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The role of teacher-made rubrics on EFL speaking assessment: perspectives on students' decision-making, professional development, and workload

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Abstract: This article examines the diverse functions of teacher-created rubrics in evaluating speaking abilities in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) schools. It underscores the benefits of rubrics in encouraging investments, clarity, and student involvement while also acknowledging the difficulties educators encounter in their applications. The subject matter here analyzes the impact of rubrics on decision-making in assessments, their role in professional growth, and their influence on task management, based on research and teacher opinions. It looks into what practical effects and benefits come from rubrics that balance theoretical potential with practical application. This encourages a more learner-centered approach to speaking assessment in EFL settings.

Keywords: EFL, speaking assessment, teacher-made rubrics, assessment criteria, professional development, classroom management, formative assessment, summative assessment, educational transparency, student engagement.

Introduction: The field of teaching English to speakers of other languages is a vibrant one. However, inside this vitality exists a particular challenge: accurately evaluating students' speaking abilities. In contrast to the

definitive nature of a multiple-choice test, assessing spoken fluency, pronunciation, and overall communication efficacy requires a more nuanced methodology. This is when teacher-created rubrics come into influence. These carefully developed standards, created by educators, serve as a guide to navigate the inherent subjectivity of speech assessments. Research by Rini et al. (2019) emphasizes that teacher opinions of the development and execution of these rubrics greatly influence their effectiveness.

Main part

Exploring teacher perceptions allows us to connect the promise of rubrics with their practical implementation in EFL speaking classrooms. This section seeks to clarify this essential facet of assessment, promoting a more efficient and learner-focused method for evaluating the continually developing competence of spoken English. Teacher-created rubrics, carefully designed assessment criteria, have become an effective instrument in the EFL (English as a Foreign Language) classroom. Nonetheless, their efficacy extends beyond merely offering a rating system. When executed proficiently, rubrics have numerous advantages as recognized by educators, hence cultivating a more favorable and efficient learning atmosphere.

One of the most significant advantages of rubrics lies in their ability to promote fairness and transparency in the assessment process. By providing clear and well-defined criteria for evaluation, rubrics ensure that teachers are applying consistent standards across all students (Andrade, 2000). This consistency minimizes subjectivity and ensures that each student is assessed based on the same set of expectations. Additionally, as highlighted by Rini et al. (2019), rubrics make assessment criteria readily apparent to students. Students gain a clear understanding of what constitutes success in a speaking task, allowing them to target their learning efforts more effectively and engage in self-assessment. This transparency fosters a sense of ownership and empowers students to take a more active role in their learning journey. Furthermore, research suggests that rubrics can positively impact student performance. When students understand the specific criteria that will be used to evaluate their speaking skills, they can focus their learning activities more strategically (Moss, 2003). They can identify areas of strength and weakness, allowing them to tailor their practice and target specific skills requiring improvement. This targeted approach to learning can lead to demonstrably improved performance in speaking tasks.

Finally, rubrics can be a valuable tool for streamlining the grading process for teachers (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). Well-designed rubrics offer a clear framework for evaluation, eliminating the need for educators to reinvent the wheel for each assessment. This translates to a significant time saving, which can then be redirected towards more personalized feedback for students or further lesson planning. The benefits of teacher-made rubrics extend far beyond simply providing a means for scoring. They foster a classroom environment characterized by fairness, transparency, and a student-centered approach to learning. By understanding these perceived benefits, teachers can leverage the power of rubrics to create a more effective and rewarding assessment experience for themselves and their EFL students.

While teacher-made rubrics offer a plethora of benefits in EFL speaking assessment, their implementation is not without its challenges. These challenges, as reported in research, can act as roadblocks hindering the full potential of rubrics. Let's delve deeper into these complexities. One of the most significant challenges identified by teachers is the issue of time constraints (Rini et al., 2019). Developing rubrics from scratch can be a time-consuming endeavor, especially for educators already burdened with heavy workloads. The meticulous process of crafting clear and concise criteria often requires significant dedication and careful consideration. This can be particularly daunting for teachers juggling large class sizes, demanding curriculum requirements, and limited planning time.

Another hurdle teacher's face is the challenge of adapting rubrics to cater to diverse student needs (Fulcher, 2009). A rubric designed for advanced learners, for instance, might not be suitable for beginners who are still grappling with basic grammar and vocabulary. Similarly, rubrics might need to be tailored to specific learning objectives of a particular lesson or unit. This necessitates flexibility and the ability to adjust criteria based on the specific context and student proficiency levels.

