The Role of Using a Rubric in Assessing Sophomore Students Oral Performance at KEU and Balkh Universities

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this article is to explore the ways to assess students' oral performance (what students exactly do and what are teachers' expectation from students by using a rubric. The main problem in this research is uncertainty and students complain about their grades while teachers cannot convince their students. Since the areas of assessment are not clear it causes a challenge between teachers and students. Through this research I found that using a rubric for assessing students' performance in any courses based on the aim and objectives of a course can convince educators in term of learning outcome. The importance of this research paper is that if teachers are using rubrics and guide learners in assessing their spoken performance for more transparency or clarity between teachers and students it makes the result of teaching/learning more acceptable and the learning outcome will be more productive. This is a qualitative approach research and the participants of this study were 30 teachers and 20 students from Kabul Education University and Balkh university of English departments. After reading this research article hopefully teachers can get useful information for creating and designing useful rubrics including standard criteria to facilitate evaluation and assessment. In teaching and learning process that is the evidence of professional assessment in different level especially at the university level. In conclusion, this research has found that lack of using rubrics cause uncertainty between teachers and students. When teachers use a rubric for more clarity to guide students what they exactly do in their performance and what the teacher expect them. Therefore, they can convince each other and reach in to satisfactory results.

Keywords- Rubric, Oral performance, Assessment, Sophomore students, Universities (KEU and Balkh).

I. INTRODUCTION

The hot issue in language assessment is the movement toward engaging teachers in the use of rubrics in their day-to-day classroom-based assessment procedures. It is for teacher educators to note that rubrics are not a separate alternative in assessment but rather a virtually necessary tool in effective, responsible, performance-based assessment. A rubric is a device used to evaluate open-ended oral and written responses of learners. It is usually composed of a set of criteria or competencies, each with descriptions of levels of expectation. As we experienced it in our own classes and got a positive result.

In this article the most important issues of using a rubric have been explored. It is important for teachers to check and grade students' performance using rubrics (what exactly students did in a project or exams) also how to convince students and how students value and know the criteria of scoring in testing different courses (Brookhad, 1999). It also focuses on some elements of the role of using a rubric in assessing students' performance such as definition of rubric, types of rubrics, importance of using rubric in assessing students' performance, advantages and disadvantages, and checklist for creating and designing a rubric based on a course goals and objectives.

This article focuses on ways to assess students' performance through designing and using rubrics to

create criteria for transparent assessment, support leaner self-reflection practices and getting more productive results in teaching/ learning.

The research questions
- How to design a rubric based on a course objective, course expectation and students' performance?
- What are some useful steps for designing a good rubric?
- Why teachers should use rubrics for assessing students' written performance?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

An important issue in language assessment is the movement toward engaging teachers in the use of rubrics in their day-to-day classroom-based assessment procedures. According to Carrivenau (2010), rubrics are descriptive scoring webs used for assessing and scoring student performance. A rubric is a measurement tool that describes the criteria how a performance, a behavior, or a product is compared and measures.

Moreover, rubrics list the norms established for a specific task and the levels of achievement associated with each norm. These are often developed in the form of a matrix. Rubrics enable teachers to clearly communicate their expectations for student performance. They support more reliable and objective assessment of student work. They also facilitate detailed feedback to students. When areas of strength and weakness in performance are marked on an essay rubric, students can easily comprehend the cognitive behind their professor's assessment regarding their work.

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Rubrics are descriptive scoring grids used for assessing and scoring student performance. A rubric is a measurement tool that describes the criteria against which a performance, behavior, or product is compared and measures. Rubrics list the criteria established for a particular task and the levels of achievement associated with each criterion. These are often developed in the form of a matrix.

Therefore, rubrics enable faculty to clearly communicate expectations for student performance to students. They support more consistent and objective assessment of student work. They also facilitate detailed feedback to students. When areas of strength and weakness in performance are marked on an essay rubric, students more easily comprehend the reasoning behind their professor's assessment of their work. Also for student outcomes assessment rubrics facilitate quality conversations among faculty about student learning, shorten the time it takes to do SOA, and contribute to the validity and reliability of the assessment process (William, 2003).

Why using and designing rubrics in speaking classes to value teaching and learning? Because rubrics:

A rubric provides more simplicity and objectivity than other tools, such as rating scales and also it can create a common framework for assessment in different courses and classes. Rubrics express what counts and what is valued in a rich descriptive form to assess skills that are difficult to assess in "traditional" ways and make the criteria for assessment transparent to learners. Besides, rubrics increase reliability and validity in assessments and support students' self-reflection practices in different courses to promote high expectations of teachers and students in grading and evaluation.

