (2) developing assessment methods appropriate for instructional decisions, (3) administering, scoring, and interpreting the results of both externally produced and teacher-produced assessment methods; (4) using assessment results when making decisions about individual students, planning, teaching, developing curriculum, and school improvement; (5) developing valid pupil grading procedures which use pupil assessments; (6) communicating assessment results to students, parents, other lay audiences, and other educators; and (7) recognizing unethical, illegal, and otherwise inappropriate assessment methods and uses of assessment information". (National Council on Measurement in Education, American Federation of Teachers, National Education Association, 1990)

1.2. Literature Review

1.2.1 A Writing Standards-Based Rubric Is a Two-Faceted Beneficial Tool

Studies indicate that the use of standards-based rubrics can be helpful for both teachers and students during the writing process. Elaborately designed standards-based assessment that outlines clear specific criteria provides teachers with information about the target expectations. (Andrade, Du, & Wang, 2008). Krebs, Rothstein, and Roelle (2022) uncovered that the subjects who used rubrics showed less bias and higher absolute accuracy in writing. They further contended that rubrics improved "judgment accuracy" and minimized self-assessment cognitive load. In this paper, the subjects received individual copies of the rubrics and explanations before the writing sessions. SBRs enable learners to exhibit accomplishments and personal development and analyze, with instructors quantitative and qualitative data that informs both goals and instruction. The obtained feedback, thus, reduces "the discrepancy between the current status and the goal" (Hattie & Clarke, 2019:3). Being conscious of one's learning enhances self-regulation and metacognition, two abilities that are widely acknowledged to be efficient learning strategies that enable students to identify specific standards of performance. (Emily, 2016). A different insightful discussion was provided by Eutsler (2023), who explored teachers' understanding of assessment development. Teachers were subjected to an instructional program that used a state reference of standards. The finding showed an increase in teacher effectiveness due to the use of assessment standards.

1.2.2 Impact on Writing Development

The impact of standards-based rubrics on various facets of writing development has been the subject of considerable research. Kahveci and Şentürk (2023) argued that rubrics could be a reliable tool for evaluating exam writing. Using rubrics frees assessment from subjectivity (Andrade, 2000). Ankeny, Gentry, O'Neill, and Eshun (2023) investigated 'In-Class Peer Reviews of Written Assignments' using standard-based grading and found a positive shift in individual learning and achievement and error reductions. Lipnevich, Panadero, and Calistro (2023) explored significant improvement in students writing performance due to using rubrics. Yorgancı and Baş (2021) used an

analytical rubric for assessing the writing skills of Turkish students and reported its appropriateness for evaluating writing. Carson & Kavish (2018) investigated the use of rubrics to boost learning and mechanical writing skills and found it promising for improving student writing skills. Andrade (2001) observed that students who received rubric-based feedback demonstrated progress in essay writing.

### 1.2.3 Learners Perception

It's essential to consider how learners view standards-based rubrics. Mahmoudi (2020) examined the effect of rubrics and face-to-face feedback in assessing students' writing performance. Students reported their complete awareness of the rubric and could check their writing to provide feedback to their peers and produce high-quality writing. Likewise, students gained more confidence and control over their learning to achieve goals. (Link & Guskey, 2022). Oliver (2023) discussed teachers' perceptions of implementing different grading practices encompassed in standards-based grading. They recommended the application of standards-based grading. However, some educators reported the inefficiency of rubrics to improve grading reliability (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010)

### 1.2.4 Comparison with Traditional Grading

Traditional grading practices may no longer be effective in measuring student progress, as they do not correlate with performance on standards. (Vatterott, 2015). Traditional grading is mainly teacher-centered and does not consider learners' thinking skills and learning development. The main emphasis is on what students know (product) rather than how they arrive at the grade (process). 'Educators who emphasize process criteria believe that product criteria alone don't provide a complete picture of student performance. They think grades should reflect not only final achievement results but also how students got there' (Guskey, 2020:3). However, standards-based assessment inspires students to take charge of learning, track, and reflect on progress. In traditional grading: "That number or grade combines diverse data, gathered through different means to measure different attributes. As such, it's not informative, meaningful, helpful, or equitable" (Guskey, 2020:2). Standards-Based Grading: "a philosophy of grading separating learning goals and work habits, repurposing homework as practice, and emphasizing more recent evidence of learning rather than averaging multiple attempts" (Townsend & Buckmiller, 2020: 2-3). Traditional grading that calculates grades gives rise to "does this count". Therefore, poor reliability is unavoidable in instructors' traditional grading system. Melissa, Frank, and Adam (2022) found that a lack of helpful feedback and low learner motivation were deficiencies of conventional grading.

