研究ノート

An Evaluation of a Scoring Rubric in the Foreign Language Classroom

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外国語教室におけるルーブリック評価に関する研究

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要　旨

　本研究では、日本のある大学の外国語の授業におけるポスター発表プロジェクトのためのルーブリック使用に対する学生の見解を調査する。筆者は次の項目に関して質問調査を実施した。1）どの程度学生がプロジェクトの準備段階でルーブリックを参照したか、2）発表のためのツールとしてルーブリックはどれくらい学生の手助けとなったか、3）発表についての効果的なフィードバックを提供してくれるツールとして、ルーブリックはどれくらい学生の手助けとなったか。結果としては、前もってルーブリックが提示されていたにもかかわらず、3分の1の学生がプロジェクトの準備の際に、ルーブリックを参照していなかった。しかしながら、学生の反応からは、ルーブリックはプロジェクトの準備の際に役に立ったと考えられるのではないかということを示唆している。本稿では、外国語の授業でルーブリックを使用することの意義を議論していく。

キーワード

　ルーブリック、外国語として英語

Abstract

　　This study examines students' views toward the use of rubrics for a poster presentation project in a foreign language classroom at a Japanese university.　The author examined the following questions: 1) to what extent did students consult the rubric during the preparation stage of the project?　2) how helpful did students find the rubric as a tool for preparation?　3) how helpful did students find the rubric as a tool for providing feedback on performance?　The results indicate that, despite being presented with the rubric in advance, 1/3 of students did not consult it when preparing their projects.　Nevertheless, student responses suggest that rubrics were deemed to be helpful in preparing for the project and in providing effective feedback afterward.　Implications for using rubrics in the foreign language classroom are discussed.

Key words

　　Rubric, English as a foreign language

1．Introduction

Rubrics are a common way to evaluate students' performance on tasks.　This paper investigates the use of a rubric for a poster presentation project in a foreign language classroom at a Japanese university.　Specifically, the author focuses on the following questions:

1) to what extent did students consult the rubric during the preparation stage of the project?

2) how helpful did students find the rubric as a tool for preparation?

3) how helpful did students find the rubric as a tool for providing feedback on performance?

The paper begins with an overview of rubrics and the possible benefits of using them. Section 3 describes a questionnaire used with a class of first year university students in Japan. Section 4 presents the results, while Section 5 discusses the implications for using rubrics in the foreign language classroom.

2. Rubrics

Rubrics are a way for teachers to evaluate and provide learners with feedback on assignments. Stevens & Levi (2005) describe rubrics as, "a scoring tool that lays out the specific expectations for an assignment" (p.3). Andersen (2003) defines a rubric as, "a rating scale in which a verbal summary of each rating point is written" (p.88). Rubrics will be defined here as a list of criteria upon which an assignment is evaluated.

There is no a single way to construct a rubric. The two main types are holistic and analytic (Moskal, 2000). A holistic rubric provides a single description of what constitutes a given level of performance. Conversely in an analytic rubric, performance is evaluated based on specific criteria and objectives. Similarly, Stevens & Levi (2005) identify rubrics as being composed of dimensions and descriptions. Dimensions relate to a specific objective of the task and a

description provides an account of the levels of performance.

Rubrics have been described as an alternative form of assessment to standardized tests (Brown, 2004). Such tests may focus on discreet items or rote knowledge. Rubrics, on the other hand, are often associated with (though not limited to) evaluating production skills, such as speaking or writing. Rubrics play an important role in how tasks are designed (Chow & Li, 2008; Mislevy et al., 2002). In such cases, there is not necessarily a single right or wrong answer upon which to assess students. By comparing students' performance on a task against the rubric, teachers engage in an evidence-based approach to evaluation.

