

## Implementing rubrics to assess writing skills in an Adults Advanced EFL (English as a Foreign Language) Class at ICDA (Instituto Cultural Dominicano Americano)

*Santa Cabrera, Jayza Rosario, Pablo Castillo, and Jaison Jimenez*

Universidad Dominicano Americana,  
Santo Domingo, D.N., Dominican Republic

Copyright © 2017 ISSR Journals. This is an open access article distributed under the *Creative Commons Attribution License*, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**ABSTRACT:** Oftentimes, when assessing adult student's writing skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) environment, teachers and students alike might find themselves at an impasse regarding the grade given in a composition. With this in mind, we have upgraded one of most used assessment tools: rubrics.

This project proposal describes the path that we have taken to design an innovative rubric that aims to improve the assessment of writing by both teachers and students alike. Outcomes of this project include increase of students' self-awareness and independence, and the acceptance of an upgraded assessment tool.

In our upgraded rubric the proficiency categories are based on a gradient of colors for each of the relevant aspects of writing rather than on numbers (one through four), literals (A through D), among other types of proficiency indicators, with the aim of making written compositions a useful learning experience, and avoid the conflict of subjective grade.

**KEYWORDS:** Assessment, rubric, writing skills, EFL.

### 1 INTRODUCTION

Adults are goal-oriented individuals that are highly motivated when they are engaged in self-educating activities that go beyond their basic literacy skills and fulfill their needs as lifelong learners. As such, the adult learner needs to know how instructors assign grades on writing compositions for the assessment exercises to be useful learning experiences. Instructors must be able to explain how they arrived at the grade they have assigned to a piece of written work in order to avoid concerns about subjective grading. The use of a color-based grading rubric by instructors addresses both of these demands – the rubric provides detailed explanations about each of the relevant categories for writing (grammar, vocabulary, coherence, et cetera), which give evidence of the proficiency of the piece of writing.

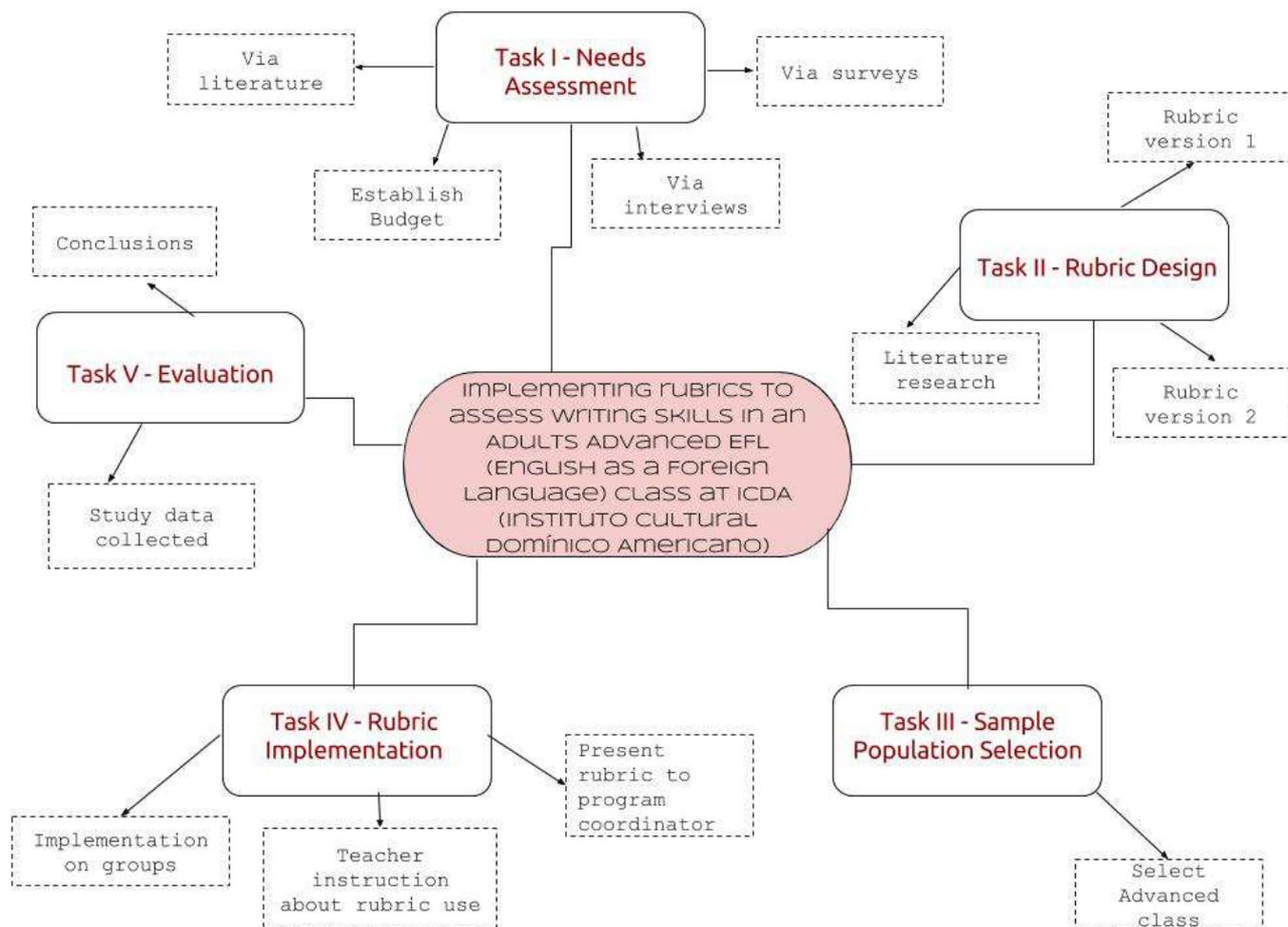
Rubrics take special precedence in today's world, where 21st Century skills - communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking - are becoming an innovative way to teach. As so, teachers need to be familiar with assessment and evaluation tools that foster student's independence and awareness of their learning, and that also leave behind standardization of grades.

This is where our project, in the shape of an innovative rubric, comes into play, designed with the ultimate goal of integrating rubrics as a classroom assessment tool in an adults advanced EFL class, in order to enhance learners' awareness and performance in writing.

To reach our goal, we must first identify the pros and cons of using rubrics to assess writing skills in adults, as well as demonstrate the implications of doing so. Furthermore, we are going to compare and contrast students' writing composition performance before and after using rubrics, which will increase students' self-awareness of the achievable standards for writing according to their level. These are our objectives.

Having all this clear, it can be said that the aim of this project is to effectively integrate rubrics as a classroom assessment tool in an adults advanced EFL class. And, by doing the aforementioned, our main purpose is to demonstrate that using

rubrics can enhance learners' awareness on teachers' expectations about what they have to learn in order to have an improved and more polished performance in writing skills.



## 2 TASK I - NEEDS ASSESSMENT

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 RUBRICS

According to the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center of Northern Illinois University, rubrics are a set of explicit criteria used for assessing a particular type of work or performance and provides more details than a single grade or mark. This means that rubrics will allow teachers to grade students fairly and more objectively.

As students many times we have asked ourselves, "Why did I get this grade?" or maybe stated, "I do not remember when you said grammar would be graded!". We used to feel very confused because of these situations. We have received a grade; however, we still do not know what it means. For this particular reason we are now talking about rubrics.

Stevens & Levi (2005) expressed, "as grading tool, rubrics can address these and other issues related to assessment: they reduce grading time, they increase objectivity, they convey timely feedback to students and they improve students' ability to include required elements of an assignment". (Northern Illinois University, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center).