According to Carrivenau (2010), there are two types of rubrics analytic rubric that presents a description of each level of achievement for each criterion, and provides a separate score for each criterion and the second one is holistic rubric which presents a description of each level of achievement and provides a single score based on an overall activity of a student's performance on a task-based goal. Holistic rubric: a holistic rubric presents a description of each level of achievement and provides a single score based on an overall impression of a student's performance on a task (Carrivenau, 2010).

Rubrics are composed of four basic parts (Hawaii, 2012). In its simplest form, the rubric includes: A description of an activity that the outcome is already assessed or an instruction that students received for their assignment. The characteristics to be rated (rows) that includes skills, knowledge, and/or behavior to be demonstrated. Also, the levels of mastery/scale (columns) and labels which is used to describe the levels of mastery and it should be thoughtful and clear. Commonly used labels include: Beyond expectations, meets expectations which have been met, near expectations, below expectations. Exemplary 4, proficient 3, marginal 2, or unacceptable from 4,3,2,1.

According to Ur (2010), for designing more productive rubrics first of all consider the course content and course objectives then consider students' level of knowledge. The description of each characteristic at each level of mastery/scale (cells) required to be clear and shared with the learners. Moreover, creating effective rubrics requires effort, care, and exactness by teachers and group of students. Very important to consider the following steps:

Review the learning outcomes and associated criteria for success and clearly list the objectives of the assessment tool.

Describe, in a scale from excellent to poor, levels of performance that you expect. In those objectives and levels, use task-specific performance as your criteria avoid unreasonably general criteria and

define the numeric scale and its terminology for the top row (e.g., 1= poor to 5=excellent).

According to Popham (1997), make your statements concise and if possible, consult other models of rubrics for ideas on how to describe expected performance also list each skill and sub skill in the first column. Manage the each considered items in the logical order, if you can.

Write a clear description for the level of success or quality needed to demonstrate proficient performance or level of understanding for each skill and sub skill. Besides, write a description for the level of success or quality needed to demonstrate the worst performance or level of understanding for each skill/sub skill. This is the poor column. For each skill/sub skill, fill in the level of success or quality that is needed to demonstrate each level of intermediate presentation or level of understanding.

Add weight and final score columns in case of need. Write a clear instruction for the observer also ask for feedback from other instructions, finally format the rubric then after trying out a rubric, consider revisions that will improve your evaluation for a better result.

When teachers use rubrics for students oral performance they should know that there are many advantages for both teachers and students it means, what are some good things about rubrics that can really do? A rubric, after all, is a sheet of paper that is all too easy for students to see at once and then push to the bottom of an overflowing backpack. However, rubrics are more important than they seem. Every time you make a rubric, you clarify your educational philosophy; you indicate where students are, where they can go, and how they will get there. As an English Professor Emeritus Peter Elbow (2010) explained that by offering your students a rubric, you're telling them the course expectations. Rubrics have so much possibility that even slight engagement with them can give many benefits.

As Heidi and Andrade (2005) explained that "If I were to simply circle boxes on a rubric and give it back with an assignment, I would still be providing more feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the work than if I had just assigned a letter grade, and it would not have taken me any longer." The importance of feedback for student learning cannot be overstated. In a rubric that included clear information about the improvement of learners work and guidance on how to do it with "significantly better performance in planning scientific experiments"; in this case these students "find themselves more competent and also more accurate in their self-evaluative in their performance judgments." That's exactly what it is hoped to achieve by combining rubric-based scores with personalized, qualitative feedback about each student's areas of strength and areas for growth. As educator and author Carol (2008) said "feedback cools quickly," so anything you can do to speed up the availability of feedback for students matters.

Nicol (2005) explained that the best rubrics can encourage students to think critically about their own work and scores. It's a fairly common feeling among students that teachers "give" certain grades rather than students "earning" them. These word choices tell that students often don't feel involved in the assessing process; they feel as if it is being done to them rather than with them or by them. To create a good rubric lets students to be involved in decision making process. Students better understand the criteria of each assignment, so they can look at their assignments with the critical eye of a teacher, allowing them to understand their past mistakes and fix their current ones. In short, criterion-referenced scoring shows that when teachers are grading, they ask themselves does a paper meets the criteria of a certain score or not to be consciously or unconsciously assigning grades based on the quality relative to the other papers in that class.