Finally, despite the presence of rubrics, some aspects of speaking assessment may still involve a degree of teacher judgment (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Fluency, for example, can be a subjective concept, and rubrics might not always capture the nuanced variations in a student's speech patterns. While rubrics aim to minimize subjectivity, a teacher's experience and expertise inevitably play a role in the final evaluation.

Reference. This section embarks on a journey to explore the multifaceted world of teacher perspectives on rubrics. We will delve into the perceived benefits that motivate educators to invest time and effort in

designing these assessment tools. As highlighted by Andrade (2000), rubrics hold the potential to enhance fairness and transparency in the evaluation process. Students equipped with a clear understanding of the assessment criteria can better target their learning and engage in self-assessment, ultimately fostering a more learner-centered environment. Additionally, research suggests that well-designed rubrics can streamline the grading process for teachers, saving valuable time (Linn & Gronlund, 2000). Teachers can then redirect this saved time towards more personalized feedback and targeted instruction. As N. N. Normatova states, "The process of developing the oral speech skills of foreign language for linguistic departments of Higher Education is different from the process of developing it for non-philological departments. The process has its own peculiarities. The quality of education, which is a bilateral process between the teacher and student, depends on the didactic perfection of teacher's mastery, and on the other hand, the on the student's motivational activity. Meanwhile, if the high scientific potential and methodological skills of the teacher is integrated with the educational activity of students' high results can be achieved in the short term period". However, the path to rubric implementation is not without its hurdles. As reported by Rini et al. (2019), teachers often grapple with time constraints, particularly those with heavy workloads. The meticulous process of developing rubrics from scratch can be time-consuming, potentially hindering their wider adoption. Furthermore, Fulcher (2009) emphasizes the challenge of tailoring rubrics to cater to diverse student proficiency levels and learning objectives. A rubric designed for advanced learners might not be suitable for beginners, necessitating adaptations that require additional planning and effort. Research by Fraser & Takala (1996) suggests that collaborative development with colleagues or leveraging pre-existing rubrics as a starting point can be effective strategies to overcome time constraints. Additionally, Moss (2003) highlights the potential benefits of including students in the rubric development process. This fosters a sense of ownership among learners and deepens their understanding of the assessment criteria. Finally, Wiggins & McTighe (2005) emphasize the importance of professional development opportunities for teachers. Equipping educators with the necessary skills and confidence to utilize rubrics effectively can significantly enhance their impact on the assessment process.

Analysis. The challenges associated with teacher-made rubrics highlight the importance of ongoing professional development and support for educators.

Strategies to overcome these challenges, such as collaborative rubric development or leveraging pre-existing frameworks, can be explored. By acknowledging these roadblocks and seeking practical solutions, we can strive to make rubrics a truly powerful tool for effective EFL speaking assessment. While teacher-made rubrics offer a plethora of benefits in EFL speaking assessment, their successful implementation requires navigating some challenges. However, research reveals valuable insights from educators themselves on how to overcome these hurdles. These suggestions, when embraced, can bridge the gap between the potential of rubrics and their practical application in the classroom.

To investigate the impact of rubrics on teacher-raters, this paper will focus on the following areas:

1. How does the use of speaking assessment rubrics influence teacher-raters' decision-making during the evaluation of student speaking skills?

This question narrows the scope to speaking skills and explores how rubrics impact teacher judgment. It inquires:

- **Clarity and consistency:** Do rubrics provide clear criteria that lead to consistent decisions about student fluency, pronunciation, and organization?
- **Nuance vs. rigidity:** Do rubrics allow teachers to consider individual differences and unexpected strengths or weaknesses in a student's spoken performance?
- **Calibration and interpretation:** How do teachers interpret specific rubric criteria like "advanced fluency" or "effective use of body language"?

Speaking evaluation rubrics are a double-edged sword for the decision-making of teacher-raters. Positively, they provide stability and clarity. A common framework is provided by defined standards for organization, grammar, pronunciation, and fluency. As a result, scoring becomes less subjective and uniform throughout teachers. Rubrics can also help with interpretation and calibration through conversations and training sessions. This guarantees that educators agree on how to implement the standards in a variety of speaking assignments, such as debates or presentations.

Nevertheless, there are limitations. Certain criteria, such as "advanced fluency," might be interpreted subjectively, necessitating constant debate among educators. Moreover, too stringent rubrics may prevent

teachers from taking individual variations and subtleties into account. If a student's pronunciation deviates from the norm even little, they may be disregarded even though they have extraordinary inventiveness. Ultimately, speaking assessment rubrics are useful resources, but they cannot take the place of instructor subjectivity. Their efficacy is dependent on their ability to communicate clearly, continue to grow professionally, and remain adaptable enough to recognize the individual merits and shortcomings of every student's spoken performance.