The term rubric nowadays has distinct meanings, nevertheless when it comes to education, when we listen to this word we know meaningful assessment tool is the main topic. According to Oxford Online Dictionary, this concept comes from Late

Middle English word "...*rubrish* (originally referring to a heading, section of text, written in red for distinctiveness), from Old French *rubriche*, from Latin *rubrica (terra)* 'red (earth or ochre as writing material)', from the base of *rubeus* 'red'; the later spelling is influenced by the Latin form".

The use of rubrics as an assessment tool in the classroom became popular, according to Donna Korycinski (2011), in the 1970's. After that decade and until current time rubrics had been used and implemented more and more in many diverse ways inside classrooms. Korycinski argues that "when constructed properly, rubrics are highly effective tools not only to assess and evaluate student performance but also to provide constructive and informative feedback". These are part of the features that make rubrics so helpful for teachers and students. They (rubrics) serve as an expected performance reference structure that gives students an open window to improve and control their future learning outcomes and products.

## 2.2 WHY USE RUBRICS?

The author (Korycinski, 2011) quotes Andrade (2000) and Cooper & Gargan (2009) to provide reasons why educators at any level should consider using rubrics to assess students:

First of all, they need to be easy to explain. Second, it has to make teachers' expectations very clear to students, parents, other teachers and educators. Third, it should be able to help teachers think carefully and critically about what they are teaching and want students to learn. Fourth, it has to provide students with more informative feedback about their strengths and areas in need of improvement those other forms of assessment. And fifth, there has to be continued support in the progress of learning, the development of skills and understanding and good thinking.

In other words, rubrics make the teaching and learning process to be more specific and target better and more efficiently those aspects of the content that are more desirable to be gained and developed. Also we can mention that rubrics create a scenario in which feedback and reflection are vital in order to properly fulfill the expectations of teachers on student performance and improvement. They (rubrics) give the learner some kind of freedom and power, because they can critically think about what they are supposed to show and contrast it with that they are actually demonstrating. This way students are able make some important improvements, be responsible about their products and understand the nature of their grades.

To design useful and reliable rubrics we need to be experts on the area we are looking to target with it. Nonetheless, it does not matter the orientation of the rubric, all of them must include "...a list of evaluation criteria or expectations for the assignment and descriptions of degrees of quality associated with each criterion that identifies if the work has met the requirements to be considered "excellent", "above average", "average" or "below average"..." (Korycinski, 2011). The author explains that is recommended to have a least four or five levels of quality, because three or less levels would not be able to provide a valid range of description and information for analysis. In the other hand, having six or more quality levels would make more difficult the differentiation of student performance.

## 2.3 STEPS TO CONSTRUCT A RUBRIC

Andrade (2000), quoted by (Korycinski, 2011) says that, if the teacher creates the rubric solely is going to be called "performance rubric". However, if the students are involved during the process of design and negotiation with the teacher, then is referred to be an "instructional rubric". This takes us directly to the steps needed to construct a rubric. First, we have to look at examples of a variety of works and strategies used during similar courses. Second, we should make a criteria list. Third, we should revise these criteria in order to verify its reliability. Fourth, quality levels should be set according to the criteria used. And finally, the draft should be done and then revised.

## 2.4 BENEFITS OF USING RUBRICS FOR ASSESSMENT

As educators we need to be clear about why using rubrics may be beneficial for teaching and assessment, and to what extend they can be implemented. First, rubrics if correctly used, can improve student performance at the areas or area directly related with the evaluation criteria. They (rubrics) give teachers chance to clearly state what his or her expectations are and also allow teachers to show students how and what to do to meet them. (Andrade, 1997)

Second, rubrics are useful in the way they help students to become more critical, organized, rigorous, and thoughtful about their work and others' work. This is something very important for those teachers who look for students learning autonomy and self-efficacy.

Third, rubrics are planned to make the evaluation and assessment process more effective and less time wasting. Rubrics "...reduce the amount of time teachers spend evaluating student work..." When a student has a doubt rather than struggling

in order to explain the concepts or criteria, the teacher can give a faster but more meaningful feedback and point out the quality level description that explains the level of performance.

And fourth, "...teachers appreciate rubrics because their "accordion" nature allows them to accommodate heterogeneous classes. The examples here have three or four gradations of quality, but there is no reason they can't be "stretched" to reflect the work of both gifted students and those with learning disabilities..." (Andrade, 1997) Rubrics have space for inclusion of many types of learners' performance.

Even with all the evidence supporting rubrics as useful assessment and teaching tools, there are some issues that can impact the effectiveness and reliability of these awesome resources. These authors express the following about rubrics (Tierney & Simon, 2004):

"...many rubrics are still not instructionally useful because of inconsistencies in the descriptions of performance criteria across their scale levels. The most accessible rubrics, particularly those available on the Internet, contain design flaws that not only affect their instructional usefulness, but also the validity of their results. For scoring rubrics to fulfill their educational ideal, they must first be designed or modified to reflect greater consistency in their performance criteria descriptors..."

This should be an alarm bell in the ears of teachers who use rubrics. The authors argue that, there is not enough clarity of criterion when constructing rubrics. Apparently, this occurs as a consequence of the lack of knowledge about listing and setting criteria of evaluation that are valid, reliable and really measure what they are supposed to. They said that "given the fact that consistency has not been discussed extensively in relation to rubric design, it is not widely understood by rubric developers as a technical requirement..." (Tierney & Simon, 2004).

## **2.5 WHAT IS THE PROBLEM WITH RUBRICS?**

As seen by Brookhart (2013), there are common misconceptions about rubrics. They are not assignment directions set into a chart format. When Goldberg and Roswell (1999 - 2000) conducted a study with teachers in the elementary and middle school levels and found some interesting flaws:

- Teachers confounded the outcomes being measured, scoring more than one area at a time instead of recognizing them as separate skills.
- Teachers scored features that had nothing to do with the rubric (neatness, color, etc).
- Teachers scored by counting up parts or components instead of looking for evidence in proficiency of the outcomes measured.
- Teachers scored for things students had not been made aware of.
- Teachers scored products instead of outcomes.

Many educators have jumped in the bandwagon of rubrics and sometimes do not completely grasp the correct implementation of them and can make mistakes that instead of helping give a better assessment just work on hindering their students production. There are some rubrics that try to assess activities in an incorrect way, and these can be called miss-the-mark rubrics, which are the ones that assess a task but not the outcome of it.

This problem of confusing a task with a learning goal is because of the huge temptation to align the criteria to the task instead of the learning goal and because of the existence of many near-miss rubrics-engaging but empty.

Not focusing beyond tasks to intended learning outcomes is an error on two levels, because students really will think that what the teacher asks them to *do* exemplifies what they have to *learn*; and what is wanted is for the learning-focused rubric to help students aware of what was learned in the process of doing a task. (Brookhart, 2013).

Simon & Forgette-Giroux (2003) quoted by Tierney & Simon in 2004, also discuss consistency in performance criteria. They suggest that the descriptors for each level should deal with the same performance criteria and attributes in order to progressively scale one level to the other.