Rubrics create a common language to speak about academic work, make the learning goal clear, and level the educational playing field. In this time of increasing diversity, this last point is an important one. Researchers Kenneth and Ellen (2008) claimed that first-generation students, as well as immigrant students and students from minority backgrounds, often don't come into school with the same academic assumptions as other students on their level. If the learning target is clearer for these students, the more likely they are to meet it.

On the other hand, using a scale of 1 to 20 will make it harder to justify small differences, such as giving a student 13 rather than 14. Having three to five possible options on a scale is often effective and four is sometimes considered ideal. That being said, one of the largest working scales in effect right now is the College Board AP English essay holistic grading scale from 1 to 9. Even so, this scale is still essentially a 5-point scale broken down into pairs: 9/8, 7/6, 5, 4/3, 2/1. There are a number of considerations as well when it comes to descriptions of each dimension; parallelism and consistency are your friends here. For instance, let's say that your current rubric breaks down the dimension of citation in the following way:

- level 1 describes a paper with incorrect citations
- level 2 is a paper with sometimes accurate citations
- level 3 is a paper with many correct citations
- level 4 is a paper with complete citations

These levels have clear differences, but the language isn't as clear as it could be. Choosing to describe either amount, frequency, or greatness across all parts of your scale will help to keep the language consistent automatically.

The parallel language (using "correct") of each description shows how all the levels relate to each other, easing comprehension for anyone who encounters the rubric (Babis, 1998).

According to Mundy (2001), for designing an oral rubric very for teacher educators to divide the level of knowledge in to sections and take care about students'

level of knowledge that the whole class should be involved while reviewing the content. For example: Fluency of the target language, accuracy, level of information, logical use of the language and reasoning that are all for high level students so there is little chance for poor level students to be considered.
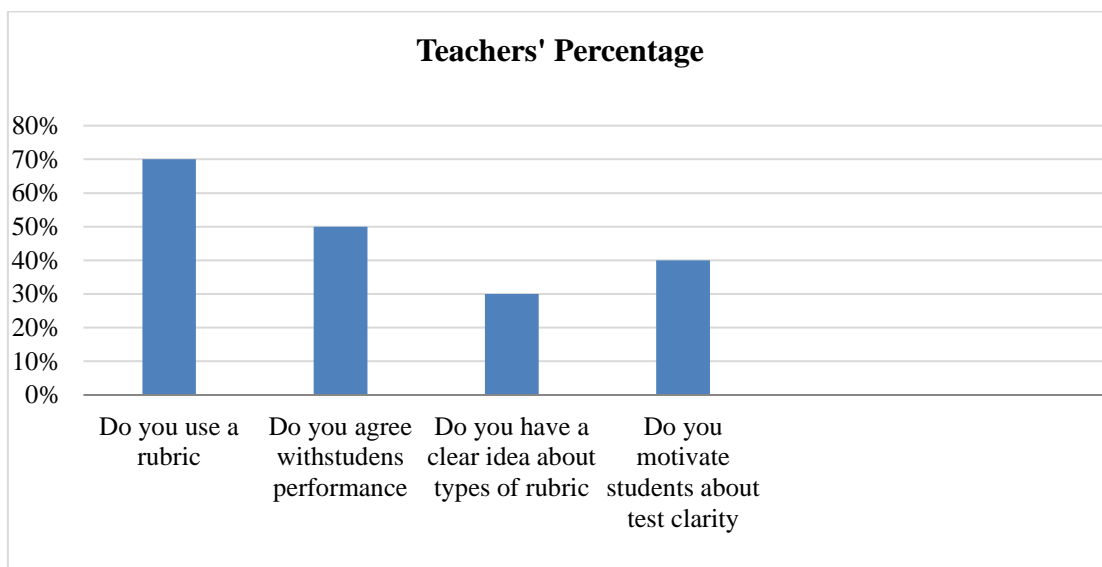
III.   METHODOLOGY