In addition to being an evaluation tool, rubrics provide benefits to teachers and students at several stages of the learning process. Stevens & Levi (2005) have proposed six benefits, which are summarized below:

1. Rubrics provide timely feedback,
2. Rubrics prepare students to use detailed feedback,
3. Rubrics encourage critical thinking,
4. Rubrics facilitate communication with others,
5. Rubrics help us to refine our teaching skills,
6. Rubrics level the playing field,

Stevens & Levi's list describes instances of how rubrics can benefit teachers and students. By using a rubric, teachers can provide feedback to students that is both standardized and in a time-saving format. Teachers need not write the same comment repeatedly. If a rubric is explained to students in advance,

it prepares them to better receive feedback from the teacher. By functioning as a preparation checklist, rubrics put students in a better position to think critically about their assignments. Should students have trouble with the assignment, they can show the rubric to others when receiving help. If a teacher notices consistent weak spots in students' performance, they can adjust the rubric and and/or their teaching as necessary. Finally, rubrics level the playing field for students who are less accustomed to the expectations and jargon of academic assignments.

3. Method

The author conducted a study of an upper-level first year English class at a Japanese university to determine students' opinions of rubrics. The class consisted of 29 students, 21 female and 8 male, including one Taiwanese male and one Nepalese female. Over several classes students worked on a poster presentation project and were evaluated based on the criteria of a rubric (Appendix 1).

The teacher introduced the rubric in the first lesson by showing it on the projection screen and going over each point. Following this, students were shown examples of posters from previous years with reference to key points from the rubric. Finally, a copy of the rubric was uploaded to the class page of the university's online learning system, called Manaba Folio, thus giving students access the rubric for future reference. Since the teacher would evaluate students based on the rubric, students were instructed to consult the rubric as necessary when preparing their projects.

Over the following three lessons, students prepared and practiced their poster presentations. In each of these lessons, the teacher reminded students of the rubric and where to find it. The teacher evaluated the project by filling out a copy of the rubric for each student.

The project concluded with a questionnaire (Appendix 2) given to students to gage how helpful they considered the rubric as a tool for preparation and feedback. For clarity, the questionnaire was conducted in Japanese. Moreover some students wrote comments in Japanese, which were translated into English by the author and checked by a native speaker of Japanese.

4. Results

In this section, the results of the questionnaire will be reported. The results show that 18/27 students (66%) consulted the rubric when preparing their presentations. The nine students who did not consult the rubric expressed several reasons for not doing so, such as forgetting (5 students), not thinking it was necessary (3 students), and not being able to access the rubric (1 student) due to unfamiliarity with the new online learning system. Of the 18 students who did consult the rubric, 13 agreed and 5 somewhat agreed that it was helpful for preparing their presentations. No students disagreed.

Students also responded favorably to the feedback provided by the rubric. According to the questionnaire, 26/27 responded that the rubric provided effective feedback on their poster presentations, with 18 agreeing and 8 somewhat agreeing. Only one student somewhat disagreed.

5. Discussion

In this section, the implications of the results will be discussed in reference to both

foreign language teaching and Levi & Stevens （2005） list of the benefits of rubrics. The first point to consider is that a significant number of students （1/3） did not consult the rubric during the preparation stage even though the teacher made a conscious effort to explain the rubric in class, tell students that they should consult it, remind students to consult it, and post it to the online learning management system. One reason for putting it online was to ensure that students could not possibly lose the rubric. Unfortunately, one student commented that unfamiliarity the new system was an obstacle to accessing the rubric. With a class of first-year students at the beginning of the school year, this could be a recurring issue. Ensuring familiarity with the system and having paper copies available are potential solutions. It should also be mentioned that the two students who were absent for the initial explanation of the rubric reported that they did consult it when preparing their projects. Thus the system appeared to work for them.

Not consulting the rubric beforehand potentially negated some of the benefits of using a rubric, such as preparing students to better undertake the task. As mentioned above, students who did consult the rubric reported that they experienced this benefit, and one student who did not consult the rubric plans to do so in the future.

The reason why students found the rubric helpful in the preparation stage can be seen in some of the comments from the question-naire. One student commented, "The rubric was especially helpful for students who are not good at making posters or are uncertain of how to do the project." Another student discussed using the rubric to practice their

presentation wrote, "After finishing the poster, I understood exactly how I should practice." These comments indicate that the rubric potentially acts as a scaffold for how to complete the project at both the initial and final stages. One student commented, "If each category was assigned a point value this rubric would be even better." Although groups of criteria such as 'presentation' were assigned a percentage, individual skills, such as eye contact, voice, and gestures were not given individual point values. Indicating which areas are more heavily weighted would clarify further what students should focus on when preparing.