Since rubrics can be customizable, teachers have the freedom to create their own and that is what makes rubrics so popular and loved. In order for an educator or even student to create a rubric there are some basic steps to be followed; in short terms these steps, according to Andrade (1997), are: start by checking previous rubrics made by others; then, decide on the criteria to be used according to the objectives to be attained; decide on how to divide the quality levels; create the rubric with some models as guide; implement and last but not least, revise to see if it needs any changes made. Whether used with students to set learning goals, as scoring devices for grading purposes, to give formative feedback to students about their

progress toward important course outcomes, or for assessment of curricular and course innovations, rubrics allow for both quantitative and qualitative analysis of student performance. (Allen & Tanner, 2006).

**2.6 THE USE OF RUBRICS IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

In the Dominican Republic, the new Curriculum Design (2014) for the primary levels, cycle two (4th, 5th and 6th grade) proposed by the Ministry of Education touches on the subject of rubrics and says that the criteria set in those used to assess need to reflect what are the achievement indicators of the curriculum. The objectives can be proven to be attained with them, although it leaves flexibility for the educators to decide on which assessment tool to use.

**2.7 INSTITUTO CULTURAL DOMINICO-AMERICANO**

The Instituto Cultural Domínico-Americano (ICDA) is an institution founded on January 26th, 1946, with the aim of strengthening the cultural ties between the United States of America and Dominican Republic. The ICDA offers a wide array of services in both the cultural and educational fields, focusing on the teaching of the English language to the Dominican populace. Its many cultural and academic programs include the Language School (EDI), Preschool, the Colegio Domínico-Americano (CDA), the Universidad Domínico-Americana (UNICDA), among others.

The Language school offers its services in yearlong trimestral cycles, where the students acquire comprehension skills and participate in oral and written production in order for them to be able to communicate in whatever environment. The EDI consists of four programs: Adults (17 years old and onwards), Juniors (13-16), Playful (5-12), and Spanish as a Foreign Language (adults from 17 years old and onwards).

The focus of this project is on the Adults program, which consists of nine basic levels and five Advanced levels. They employ the communicative teaching methodology to develop oral comprehension and production, reading, writing, and cultural knowledge.

A big chunk of the development of the project mainly requires the acquisition of literary resources that enable us to design an accurate and user-intuitive rubric, like the book title *How to Create and Use Rubrics for Formative Assessment and Grading*. Furthermore, economic resources were spent on photocopies of the surveys handed out to both teachers and students, and were spent on photocopies of the rubric for these individuals. The implementation phase of the project includes trips to ICDA, which means that the transportation fees are to be covered.

**TRIANGULATION**

Both teachers' and students' surveys are comprised of eight close-ended statements to be answered with a number ranging from one (strongly disagree) to four (strongly agree). To better identify the background knowledge of teachers and groups of students selected to implement the rubric on, a closed survey has been provided for them to statistically organize their knowledge.

**WRITING ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR TEACHERS**

According to the scale described below, rate the following statements regarding the assessment of writing skills in an Adults Advanced class.

1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

I only assess my student's writing skills during compositions.	
I use different tools to assess the writing skills of my students.	
I integrate writing into all my lessons.	
I design effective writing assignments.	
I inform my students beforehand of the aspects of writing to be evaluated.	
I feel comfortable with my students being independent in their assessment.	
I provide feedback and grading to the student's writing assignments.	
I have used rubrics to assess the writing skills of my students.	

**WRITING ASSESSMENT SURVEY FOR STUDENTS**

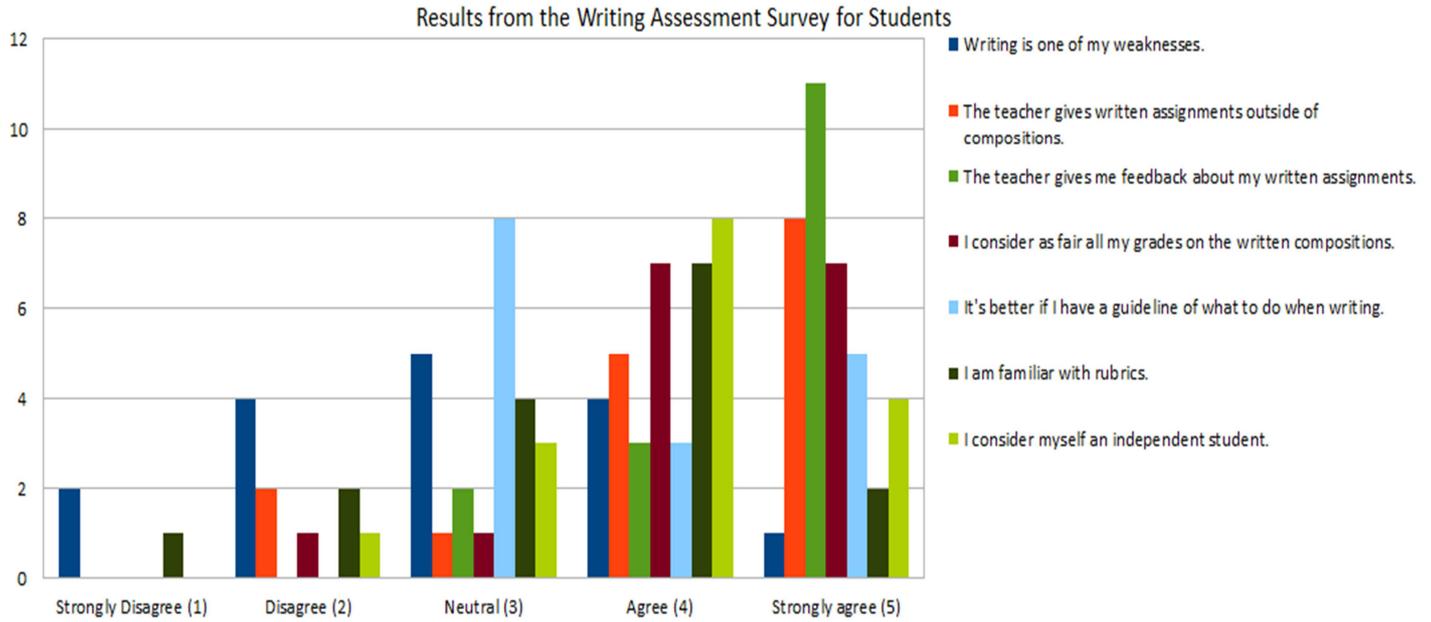
According to the scale described below, rate the following statements regarding the assessment of writing skills in an Adults Advanced class.

1	Strongly disagree
2	Disagree
3	Neutral
4	Agree
5	Strongly agree

Writing is one of my weaknesses.	
The teacher gives written assignments outside of compositions.	
I am kept informed of what elements are going to be evaluated on my compositions.	
The teacher gives me feedback about my written assignments.	
I consider as fair all my grades on the written compositions.	
It's better if I have a guideline of what to do when writing.	
I am familiar with rubrics.	
I consider myself an independent student.	

The results from the students' surveys show that:

Results from the Writing Assessment Survey for Students						
Total number of surveys	16					
Question	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Total
Writing is one of my weaknesses.	2	4	5	4	1	16
Teacher gives written assignments outside of compositions.		2	1	5	8	16
I am kept informed of what elements are going to be evaluated on my compositions.		1		5	10	16
The teacher gives me feedback about my written assignments.			2	3	11	16
I consider as fair all my grades on the written compositions.		1	1	7	7	16
It's better if I have a guideline of what to do when writing.			8	3	5	16
I am familiar with rubrics.	1	2	4	7	2	16
I consider myself an independent student.		1	3	8	4	16



Relative values of students' survey results, according to agreement, neutrality, and disagreement, to be presented in percentages.