The following research questions have been addressed to achieve the study's objectives.

### 1.2.5 Research Questions

1. How does using standards-based rubrics impact writers' development of communicative writing skills?
2. To what extent do writers perceive the effectiveness of standards-based rubrics in improving their communicative writing skills?
3. What is the effect of standards-based rubrics compared to traditional writing grading methods in terms of enhancing writers' writing skills?

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants

Sixty level 2 students from Qassim University affiliating with the College of Science comprised the study participants. They were homogenous with similar language backgrounds. They were divided into thirty for the experimental group and thirty for the control group and were subjected to pre-test and post-test. The consent form was obtained officially from the students' institution, and the researcher sent copies to the individual participants via email. Participants were made aware of their role in the study, including the practical work of training sessions, testing, and answering a questionnaire for reflection. They, moreover, were informed that their information could not be used elsewhere. The consent form information was also transparently included at the onset of the questionnaire, emphasizing that there are no gains from participation and that participants are free to quit any time they wish.

### 2.2 Instruments

Two instruments were used: a questionnaire and a standards-based rubric.

#### 2.2.1 Questionnaire

The survey was confidential and voluntary, and participants' opinions were surveyed after the post-test by answering a Google Forms questionnaire to determine their perception of the impact of standards-based rubrics on performance and learning progress. Surveys enable rapid data collection from many participants in a short time. (Cherry, 2020). A five-rating Likert- scale has been used to allow various types of measuring opinions, such as strongly disagree, disagree, agree, neutral, and strongly agree. The questions were categorized under themes aligned with the literature review, and the research questions: RQ 1. How does using standards-based rubrics impact writers' development of communicative writing skills? RQ.2. To what extent do writers perceive the effectiveness of standards-based rubrics in improving their communicative writing skills? RQ3. What is the effect of standards-based rubrics compared to traditional grading methods in enhancing writers' writing? Questionnaire's validity was tested by experts, and reliability was tested by calculating Cronbach's Alpha below.

Case Processing Summary			
		N	%
Cases	Valid	26	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	26	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.860	20

Reliability Statistics				
Cronbach's Alpha	Part 1	Value	.731	
		N of Items	10 <sup>a</sup>	
	Part 2	Value	.802	
		N of Items	10 <sup>b</sup>	
	Total N of Items			20
	Correlation Between Forms			.674
Spearman-Brown Coefficient	Equal Length		.805	
	Unequal Length		.805	
Guttman Split-Half Coefficient			.799	

a. The items are: q1, q2, q3, q4, q5, q6, q7, q8, q9, q10.  
 b. The items are: q11, q12, q13, q14, q15, q16, q17, q18, q19, q20.

2.2.2 Standards-based Rubric

Table 2.1 shows that the rubric was designed to target testing and developing students writing mastery. It consists of criteria and a scale of 4 levels using the descriptive words accomplished, good, satisfactory, and need improvement. Descriptive words provide information that enables the flow of participants' self-assessments and reflections. (Brookhart, 2018). To be used by students, the rubric components were divided into three smaller rubrics that targeted prompt learning outcomes(criteria) and aligned with instructions and prompted assessments.

Table 2.1. A rubric for assessing mechanics, grammar, and transitions in writing

Scale Criteria	Accomplished	Good	Satisfactory	Need Improvement
1.Mechanics mastery	correct mechanics	Somecorrec mechanics	Little correct mechanics	Lack of correct mechanics,
2. Grammar mastery	correct grammar	some correct grammar	little correct grammar	lack of correct grammar
3. Transitions	correct transitions	some correct transitions	little correct transitions	lack of correct transitions

Mastery

As shown in Table 2.1, a rubric for assessing mechanics, grammar, and transitions