This research is based on a qualitative approach of research methodology through a questioner form. The sample population of this research included 30 in-service teachers and teachers of Kabul Education University and Balkh University of English departments who are in contact through online activities and they are in different levels and eight female pre-service students have been selected from each department to participate in answering the questioner. They were informed about the research and their confidentiality was important. There were a survey questioner indicating the role of using a rubric in learning and teaching. The questionnaires have been sent through emails and gave them enough time to answer the questions. The data has been collected through email; and analyzed by excel program. The result is drawn in the following table. Besides the data I have collected the material from my experiences in

graduate and undergraduate classes then lined them with ideas of different books and internet articles.
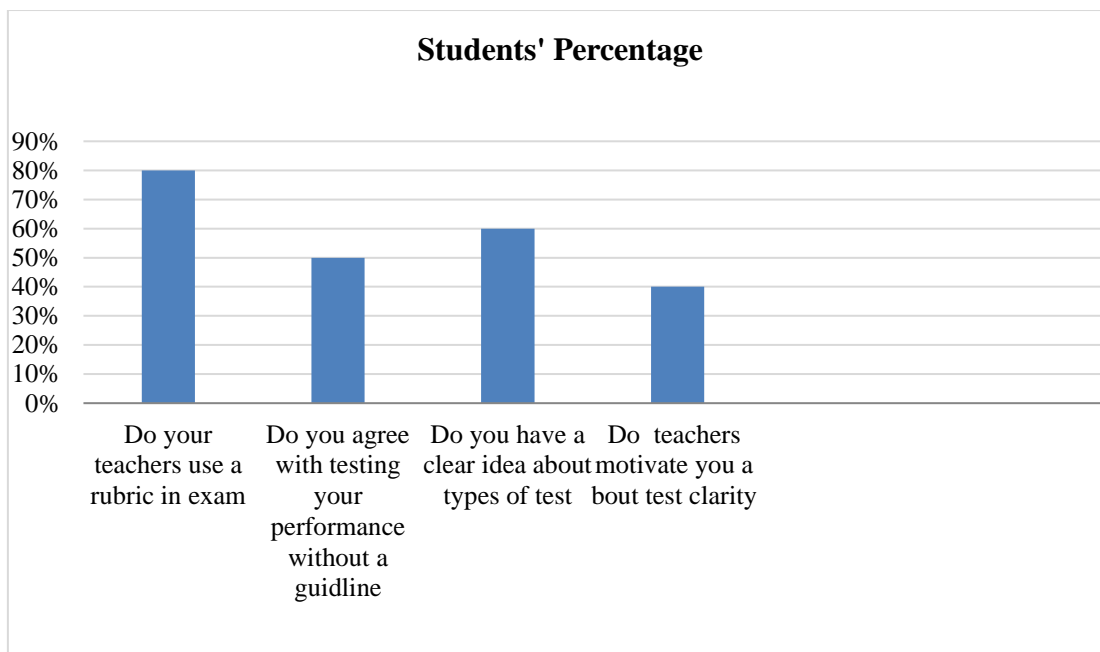
IV.   RESULT

As a result, this research has been found mostly positive ways to design a rubric for different courses including productive skills such as speaking in language classrooms. From 30 questioners distributed among teachers of schools and university teachers about the first question that (Do you use a guidelines/ rubrics for students' performance to make the goal of test more sclear)? 70% mentioned and disagreed in using a rubric by teachers to make the goal of testing students' performance. A bout the second question on (Do you agree with testing students' performance without a guideline)? 50% answered no but we give them some ideas about the exam what they should do to have a good result. The answers about question three (Do you have a clear idea about the types of tests?) 30% yes, because students focused on uncertainty of test which are not clear. A bout question number four (Do you motivate your students about test clarity? 40% disagree because if teachers explain parts of tests they just focus on one part so they should read everything for every part. See column one below.

Teachers' Percentage

we do not have any ideas about the exam what should we do to have a good result. The answers about question three (Do you have a clear idea about the types of tests?) 60% no, we are uncertain about the test which are not clear. A bout question number four (Do teachers motivate you about test clarity? 40% disagree because if teachers explain parts of tests we will be very happy to join in exam and we will have very good result for example, in our conversation course they never explain that do they check students' fluency, accuracy or all components because for different levels it is difficult to be ready for exam. See table two

As a result this research has been found mostly positive ways to design a rubric for different courses including productive skills such as speaking in language classrooms. From 20 questioners distributed among students KEU University and Balkh University students answers were different from teachers. The first question (Do teachers use a guidelines/ rubrics for students' performance to make the goal of test more clear)? 80% mentioned and disagreed in using a rubric by teachers to make the goal of testing students' performance. A bout the second question on (Do you agree with testing your performance without a guideline)? 50% answered no but

Therefore using a rubric is a must for removing students' uncertainty about exams and very important to improve rubrics with other teachers before their implementation, and take a day to talk your students through a new rubric. You can even go further and grade example of tests parts using a rubric during class, a helpful way to clarify learning goals. By clarifying learning goals, we bring students closer to them, one rubric at a time for clear and convinced result.