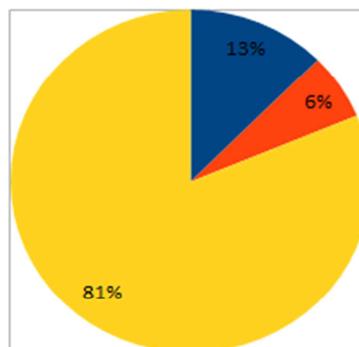
Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
0.375	0.3125	0.3125
0.125	0.0625	0.8125
0.0625	0	0.9375
0	0.125	0.875
0.0625	0.0625	0.875
0	0.5	0.5
0.1875	0.25	0.5625
0.0625	0.1875	0.75

A more detailed examination of the data follows

- 31.25% of the students consider that writing is one their weaknesses, in contrast to 37.5% of students that disagree with the statement. 31.25% of the students were neutral in the matter.

**The teacher gives written assignments outside of compositions.**

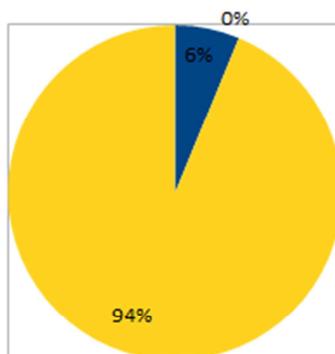
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



2. An overwhelming 93.75% of the students are aware and informed of what is going to be evaluated during compositions. One student out of sixteen considers that s/he is not kept informed of these matters.

I am kept informed of what elements are going to be evaluated on my compositions.

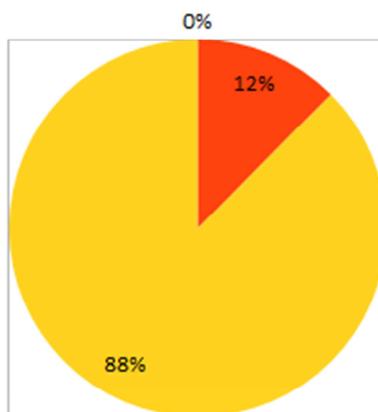
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



3. When asked if they were given feedback about their written assignments, 87.5% of the students were positive about this, while 12.5% disagreed with the statement.

The teacher gives me feedback about my written assignments.

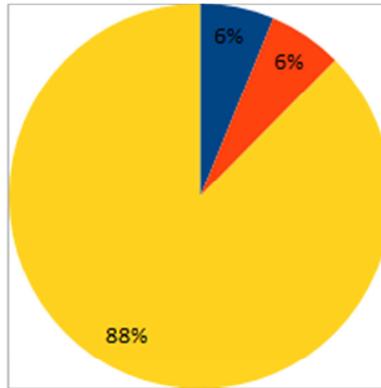
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



4. 87.5% of the students considered that the grades on their compositions were fair, and only 6.25% did not consider them as so. Same percentage of students remained neutral.

I consider as fair all my grades on the written compositions.

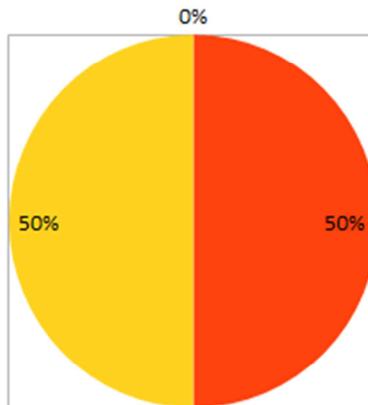
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



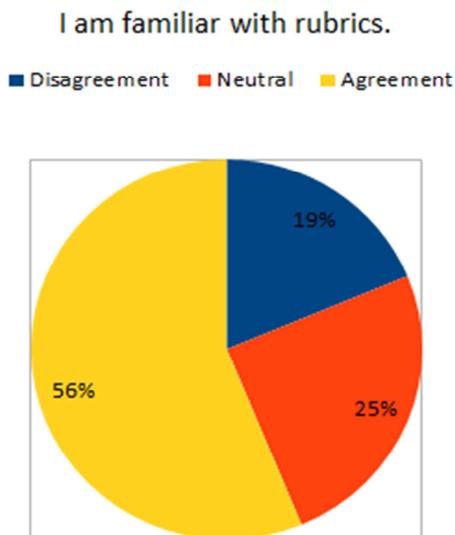
5. Half of the students (50%) believe that is better to have guidelines when writing, while the other half remained neutral.

It's better if I have a guideline of what to do when writing.

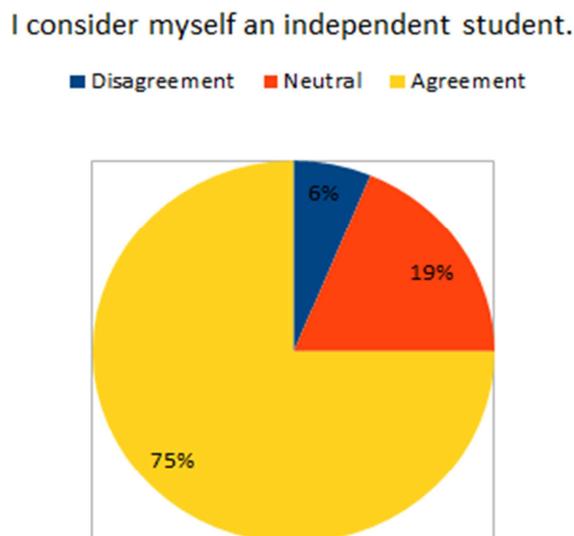
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



6. A little bit over a half (56.25%) of the students are familiar with rubrics; 18.75% are not familiar with them, and 25% remained neutral.



7. 75% of the students consider themselves as independent learners, while only one disagrees with the statement. The remaining 18.75 of the students were neutral on the topic.