The rubric was modeled to internalize the criteria and quality levels (scale). The rubric was piloted by applying it to exemplar work to increase inter-rater reliability. Twenty-nine students went through the standards-based rubric in Google Forms and answered the questionnaire after conducting a writing task. The link is provided below.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdoYRea9XhHMzh76TztBq\\_-HAgDzJ1d9cUND0TN19AIPTQKQ/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScdoYRea9XhHMzh76TztBq_-HAgDzJ1d9cUND0TN19AIPTQKQ/viewform?usp=sharing)

For testing validity, 3 experts were consulted, and 10 students examined the rubric and answered a short online questionnaire in Google Forms on the usefulness and appropriateness of the rubric to students. Both groups reported that the criteria and the rating scale were appropriate and easy to understand and use.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8NM3c6PuS-9ZgJe3pY6yWt2NgfOoCxx8Ym\\_rQ\\_S70F2h9aQ/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc8NM3c6PuS-9ZgJe3pY6yWt2NgfOoCxx8Ym_rQ_S70F2h9aQ/viewform?usp=sharing)

2.3 Procedures & Pedagogical Interventions

2.3.1 Training Sessions

The researcher followed an instructional plan to instruct and make prompt authentic assessments to measure students' learning progress against the rubrics' standards. This was based on objectives that were made clear to the experimental participants to train them and develop their skills, knowledge, and understanding in writing and assessment. They were doing three writing tasks for 8 weeks (table 2-2), following the instructions in the online training sessions. Training session 1, was to raise the subjects' understanding of mechanics, session 2, was to highlight grammatical aspects, and session 3 was about transitions.

Table 2.2. Writing tasks

Task	Content	Learning Target
1	Describe your home in two paragraphs.	mastery of capitalization, punctuation, spelling
2	Describe your daily program	mastery of syntax, and grammar
3	How do you spend summer vacation	mastery of transitions

As shown in Table 2.2, the writing tasks

Based on rubrics with standards, the tasks were administered after the pretest and followed by the post-test for both experimental and control groups. After every two weeks, a test was given, and the trainees' performance was recorded.

2.3.2 Pretesting & Posttesting

Pretesting is helpful in prime students for learning (Little and Bjork, 2016). It is a warm-up test-enhanced learning. Post-test results enable instructors to uncover and identify learning gaps and to fill them with students after they know of their deficiencies. In this study, the pretest was administered to both the experimental and control groups before the training sessions. Each test comprised a two-paragraph writing passage. Pretest question: In two paragraphs, describe your daily routine. Post-test question: Describe what you did yesterday and what you are doing today. The learning targets were mastery of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and transitions.

2.3.3 Self-assessment, Peer Review Assessments, and Feedback

Peer assessment and feedback are intended to boost students writing and develop assessment skills. Participants conducted an online self-assessment (Rating yourself) to gauge their mastery of capitalization, punctuation, spelling, grammar, and transitions. Following this, analysis of one sample writing based on the criteria of the rubrics, by the students under the collaboration of the teacher. Yu (2024) points to the impact of peer assessment in improving students' writing.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScq6ERcg51vP3fnSMk0IWAc98XiTDAnETGWMiv06hHTz\\_M9cg/viewform?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScq6ERcg51vP3fnSMk0IWAc98XiTDAnETGWMiv06hHTz_M9cg/viewform?usp=sharing)

3. Data Analysis & Result

3.1 Intervention Result

Table 3.1. Pre-test result

Error type	Experimental G				Mean	Control G				Mean
	Frequency					Frequency				
	R	O	S	T		R	O	S	T	
capitalization	16	0	39	55	18.33333	30	0	36	66	22
Punctuation	15	23	12	50	16.66667	5	20	13	38	12.66667
Spelling	0	5	38	43	14.33333	0	6	40	46	15.33333
Grammar	4	26	29	59	19.66667	23	26	27	76	25.33333
Transitions	26	3	0	29	9.66667	31	5	0	36	12
Total	61	57	118	236					262	

As shown in Table 3-1, the pre-test result

Table 3-1 shows that the total number of errors of the experimental group is 236 (M=47.2), whereas the control group's number of errors is 262(M=52.4). Grammar receives the highest mean (M=19.66667), and (M=25.33333) for both groups, respectively. Capitalization errors are high, with a mean of 18.33333 for the Ex. group and 22 for the Cr. group. Transitions receive the lowest mean (M=9.66667) and (M=12), respectively.