2.To what extent does utilizing speaking assessment rubrics contribute to teacher-raters' professional development in evaluating and promoting effective spoken communication skills in students?

This question explores the potential for rubrics to enhance teachers' expertise in speaking assessment. It inquires:

- **Reflective practice:** Do rubrics encourage teachers to reflect on their expectations and feedback strategies for spoken communication?
- **Development of expertise:** Do rubrics assist teachers in solidifying their understanding of key features of effective spoken communication (e.g., pacing, tone, clarity)?
- **Collaboration and discussion:** Do rubrics facilitate discussions among teachers about effective speaking and the interpretation of rubric criteria for spoken tasks?

You can analyze teacher self-reflections on using rubrics for speaking tasks, interview data about rubric development discussions, and observe changes in teacher feedback practices to explore the impact of rubrics on professional development related to speaking assessment. Teachers obtain an expanded understanding of the essential components of effective spoken communication, tone, clarity, and body language—by interacting with the rubric's numerous criteria. This improved comprehension results in more insightful assessments and focused student comments. Collaborating cooperatively and having conversations about rubrics are equally crucial. Teachers often have conversations about effective speaking and how to interpret particular criteria as a result of creating and using rubrics. This collaborative effort offers a means of exchanging knowledge, improving comprehension of the rubric, and

guaranteeing uniform implementation in various speaking assignments.

A number of variables affect how much rubrics aid in professional growth. If a badly constructed rubric is unclear or leaves out important components of spoken communication, it might impede development. Moreover, giving instructors a rubric alone is insufficient. For instructors to grasp and use the rubric efficiently, training sessions and continuing conversations are crucial. Lastly, it's important that teachers are responsive. Instructors must be willing to use rubrics as instruments for growth rather than as inflexible mandates. You can obtain important insights into how speaking assessment rubrics support the professional development of teacher-raters by examining teacher self-reflections on using rubrics for speaking tasks, interview data regarding rubric development discussions, and observing changes in teacher feedback practices prior to and following rubric implementation. Enhanced assessment and encouragement of students' proficient oral communication abilities are the ultimate results of this professional development.

3.In what ways does the implementation of speaking assessment rubrics affect teacher-raters' workload and classroom time management when used for formative and summative assessment of spoken communication skills?

This question explores the practical implications of using rubrics for speaking assessment on teacher time management. It inquires:

- **Formative feedback:** Do rubrics streamline providing constructive feedback to students during speaking activities?
- **Summative evaluation:** Do rubrics efficiently capture student progress and achievement in spoken communication skills?
- **Time commitment:** Does creating, utilizing, and adapting rubrics for speaking tasks require a significant additional burden on teacher time?

By analyzing teacher surveys and time management logs, you can understand how rubrics impact workload and classroom time allocation specifically for formative and summative speaking assessments. Formative and summative assessments may be impacted by the use of spoken assessment rubrics, which can have a dual effect on teacher workload and classroom time management. Positively, formative feedback-giving may be

streamlined with the use of rubrics. Rubrics give teachers a framework for assessing strengths and shortcomings in spoken communication activities by providing explicit criteria for various components of the communication process. This can result in more focused and effective feedback, enabling teachers to target certain areas for growth while students' memories of the speaking exercise are still fresh.

CONCLUSION

Rubrics can improve summative assessment effectiveness. The rubric's consistent criteria make it possible to evaluate students' growth and accomplishment in oral communication skills more quickly and objectively. This can be particularly beneficial for large classes or situations requiring multiple raters. On the other hand, the initial time commitment may be substantial. Teachers must carefully analyze and work together to create rubrics that are tailored to speaking assignments. Additionally, if teaching strategies or student requirements change, continual rubric adaption may be required. Several factors determine the total influence on workload. Teachers may save a significant amount of time when it comes to summative evaluation and formative feedback if they are properly trained and supported in utilizing rubrics. Workload can eventually be further decreased by the reusability of well-designed rubrics for a variety of speaking activities.

Surveys from teachers about their use of rubrics—in particular, how much time they save or spend on formative and summative assessments—can be analyzed to learn more about this topic. Time management records can also give instructors insightful information about how they divide their time both before and after using speaking rubrics.

These 3 questions delve into the impact of rubrics on teacher-raters in the context of speaking skill evaluation. By focusing on decision-making, professional development, and workload, you can build a strong foundation for analyzing the impact of rubrics in classes.

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