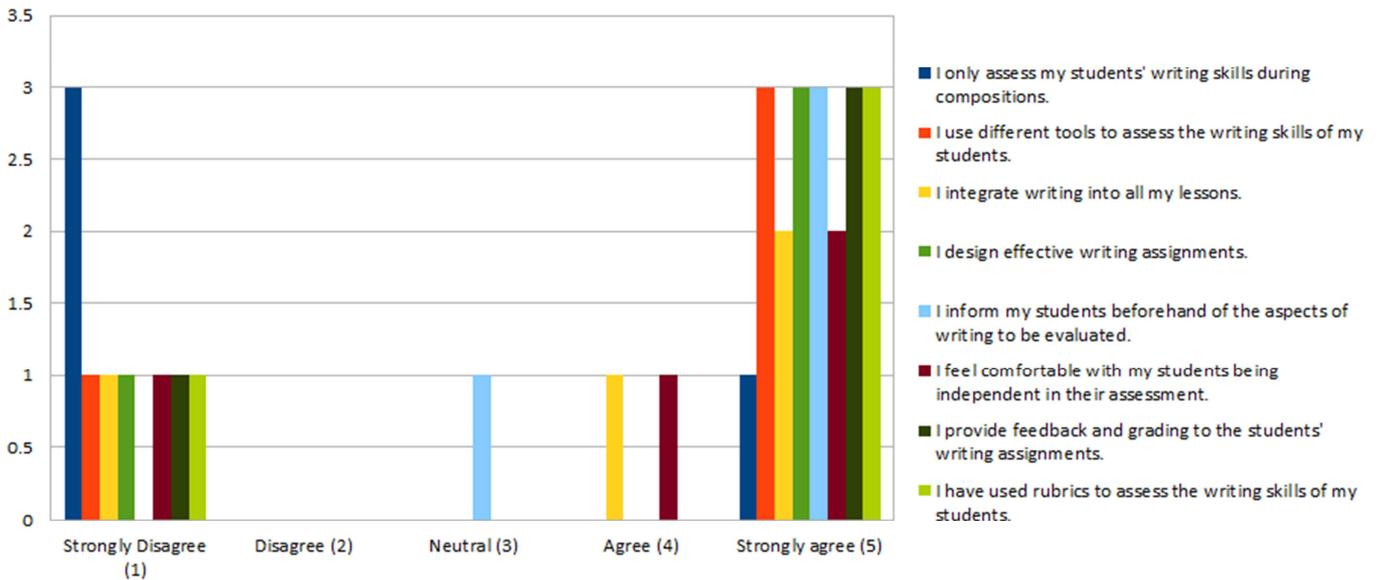


Firstly, only a little bit over a half of the students are familiar with rubrics, which means that we must work on introducing and giving instructions on the rubric to the percentage of students that are not familiar with them. Even if the rubric is self-explanatory and user-friendly, it is of utmost importance that every student is on the same page. Regarding the aspect of student independence, that 75% must be taken to a 100% if we are to wholly achieve our goals. Once this is done, we believe that the aspects of satisfaction with the grades and the reception of feedback will greatly increase, as both teachers and students will work together to cover them.

On the other hand, the results from the teachers' surveys these results, as seen below, pose some important implications for our project. They show that:

Results from the Writing Assessment Survey for Teachers						
Total number of surveys	4					
Question	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Total
I only assess my students' writing skills during compositions.	3				1	4
I use different tools to assess the writing skills of my students.	1				3	4
I integrate writing into all my lessons.	1			1	2	4
I design effective writing assignments.	1				3	4
I inform my students beforehand of the aspects of writing to be evaluated.			1		3	4
I feel comfortable with my students being independent in their assessment.	1			1	2	4
I provide feedback and grading to the students' writing assignments.	1				3	4
I have used rubrics to assess the writing skills of my students.	1				3	4

As well as a representation of the results with bars

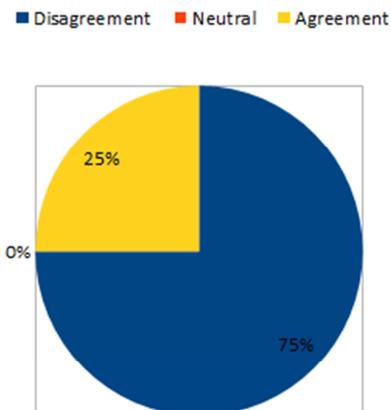


Relative values of teachers' survey results, according to agreement, neutrality, and disagreement, to be presented in percentages.

Disagreement	Neutral	Agreement
0.75	0	0.25
0.25	0	0.75
0.25	0	0.75
0.25	0	0.75
0	0.25	0.75
0.25	0	0.75
0.25	0	0.75
0.25	0	0.75

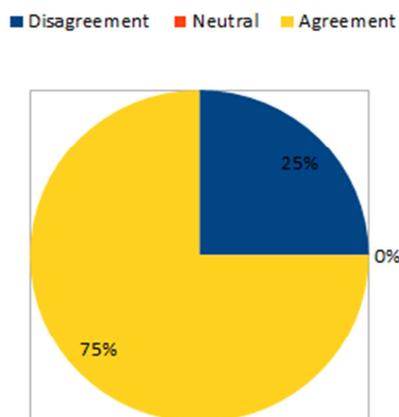
1. One out of four teachers ONLY assesses the students during the compositions.

I only assess my students' writing skills during compositions.



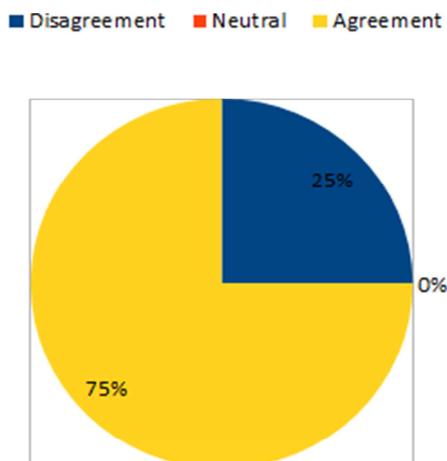
2. 75% of the teachers use different tools to assess their students' writing skills, while the other 25% doesn't.

I use different tools to assess the writing skills of my students.



3. Three out of four teachers integrate writing in all of their teaching lessons.

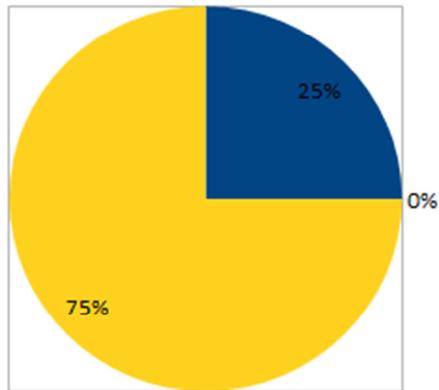
I integrate writing into all my lessons.



4. 75% of the teachers consider that they design effective writing assignments for the students. The remaining 25% disagrees with this statement.

I design effective writing assignments.

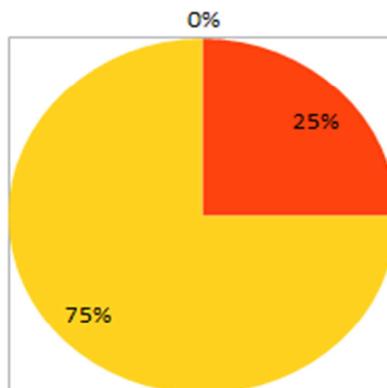
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



5. 75% of the teachers inform their students about which aspects of their writing are going to be evaluated. The other 25% remained neutral about this statement.

I inform my students beforehand of the aspects of writing to be evaluated.

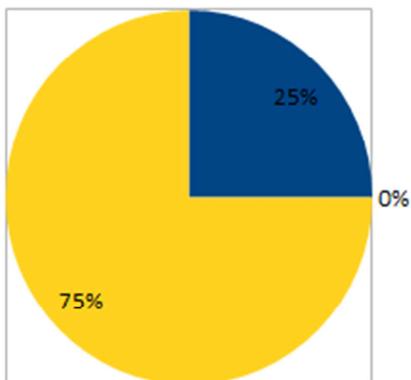
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



6. Regarding students' independence, 75% of the teachers feel comfortable with them being independent in their assessment. None of them feel neutral about this aspect.

**I feel comfortable with my students being independent in their assessment.**

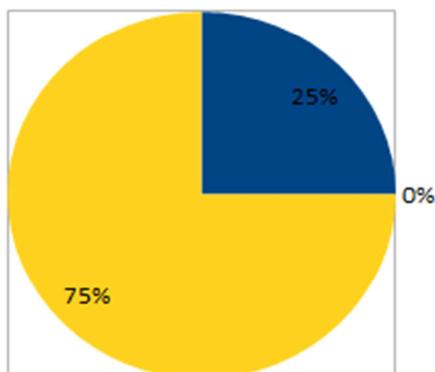
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



7. Majority of teachers (75%) provide feedback and grading to the students about their performance during the compositions. Only one teacher, equivalent to 25%, does not provide feedback.