Another potential benefit of rubrics was an increase in the salience of feedback. One student commented on the clarity of the feedback provided by the rubric, "It clearly explains the good points and points of improvement." Another student commented that they want to see more rubrics in the future, "By all means, please continue to use rubrics." These comments indicate that the feedback is helpful for further progress. The only student who answered that they somewhat disagreed that rubrics provide effective feedback was one of the students who had forgotten to consult the rubric before-hand. Future research that compares the scores of students who did and did not consult the rubric could be beneficial.

Given that students found the feedback from the rubric to be effective, it makes sense for a teacher to leverage that information for the benefit of students. One way to approach this might be to design a series of tasks that require the same or similar skills. By comparing the results of the rubric, students could measure their progress in developing

different skills for communication. Moreover, it could provide a basis for students to set personal goals on future tasks, thus providing an opportunity for students to take greater responsibility for their education. The result could lead to a positive cycle for using rubrics in the classroom.

Whether rubrics improved communication between students and anyone other than the teacher is outside the scope of this paper. However, based on observations by the teacher the rubric did assist with communication between the teacher and the class. The rubric provided a structure around which lessons could be structured to help students prepare. Moreover, when individual students had questions, the rubric functioned as a common ground around which students could base questions and the teacher could provide answers.

The teacher did find that using a rubric provided benefits as mentioned by Levi & Stevens. Having a rubric in place from the start made planning the lessons much easier because it listed the items that needed to be covered. It also allowed evaluation to be quick yet comprehensive and systematic. Students' performances were scored in class and the written components were scored afterward. In previous years, the teacher struggled to provide timely feedback while balancing other work (and personal) responsibilities. This time the process was much smoother and the teacher was able to evaluate all students by the following week's class.

The systematic nature of the rubric provided the teacher greater confidence in the scoring students. The process shifted from being impressionistic to evidence-based. Furthermore, each student was guaranteed a

minimum standard of feedback; whereas in the past the level of feedback that individuals received was inconsistent. With the aid of the rubric, the teacher was able to spot consistent weak points in students' presentations, and identify how make improvements. Specifically, the teacher was not satisfied with the quality of notes that students had prepared. Although class time was devoted to writing a script and subsequently how to prepare shorter presentation notes, many students did not actually prepare such notes or did so poorly. On the rubric, there was no specific requirement to submit notes for evaluation. Thus, the teacher was able to identify a blind-spot in the rubric which will be updated for the following year.

As the final point of their list of benefits, Levi & Stevens mention that rubrics level the playing field by translating academic jargon into plain language. Although they do not address the foreign language classroom directly, it could be added that by providing the rubric in advance students can then check unknown words with others or in the dictionary. Even when a rubric is written and explained in plain language, foreign language students may still encounter difficulties in understanding. A rubric can also prevent cultural misunderstandings about the basic expectations of the project. Another way to achieve this would be for the teacher to construct the rubric together with students.

6．Conclusion

This paper has discussed students' responses to the use of a scoring rubric on a poster presentation project. The results show that 1/3 of students reported not consulting the rubric during the preparation stage.

Nevertheless, those who did answered that it was helpful and so was the feedback.

The author discussed ways to improve the efficacy of using rubrics. To help increase the number of students who consult the rubric, the author identified ways to make the rubric more accessible to students, as well as a means of creating a positive cycle of rubric use with students. Such a cycle links the preparation and feedback stages across similar projects to help students achieve more autonomy in their learning.

The author concluded by discussing the benefits of using the rubric as a teacher. The author identified ways that the rubric helped facilitate lesson planning, communication in the classroom, and assessment. Rubrics are often viewed in terms of rating scales and categories. Ultimately, rubrics are a tool for communicating with students to facilitate learning. By evaluating the ways that teachers use rubrics, it may be possible to improve the quality of learning that occurs in the classroom.