Participants' answer sheets evidence overgeneralization errors such as 'sited, ate' and 'to walked' reflect the incompetency of the learners in grammar. Previously, Phung (2024) and Ahmed (2019) pointed to difficulties in English grammar. It is noticeable that learners overgeneralized the past 'ed morpheme for irregular verbs. Redundancy of the auxiliaries, the verb 'be' and 'do', and the articles 'the' and 'a' for uncountable nouns. Examples, 'it is comes, iam do, we are go'. Some of these can be attributed to the influence of the learners' native tongue and lack of competence in English grammar. (Ahmed,2019 & Hidayati,2018). The Arabic language has no verb to be, and the article 'the' is excessively used by Arabic natives. MT influence, moreover, can be detected in capitalization, as there is no capitalization in Arabic. Therefore, using lowercase for the personal pronoun 'I' and proper nouns, and uppercase for common nouns, was commonly found. In spelling, learners substituted the sound with 'b', deleted the final e and silent consonants, and shortened the long vowels. This is perhaps due to the inconsistency of the English spelling system. Some common errors were detected in punctuation, the tendency to delete the period at the end of a sentence, and the comma before 'and' in listing. Baresh (2024) and Ahmed (2019) reported some challenges created by writing conventions. A link to samples of students' work is provided below.

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T8O0V5woUwcoZm5n3WW5S0V-uGZBs--1?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T8O0V5woUwcoZm5n3WW5S0V-uGZBs--1?usp=drive_link)

Table 3.2. Training session test 1 result: mechanics errors

Error type	Frequency			Mean
	R	O	S	
Capitalization	10	0	24	11.33333333
Punctuation	7	26	14	15.66666667
Spelling	3	15	7	8.33333333

As shown in Table 3.2, training session test 1 result: mechanics errors

Table 3.2.1. Training session 2 result: grammatical errors

Frequency			Mean
R	O	S	
32	32	16	26.6666

As shown, in table 3.2.1 training session 2 result: grammatical errors

Table 3.2.2. Training session 3 result: transitions errors

Frequency			Mean
R	O	S	
16	3	2	7.000

As shown in table 3.2.2, training session 3 result: transition errors

Table 3.3. Post-test result

Error type	Experimental G				Mean	Control G				Mean
	R	O	S	T		R	O	S	T	
Capitalization	2	0	23	25	8.333333	17	5	4	26	8.666667
Punctuation	1	14	6	21	7	9	27	4	40	13.333333
spelling	3	5	10	18	6	6	9	21	36	12
grammar	7	4	7	18	6	12	20	29	61	20.333333
transitions	13	3	0	16	5.333333	12	4	0	16	5.333333
Total	98					179				

As shown in Table 3.3 the post-test result

Table 3.3 shows that the total number of the Experimental group errors is less (98) (M=35.37906137) than that of the control group (179) (M=64.6209386). This proves the significance of using SBS in developing writing skills. Several investigators found that SBRs elevate learning. Some of these are Kahveci and Şentürk (2023), Panadero and Calistro (2023), Yorgancı and Baş (2021), Carson & Kavish (2018), Andrade (2001), and Krebs, Rothstein, and Roelle (2022).

3.2 Questionnaire Result (Students questionnaire&responses link)

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdSiIzm4uw2LJBKQUJZxoLIQxTmd2YILd3qdXSD3iAjRDQD-w/viewform?usp=sharing>  
RQ1.

To test RQ1.How does using standards-based rubrics impact writers' development of communicative writing skills? The relevant questions from the questionnaire are 1,2,4,10 and 11. Question 1 shows that 50% strongly agree,43% agree, 6.7% are neutral, and no one disagrees that standards-based rubrics can help self-assess the work before final submission. Most of them believe in the feasibility of the feedback received in drafting before they submit their assignment for final evaluation. In Q 2, 53.3,40% agree, and 3.3% disagree that standards-based rubrics help with future assignments to achieve a better grade. Q 10, further shows that 50% and 36.7% of the students were satisfied with the instructor using rubrics to grade their assignments. Yorgancı and Baş (2021) emphasized the appropriateness of rubrics to evaluate writing. They provide more recent evidence of learning (Townasley & Buckmiller, 2020), and minimize subjectivity in assessment. (Andrade, 2000). Q4 shows that 50% and 40% agree, and no one disagrees that it is essential to learn how to use rubrics to assess writing for better learning awareness. (Emily,2016). Q11 shows that 50% and 36.7% agree that using rubrics enhances accuracy in writing. Ankeny, Gentry, O'Neill, and Eshun (2023) discovered error reduction and progress of student learning and achievement, due to using SBRs.