**I provide feedback and grading to the students' writing assignments.**

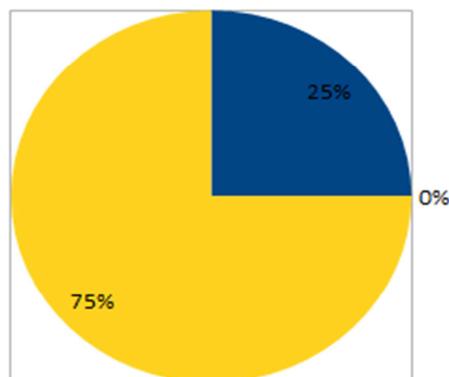
■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



8. Three out of the four teachers have used some type of rubric to assess the writing skills of their students.

### I have used rubrics to assess the writing skills of my students.

■ Disagreement ■ Neutral ■ Agreement



Among the implications of these results, on the first hand, we can safely infer that the instructors are open to the use of a new type of rubric and implement it on their classes to assess the writing skills of their students, as evidenced by the fact that they use different assessment tools and design writing assignments themselves.

Since the majority of the teachers give writing assignments outside compositions, these can be used as an introduction of the rubric and preparation practice for the moment of the compositions. Furthermore, this introduction and preparation process will not take time away from regular classes since the teachers already inform the students about the aspects to be evaluated, and it will simplify the moment the students give feedback because student's independence and awareness of their learning will be increased.

## 3 TASK II - RUBRIC DESIGN

### 3.1 PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

When assessing learning process what teachers do "is...not only about measuring student learning, but actually improving it", as Darling-Hammond (2004), cited by (Abedi, 2010) expressed. Abedi, later argues about performance assessment as the mean through which we educators can improve the significance and relevance of learning processes. He believes assessing performance strategies are the best way to accomplish learning goals "...because they not only engage these students and give them a chance to demonstrate their knowledge but also disclose more in-depth information on students' academic needs".

Even though we are capable of assessing students' performance in a great variety of forms, we can avoid and reduce linguistic complexity of tasks and activities in other subject matter that involve distinct type of abilities, and skills; this cannot be done with writing.

Abedi (2010) on Performance Assessments for English Language Learners report:

"Describes how performance assessments can help the ELL student population demonstrate what they know and are able to do. Unfortunately, research literature on performance assessments for English language learners is thin, but it offers evidence on the effectiveness and usefulness of performance assessments for these students".

### 3.2 WRITING PERFORMANCE

When we assess writing we have to understand that, first it is a process of representing and expressing language in visual and tactile forms. We need to have in mind that the main purpose of writing is communication. (Ager) Second, it must use artificial marks or graphic signs in durable surfaces as print paper, or any electronic platform just like forums and digital documents. (Daniels, 1996) Third, we need to have clear that writing involves a set or relatively fixed and consistent rules and fashion that is arbitrarily oriented to represent phonemes and sound of spoken language. This has to be done in a way that both written and spoken language, reflect each other.

Steven Fischer (2001), explained that writing goes beyond simple graphical representations. He talked about way writing is used to symbolize not only object and images, but culture and human nature itself.

It is known that performance is "the accomplishment of a given task measured against preset known standards of accuracy, completeness, cost, and speed..." Therefore, we can say performance "...is deemed to be the fulfillment of an obligation, in a manner that releases the performer..." is able to demonstrate objectively his or her level of mastery in certain area or skill. (Performance, 2016)

And we asked, how can we put together these two terms in the same page? Well, it is actually simple. If we understand the implication of writing as a system and performance as an observable and measurable demonstration of mastery and understanding, we will be able to do it. This writing performance is the criteria the educators use as a clear demonstration of written language conventions domain and mastery. For this, is vital to comprehend that "...language factors in performance assessments may even have a greater level of impact on student performance than for native speakers of English...." (Abedi, 2010).

As a response to this concern, "a distinction should be made between language related to the construct being measured (construct-relevant) and language not necessarily relevant to the content (construct-irrelevant)". This will help us focus specifically on what is important and necessary to be measured. Also, one thing educators can achieve by evaluating performance is evidence that allow them judge their students' levels.

Darling-Hammond (2006) (cited by Abedi, 2010) indicates:

"Performance assessments that require students to evaluate and solve complex problems, conduct research, write extensively, and demonstrate their learning in projects, papers, and exhibitions have proven key to motivating students and attaining high levels of learning in redesigned high schools (p. 655)."

Our intention is to use rubrics as an assessment tool that allow students to get involve in these type of challenging activities in which they have to think hard and make a great deal of effort in order to be successful. Thus, motivation will increase, but also their interest in own learning process understanding. Rubrics can help the learners to become more confident when performing, these tools are meant to serve as guides that give them a more effective view of what is expected to be done and what and how performance is going to be evaluated. As Firestone, Mayrowetz, and Fairman (1998) point out, "performance-based assessment can change specific behaviors and procedures in the classroom more easily than the general paradigm for teaching a subject". (Abedi, 2010)

These authors are suggesting that teachers can develop better instructional knowledge and more effective teaching and managing strategies when using assessment based on performance. We believe this is beneficial for both, the teacher and the student, because this approach will create opportunities for learners to be more aware of how the perform and what is the meaning of everything they show up during classroom demonstrations and practices.

### **3.3 COMMON EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK**

Each time we work with any kind of learners, educators need to have a clear understanding of their target population capacities, skills and levels of proficiency. This will allow instructors to create more effective lesson plans and use strategies that really help students move from one stage to the other. In regards to these purposes, the Common Reference Levels can be classified, arranged and modified in distinct ways. The first is the global scale as it is shown in the next table.

Table 1: Common Reference Levels: Global Scale

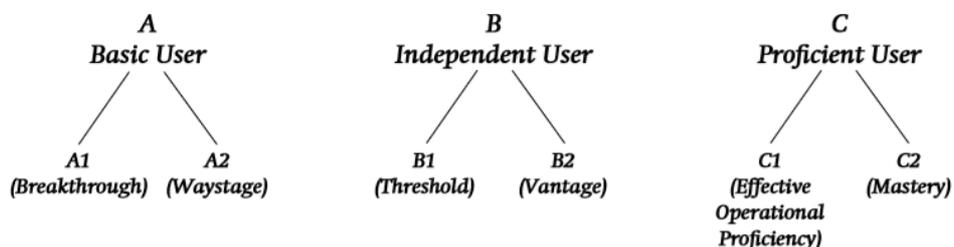
Proficient User	C2	Can understand with ease virtually everything heard or read. Can summarise information from different spoken and written sources, reconstructing arguments and accounts in a coherent presentation. Can express him/herself spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of meaning even in more complex situations.
	C1	Can understand a wide range of demanding, longer texts, and recognise implicit meaning. Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. Can use language flexibly and effectively for social, academic and professional purposes. Can produce clear, well-structured, detailed text on complex subjects, showing controlled use of organisational patterns, connectors and cohesive devices.
Independent User	B2	Can understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialisation. Can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible without strain for either party. Can produce clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects and explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
	B1	Can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. Can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. Can produce simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. Can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.
Basic User	A2	Can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment). Can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters. Can describe in simple terms aspects of his/her background, immediate environment and matters in areas of immediate need.
	A1	Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type. Can introduce him/herself and others and can ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has. Can interact in a simple way provided the other person talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

According to Council of Europe, "in order to orient learners, teachers and other users within the educational system for some practical purpose, however, a more detailed overview is likely to be necessary". (Language Policy Unit, 2001) This implies that in order to properly develop the practical usage of this framework we need to have a more specific classification. Such subdivision of the global scale "...can be presented in the form of a grid showing major categories of language use at each of the six levels..."