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Appendix 1

English I for Tourism – Project: My Hero Poster Presentation

Name:_____   Hero:_____   Presentation date: May 31, 2013

Assignment description:
Make a poster about your hero and present it.   You also need presentation notes.
Your project will be evaluated on four sections:
1) Content: give information about the your hero: life, special points, and connection to your life, presentation notes
2) Poster design: balance content, pictures, and design.
3) Presentation: make a connection with your audience.
4) Notes: use notes to support your presentation

Level / Still	Excellent	Good	Needs more work	Score
Content (30%)	☐Includes full information about hero's life ☐Includes full information about hero's special points ☐Includes full information about hero's connection to your life ☐Content is well-balanced between poster and notes ☐Easy to understand	☐Includes basic information about hero's life ☐Includes basic information about hero's special points ☐Includes basic information about hero's connection to your life ☐Content is mostly balanced between poster and notes ☐No communication problems	☐Not enough information about hero's life ☐Not enough full information about hero's special points ☐Not enough information about hero's connection to your life ☐Content is not balanced between poster and notes ☐Difficult to understand	
Poster design (30%)	☐Design is beautiful and very helpful ☐Text is helpful and easy to read ☐Effective use of colour ☐Pictures/photos are helpful ☐No spelling mistakes ☐Finished fully on time	☐Disign is clean and easy to understand ☐Text is easy to read ☐Uses colour ☐Some pictures/photos ☐1 or 2 spelling mistakes ☐Mostly finished on time	☐Design is difficult to understand ☐Text is difficult to read ☐No colour ☐Little or no pictures/photos ☐Several spelling mistakes ☐Not finished on time	
Presentation (40%)	☐Great balanced eye contact & notes ☐Use the poster effectively ☐Clear loud voice ☐Smooth and confident (practiced) ☐Time 2' 30-3' 00 total	☐Balanced eye contact & notes ☐Use the poster sometimes ☐Understandable voice ☐Fairly smooth and confident ☐More than 3' 30 or less than 2' 00	☐No eye contact or no notes ☐Didn't use the poster ☐Not clear loud voice ☐Not smooth and confident ☐Very short (less than 1' 30)	

Appendix 2: Questionnaire

下記はポスター発表プロジェクトに関するアンケートです。このアンケート結果が成績に影響することは全くありませんので、正直に答えて下さい。そして、個人情報を公開することもありません。制限時間は10〜15分です。不明な点があれば質問して下さい。
このアンケートに名前を書かないようにお願いします。

１．このプロジェクトを完成しましたか？
　　ａ．はい、発表をしました
　　ｂ．いいえ、まだ発表をしてません

２．評価基準表（ルーブリック）の説明を授業中で受けましたか？
　　ａ．はい
　　ｂ．いいえ

３．プロジェクトを準備したとき、ポートフォリオ上のルーブリックを参考にしましたか？
　　ａ．はい
　　ｂ．いいえ

３Ａ．「はい」と答えた場合、ルーブリックを参考にするのは準備に役に立ちましたか？
　　ａ．そう思う
　　ｂ．ややそう思う
　　ｃ．あまり思わない
　　ｄ．そう思わない
自由コメント：

３Ｂ．「いいえ」と答えた場合、参考にしなかった理由は何でしたか？
　　ａ．ルーブリックがあることを知らなかった
　　ｂ．ルーブリックを参考にすることを忘れた
　　ｃ．ルーブリックを参考にすることは必要ないと思った
　　ｄ．その他：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿
自由コメント：

４．ルーブリックの内容はどれぐらい理解できましたか？
　　ａ．全て理解できた
　　ｂ．だいたい理解できた
　　ｃ．あまり理解できなかった
　　ｄ．全く理解できなかった
自由コメント：

５．あなたのプレゼンテーションを改善するのにルーブリックの個別フィードバックが有効な情報となったと思いますか？
　　ａ．そう思う
　　ｂ．ややそう思う
　　ｃ．あまり思わない
　　ｄ．そう思わない
自由コメント：