RQ2

To test RQ2. To what extent do writers perceive the effectiveness of standards-based rubrics in improving communicative writing skills?' the relevant questions from the questionnaire are 5,7,8,12,13,14,16,17. Question 5 shows that 43.3, agree, 33.3 strongly agree, and only 3.3%disagree that the rubric upgraded their work standard. Lipnevich, et al (2023) found significant improvement in students' written performance due to rubric use. Q 7 shows that 40% strongly agree,36.7 agree, and only 6.7%disagree that the rubric helped them understand their grade on assessment. Link and Guskey (2022) argued that rubrics made students more confident and had control over their learning. Q8 shows that 46.7 strongly agree, 36.7 agree, and no one disagrees that rubrics helped assess writing. Q12 shows that 33.3% strongly agree, 33.3 agree, and 3.3% disagree that assessing another classmate's writing was useful. Q 16 shows that 43.6% agree, 36.7% strongly agree, and only 3.3% disagree that group collaborative and peer assessment helped develop writing ability. Q 13 shows that 40% agree,36.6% strongly agree, and 3.3% disagree that reviewing peers' writing improved writing skills. This means that using rubrics is an advantage. In addition to rubrics, Mahmoudi (2020) obtained face-to-face feedback and found that the students became more aware of checking their writing to exchange feedback with their peers and, thus, produced high-quality work. Q 14 presents that 46.7% agree,33.3% strongly agree, and no one disagrees that giving feedback is a practical approach to improving critical thinking skills. Hattie and Clarke (2019) argued that feedback obtained from using rubrics reduced the discrepancies between the learner's current level and goal. Q 17 shows that 50% agree,43.3.7% strongly agree, and no one disagrees that the training in the course helped them a lot with my writing. Oliver (2023) ensured that teachers recommended the application of standards-based grading.

### RQ3.

To test RQ3, 'What is the effect of standards-based rubrics compared to traditional grading methods in enhancing writers' writing skills? The relevant questions from the questionnaire are 18,19,20. Question 18 shows that 33.3% are neutral,26.7% agree,23.3%strongly agree, and 13.3 disagree that traditional grading did not improve writing; it only gave the percentage of grades. Townsley and Buckmiller (2020) claimed that standards-based rubrics provide learning evidence. Q20 shows that 30% are neutral,26.7% agree, and 23.3% disagree that traditional grading did not provide meaningful information about learning growth and, hence, did not develop learning (Guskey, 2020), thus giving rise to "does this count" (Marzano & Heflebower, 2011). Q 19 shows that 30% agree, 26.7% strongly agree, and 20% disagree that traditional grading enhanced their learning and growth. The result of Q19 was against expectations, that (30%) of the participants viewed traditional grading positively. This claim, perhaps, can be attributed to the negative statement that was intentionally made by the researcher that 'traditional grading enhances student learning and growth'. Another reason the researcher estimates that this reflects the desire of some learners who prefer easy accumulation of marks without conducting demanding tasks, considering the tremendous challenges created by EFL writing, due, for example, to the learners' incompetence in grammar and MT influence (Ahmed,2019& Hidayati,2018). In addition to difficulties in writing conventions (Baresh, 2024&Ahmed, 2019), and low learners' motivation. (Ahmed, 2024; Hidayati, 2018; Melissa, Frank, and Adam, 2022). Some educators have reported the inefficiency of SBRs in enhancing learning (Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010)

### 4. Discussion

This study investigates the significance of developing writers' communicative writing skills through Standards-based Rubrics. The analysis of the results of the questionnaire and the intervention are promising. The researcher discovered a reduction of errors produced by the experimental group due to the training sessions and prompted assessments; therefore, it complies with RQ 1, SBRs impact writers' development of communicative writing skills. Research evidence shows that the use of SBRs can have exceptionally positive effects on student learning. For example, Krebs et al. (2022) and Ankeny et al. (2023) reported accuracy and reduction of errors in writing attributed to the rubrics used. Lipnevich et al. (2023) discovered that students' written performance was more upgraded due to using SBRs. Moreover, Link and Guskey (2022) even found that students gained more confidence and control over their learning.