The Common European Framework provides an example in Table 2, "...is a draft for a self-assessment orientation tool based on the six levels. It is intended to help learners to profile their main language skills, and decide at which level they might look at a checklist of more detailed descriptors in order to self-assess their level of proficiency". (Language Policy Unit, 2001) As educators having an assessment tool that allow students to be more independent and aware learners, is very useful. We can provide feedback that is clear and understandable, and objectively founded. At the same time the tool serves as a reference guide of performance in any area that is desired to be measured.

These charts give data that can be used to design and elaborate rubrics for different purposes. Using the Common European Reference teachers can evaluate through rubric implementation a great variety of skills "... by restricting the range of levels and categories covered to those relevant to a particular purpose..." As a consequence "... it will be possible to add more detail: finer levels and categories. Such detail would enable a set of modules to be 'mapped' relative to one another – and also to be situated in relation to the Common Framework." (Language Policy Unit, 2001)

CEF formulates a mathematically based scale that allows educators to interpret more objectively and classify learners' performance by establishing a set of levels. This way, we can evidence the "...number and nature of levels appropriate to the organization of language learning and the public recognition of achievement. It seems that an outline framework of six broad levels gives an adequate coverage of the learning space relevant to European language learners for these purposes..."



After taking a look at these six levels we notice that they are "... respectively higher and lower interpretations of the classic division into basic, intermediate and advanced..." In addition, being capable of changing the way performance levels are seemed permit the evaluation process to be more open and to provide a greater sense of fairness when results are given. (Language Policy Unit, 2001).

Table 2: Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid (part 1)

		A1	A2	B1
U N D E R S T A N D I N G	Listening	I can recognise familiar words and very basic phrases concerning myself, my family and immediate concrete surroundings when people speak slowly and clearly.	I can understand phrases and the highest frequency vocabulary related to areas of most immediate personal relevance (e.g. very basic personal and family information, shopping, local area, employment). I can catch the main point in short, clear, simple messages and announcements.	I can understand the main points of clear standard speech on familiar matters regularly encountered in work, school, leisure, etc. I can understand the main point of many radio or TV programmes on current affairs or topics of personal or professional interest when the delivery is relatively slow and clear.
	Reading	I can understand familiar names, words and very simple sentences, for example on notices and posters or in catalogues.	I can read very short, simple texts. I can find specific, predictable information in simple everyday material such as advertisements, prospectuses, menus and timetables and I can understand short simple personal letters.	I can understand texts that consist mainly of high frequency everyday or job-related language. I can understand the description of events, feelings and wishes in personal letters.
S P E A K I N G	Spoken Interaction	I can interact in a simple way provided the other person is prepared to repeat or rephrase things at a slower rate of speech and help me formulate what I'm trying to say. I can ask and answer simple questions in areas of immediate need or on very familiar topics.	I can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar topics and activities. I can handle very short social exchanges, even though I can't usually understand enough to keep the conversation going myself.	I can deal with most situations likely to arise whilst travelling in an area where the language is spoken. I can enter unprepared into conversation on topics that are familiar, of personal interest or pertinent to everyday life (e.g. family, hobbies, work, travel and current events).
	Spoken Production	I can use simple phrases and sentences to describe where I live and people I know.	I can use a series of phrases and sentences to describe in simple terms my family and other people, living conditions, my educational background and my present or most recent job.	I can connect phrases in a simple way in order to describe experiences and events, my dreams, hopes and ambitions. I can briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans. I can narrate a story or relate the plot of a book or film and describe my reactions.
W R I T I N G	Writing	I can write a short, simple postcard, for example sending holiday greetings. I can fill in forms with personal details, for example entering my name, nationality and address on a hotel registration form.	I can write short, simple notes and messages relating to matters in areas of immediate need. I can write a very simple personal letter, for example thanking someone for something.	I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.

Table 2: Common Reference Levels: self-assessment grid (part 2)

B2	C1	C2
I can understand extended speech and lectures and follow even complex lines of argument provided the topic is reasonably familiar. I can understand most TV news and current affairs programmes. I can understand the majority of films in standard dialect.	I can understand extended speech even when it is not clearly structured and when relationships are only implied and not signalled explicitly. I can understand television programmes and films without too much effort.	I have no difficulty in understanding any kind of spoken language, whether live or broadcast, even when delivered at fast native speed, provided I have some time to get familiar with the accent.
I can read articles and reports concerned with contemporary problems in which the writers adopt particular attitudes or viewpoints. I can understand contemporary literary prose.	I can understand long and complex factual and literary texts, appreciating distinctions of style. I can understand specialised articles and longer technical instructions, even when they do not relate to my field.	I can read with ease virtually all forms of the written language, including abstract, structurally or linguistically complex texts such as manuals, specialised articles and literary works.
I can interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity that makes regular interaction with native speakers quite possible. I can take an active part in discussion in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining my views.	I can express myself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions. I can use language flexibly and effectively for social and professional purposes. I can formulate ideas and opinions with precision and relate my contribution skilfully to those of other speakers.	I can take part effortlessly in any conversation or discussion and have a good familiarity with idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. I can express myself fluently and convey finer shades of meaning precisely. If I do have a problem I can backtrack and restructure around the difficulty so smoothly that other people are hardly aware of it.
I can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to my field of interest. I can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.	I can present clear, detailed descriptions of complex subjects integrating sub-themes, developing particular points and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.	I can present a clear, smoothly flowing description or argument in a style appropriate to the context and with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view. I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences.	I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues. I can select style appropriate to the reader in mind.	I can write clear, smoothly flowing text in an appropriate style. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

We propose and designed a modified color-coded rubric to assess, specifically, the writing skills of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners, in an Adults Advanced class at the Instituto Cultural Dominicano Americano (ICDA). We count with sixteen (16) students randomly selected from the Adults Advanced program available classes, which range across Adults Advanced 1 to Adults Advanced 5.

During a normal trimestral cycle, all students of the Language school at ICDA are assessed with two written compositions: the first one before the midterm exam and the second one before the final test. The students are provided with an answer

sheet for each composition, in which there's a segment titled "Overall Evaluation of Tasks". The following tasks are assessed: grammar/mechanics, vocabulary/spelling, development/coherence, and content/format. Each aspect of writing has a value that when summed gives you a total of a hundred points, as we can see below.

OVERALL EVALUATION OF TASKS	
Grammar/Mechanics:	_____ /30
Vocabulary/Spelling:	_____ /30
Development/Coherence:	_____ /20
Content/Format:	_____ /20
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>_____ /100</b>

The first draft that we designed of the rubric, aimed to assess eight writing criteria on the Adults Advanced levels:

- creativity
- grammar conventions
- main ideas
- thought sequence
- organization
- supporting ideas
- spelling
- word choice

This rubric proposal is meant to reduce students' feelings like "Why did I get a 4 instead of 5?" and "Why did my partner get a better grade if we had almost the same mistakes?". Also, this in an attempt to make rubrics that assesses writing more visual and interesting.

The above mentioned criteria were selected for the sole reason of having a context-free and context-relevant rubric: the criteria are applicable to whichever environment, not exclusive to ESL or adults. At the same time, the criteria are relevant to whichever topic and language chunk the students are to be assessed in. Furthermore, the criteria are self-explanatory and user-friendly, since they describe common aspects of language and of written works. For example, *word choice* deals with vocabulary range and control (depending of the level of the students, they should master a certain number of words); *grammar conventions* deal with the grammatical accuracy of the written piece; *creativity* deals with how descriptions flow and with the natural style of the writer; *spelling* is related to how the words are written, and we have assigned an orthographic control aspect since the compositions are handwritten. At this point, our criteria are too broad and we have assigned any quality levels descriptors to each of the colors for each criteria.