Beside, this research has been found reasonable ideas regarding why teachers should use a rubric? Using a rubric for assessing learners outcome is very useful because rubrics provide more clarity and objectivity than other tools, such as rating scales and creates a common framework and language for assessment also rubrics express what counts and what is valued in a rich descriptive form and assess skills that are difficult to assess in "traditional" ways to make the criteria for assessment transparent to learners and increase reliability and validity in assessments to support leaner self-reflection practices for more productive skills.

V.   DISCUSSION

The result of this study showed that in the area of designing rubrics and using them for assessing students' oral performance lack of using rubrics and guidelines for more clarity among students cause uncertainty between students and teachers.

According to Carrivenau (2010), rubrics are descriptive scoring grids used for assessing and scoring student performance. A rubric is a measurement tool that describes the criteria against which a performance, behavior, or product is compared and measures. Moreover, rubrics list the criteria established for a particular task and the levels of achievement associated with each criterion. These are often developed in the form of a matrix. Rubrics enable faculty to clearly communicate expectations for student performance to students.

Moreover, teachers can support more consistent and objective assessment of student work. They also facilitate detailed feedback to students. Besides William (2003) explained the reasons of using rubrics for example, rubrics provide more clarity and objectivity than other tools, such as rating scales also it creates a common framework and language for assessment to express what counts and what is valued in a rich descriptive form and assess skills that are difficult to assess in "traditional" ways. I agree because this research has found that mostly teachers do not use a rubric in oral tests to make the process more clarity for students. Therefore, using a rubric is a must for facilitating the assessment process.

Besides, Heidi and Andrade (2005) explained that sharing the testing process through using a rubric I would still be providing more feedback about the strengths and weaknesses of the work than if I had just assigned a letter grade, and it would not have taken me any longer to share it with students.

I agree and strongly support authors regarding using rubrics for assessing students' performance in different courses in language classes and share it with students before the exam and getting feedback from students in Afghan context because using a rubric convince students regarding their result and give them a clear idea about the course expectations and course outcome. As I have experienced using rubrics in my different classes and analyzed the course objectives based on criteria and scored every level of criteria based on specific grade and announced the total grade. I really got a positive result.

According to Ur (2010), for designing more productive rubrics first of all consider the course content and course objectives then consider students' level of knowledge. The description of each characteristic at each level of mastery/scale (cells) required to be clear and shared with the learners. Moreover, creating effective rubrics requires effort, care, and exactness by teachers and group of students. Finally, very important to consider the following steps:

Review the learning outcomes and associated criteria for success and clearly list the objectives of the assessment tool. Describe, in a scale from excellent to poor, levels of performance that you expect. In those objectives and levels, use task-specific performance as your criteria avoid unreasonably general criteria and define the numeric scale and its terminology for the top row (e.g., 1= poor to 5=excellent). Therefore, I highly recommend teachers to design and used rubrics based on their course aim and objectives. In our context we use excellent, very good and good for measuring students' abilities.

VI.   CONCLUSION

To reframe this discussion of using rubrics within a course aim and objectives framework, it is useful to return to the agreement of using rubrics in different cultures including Afghanistan universities. For better transparency between teachers and students and positive learning outcome teachers should use different types of rubrics based on teaching aim and objectives. For designing good rubrics and how to structure rubrics, it is for teachers to consider the steps from literature review. In order to reduce uncertainty between teachers and students using a rubric for more clarity is very useful to adapt it according to their course goal and objectives.

SUGGESTIONS

Therefore, I highly recommend Afghan teachers to design and use rubrics based on their course aim and objectives to have a better learning outcomes.

A sample Rubric for speaking classes

	Criteria	Excellent 40%	Very Good 30%	Good 20%	Poor 10%
1	Topic development 13%				
2	Fluency 8%				
3	Accuracy 10				
4	Logical order between sentences 10%				
5	Time consideration 4%				
	Total 60%				

A Sample Rubric for Students' Writing Planning a Lesson

No	Criteria	Percentage (20%)	Comments
1	Heading (name, level, topic, students, time and date)	2	
2	Aim (SMART) and objectives	5	
3	Material for example, book, handouts, picture, flashcard	1	
4	Explaining teacher activities, students' activities	5	
5	Evaluation (how do you evaluate the lesson)	3	
6	Homework	2	
7	Appropriate time division (45 min) on stages	2	

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