Further, the student's belief in the usefulness of standard-based assessment for providing current evidence of learning agrees with the finding of Townsley & Buckmiller (2020), who even add that SBR evidences recent learning by breaking the work habits according to learning goals. A further impressive result is the students' satisfaction with self-assessment, peer, and collaborative assessment that elevated their writing abilities. This result advocates RQ2 that students' perception of the validation of SBR to upgrade communicative writing skills. Students were noticed to produce high-quality work, with fewer discrepancies, because of the excellent investment of the obtained feedback. (Mahmoudi,2020&Andrade,2001; Hattie & Clarke,2019).

Many students think traditional grading does not progress learning, as it doesn't provide meaningful information about learning. Melissa, Frank, and Adam( 2022) ensured a lack of helpful feedback and the adverse effects of grades on lowering learner motivation. Advocacy of traditional grading, as the study finds, is minimal but significant. The belief of the feasibility of traditional grading reported by some students is unavoidable and that it is part of the study findings. However, seeking to develop students' intrinsic motivation is required to guarantee their complete involvement and immersion in using SBRs to tackle the tremendous challenges in EFL aspects. It can be concluded that SBRs internalize and invigorate writing abilities.

### 5. Conclusion and Implications

The present study is intended to examine the effects of Standards-based Rubrics on communicative writing skills. It concludes that SBRs can lead to significant improvements in student communicative writing. Findings confirm the hypothesis of the study: The intervention with differentiated instructions that targeted specific learning goals, and thus, the group discussion and assessment that follow create a significant change in students' writing learning and progress. Standard-based Rubrics help students identify their strengths and weaknesses within and across papers. Students provided with rubrics report less anxiety and more confidence about the writing process, and they perceive the decisions they receive on an assignment with a rubric as fairer than those assigned without one. Rubrics produce better papers. However, to ensure students' full participation and absorption in the process, it is essential to investigate ways to enhance their intrinsic motivation.

The study comes out with some pedagogical implications that are worth consideration by instructors and educational policymakers. Instructors need to create relevance between instructions and assessment via standards-based rubrics to develop good writing strategies and provide ample paths to immersing learners in learning to manifest abilities and demonstrate learning. The need for teacher training to render standards-based rubrics a classroom norm is unquestionable. In turn, instructors train students to use and construct rubrics, which are learning tools that can be adapted to learn other courses.

### 6. Limitation

Assigning five writing tasks to be conducted by the participant students could be beneficial, but using well-crafted objective writing tasks to supplant the long paragraphs will ease student workloads. Additionally, manual marking and classifying errors pose a challenge for the researcher. Further, using SBA is advantageous, but students must have a solid grasp of the goals and expectations of the process.

## 7. Future Research

One potential avenue for research is exploring the effectiveness of incorporating personalized feedback mechanisms within the rubric-based assessment framework. This could involve utilizing natural language processing (NLP) technologies to provide tailored feedback to individual writers based on their specific writing strengths and areas for improvement. Additionally, investigating the impact of integrating multimedia elements, such as audio or video feedback, within the rubric assessment process could be a promising area for future research. By exploring these innovative approaches, researchers can further enhance the efficacy of standards-based rubrics in gaining learning facilitation, fairness, validity, and reliability that foster the development of writers' communicative writing skills.

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## Informed consent

Obtained.

## Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

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## Provenance and peer review

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## Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

## Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.

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**Appendix A**

Table 2.1. A rubric for assessing mechanics, grammar, and transitions in writing

Scale Criteria	Accomplished	Good	Satisfactory	Need Improvement
1. Mechanics mastery	correct mechanics	Some correct mechanics,	Little correct mechanics	Lackofcorrect mechanics,
2. Grammar mastery	correct grammar	some correct grammar	little correct grammar	lack of correct grammar
3. Transitions mastery	correct transitions	some correct transitions	little correct transitions	lack of correct transitions

**Appendix B**

Students' Answer Sheets& Peer Assessment Sheets Link

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T8O0V5woUwcoZm5n3WW5S0V-uGZBs--1?usp=drive\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1T8O0V5woUwcoZm5n3WW5S0V-uGZBs--1?usp=drive_link)