3.4 SELF-ASSESSMENT RUBRICS

3.4.1 COLOR-CODED RUBRIC: FIRST DRAFT

Writing Composition Rubric						
Criteria	Quality levels					
There is creativity and originality shown.						
There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.						
Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea.						
The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.						
Ideas are coherently organized.						
The student provides evidence to support main idea.						
Student shows mastering of spelling.						
There is a considerable use and variety of words.						

In the second draft of the rubric we went down to five definite writing criteria:

- Creativity
- Content/format
- Development/coherence
- Grammar
- Vocabulary/Word choice

In contrast with the first draft, we have grouped the criteria under specific aspects of writing. Instead of having two criteria related to the same aspect ('the student shoes a clear and identifiable main idea' and 'the student provides evidence to support main idea'), we grouped into one – content and format. We can also say that this format takes after the one already in used for compositions at the ICDA.

3.4.2 COLOR-CODED RUBRIC: SECOND DRAFT

At this point we have assigned which quality levels each color signifies according to the criteria.

Writing Composition Rubric						
Criteria	Quality levels					
	C2	C1	B2	B1	A2	A1
<i>Creativity</i>						
<i>Content/Format</i>						
<i>Development/coherence</i>						
<i>Grammar</i>						
<i>Vocabulary/Word Choice</i>						

3.4.3 SELF-ASSESSMENT COLOR CODED RUBRIC THIRD DRAFT

<b>Written Composition Rubric</b>						
<b>Name:</b>						
<b>Course code:</b>			<b>Date:</b>			
<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Quality Levels</b>					
	<b>C2</b>	<b>C1</b>	<b>B2</b>	<b>B1</b>	<b>A2</b>	<b>A1</b>
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	<input type="checkbox"/>					
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	<input type="checkbox"/>					

3.5 SELF-ASSESSMENT SCALE FOR ELEMENTARY LEARNER LEVELS

CRITERIA DESCRIPTION

THE BASIC USER: A1 (BREAKTHROUGH)

"The basic user has the most elementary expressions..." When it comes to communication this speaker is dependent of the "...willingness on the interlocutor to adapt to the attained level – interlocutors assistance is necessary..." (Language Policy Unit, 2001)

This Language User "can understand and use familiar everyday expressions and very basic phrases aimed at the satisfaction of needs of a concrete type". Is also capable of introducing him/herself, "...ask and answer questions about personal details such as where he/she lives, people he/she knows and things he/she has..." However a great deal of the interaction will regard on the interlocutor's patience and ability to assist this user.

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>A1 (Breakthrough)</b>
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	Shows little originality and mechanic thinking.
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	Can write simple isolated phrases and sentences.
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	Can link words or group of words with very basic linear connectors like 'and' or 'then'.
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	Shows only limited control of a few grammatical structures and sentence patterns in a learnt repertory.
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	Domains a basic repertory of isolated phrases and words related to specific and punctual situations.

A1 User "Can Do" Statements for Writing Skills (Government of Saskatchewan, 2013)

1. I can print/write short messages such as post cards and birthday greetings.
2. I can print/write simple information about myself such as my name, age, address, and my favorite things.
3. I can print/write simple descriptions of everyday objects like the color of my house or a brief description of my pet.

**THE BASIC USER: A2 (WAYSTAGE)**

**GENERAL ASPECTS**

This user can "...understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to areas of most immediate relevance..." like: very basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment, etc. The "Waystage" user is capable of communicating in simple situations. These can be related to family routines, to regular usage colloquial expressions that allow him/her to exchange information. (Language Policy Unit, 2001)

Criteria	A2 (Waystage)
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	Shows a repertory of vaguely original ideas,
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	Can write a series of simple phrases and sentences linked with simple connectors.
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	Can link words or groups of words with simple connectors like 'and', 'but', and 'because'.
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	Uses some simple structures correctly but still systematically makes mistakes - like mixing up verb tenses or misuse of pronouns.
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	Masters a vocabulary that is sufficient for the expression of basic communicative needs involving familiar contexts and topics.

**A2 User "Can Do" Statements for Writing Skills (Government of Saskatchewan, 2013)**

1. I can write brief descriptions of common objects, events, or familiar places.
2. I can describe an aspect of daily life, an event, or a personal experience very briefly in simple language. I can include concrete details such as what, where, and when.
3. I can exchange useful information with friends in emails or short notes.
4. I can write a very simple story such as the best holiday ever or my life in the future.
5. I can write a summary sentence of a text's main ideas.

**THE INDEPENDENT USER: B1 (THRESHOLD)**

**GENERAL ASPECTS**

B1 (Threshold) user should be perfectly able to "understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters..." that can be normally found in work and school, for example. These user are supposed to deal with most situations likely to arise when travelling to unknown places in an area where the target language is spoken. Also, in this stage he/she starts to be independent, users become able to "...describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions and briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans..." (Language Policy Unit, 2001).

Criteria	B1 (Threshold)
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	Somewhat shows originality and insight of creative thinking. He/she is capable of put down in written one personal's touch.
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	Can write straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects by linking a series of shorter elements to a standard format.
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	Can link a series of shorter discrete elements into a connected, linear sequence of points.
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	Is able to communicates with reasonable accuracy in familiar contexts; noticeable influence of mother tongue, but is capable of delivering and expressing his/her intentions.
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	Has a sufficient vocabulary to express herself/himself on most topics pertinent to everyday life, but major errors still occur when expressing more complex thoughts or handling unfamiliar topics and situations

**B1 User "Can Do" Statements for Writing Skills** (Government of Saskatchewan, 2013)

1. I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest.
2. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions.
3. I can express what I have learned, how I have learned it, and my learning goals for the future.
4. I can summarize simple writing which deals with a familiar topic.
5. I can use a writing frame to write short, simple descriptions or explanations.
6. I can work through examples from my science and math textbook

**THE INDEPENDENT USER: B2 (VANTAGE)**

**GENERAL ASPECTS**

The "Vantage" user of the language is able to "...understand the main ideas of complex text on both concrete and abstract topics, including technical discussions in his/her field of specialization..." He or she can already "...interact with a degree of fluency and spontaneity..." with native speakers. In writing, they can produce clear and detailed text on a wide range of subjects, explaining a viewpoint on an issue or topic. They are able to distinguish and discriminate information. (Language Policy Unit, 2001)

Criteria	B2 (Vantage)
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	Occasionally shows originality and insight of creative thinking. Is capable of imprinting somewhat his/her writing with a personal touch.
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of topics of interest. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem. Can synthesize information and arguments from a number of sources.
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	Can use a limited number of cohesive devices to link text into clear, coherent discourse.
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	Shows a relatively high degree of grammatical accuracy and control. Errors and minor flaws in sentence structure may still occur, but they are rare and do not cause misunderstanding.
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	Masters a good range of vocabulary for matters connected to most general topics. Avoids frequent repetition, though some confusion and incorrect word choice does occur without hindering communication

**B2 User "Can Do" Statements for Writing Skills Scale** (Government of Saskatchewan, 2013)

1. I can list the advantages and disadvantages of things related to me, such as the rules and regulations in my school.
2. I can write about a personal experience, a process, or a concept being studied.
3. I can write an account of an event in history using first person narrative.

**THE PROFICIENT USER: C1 (EFFECTIVE OPERATIONAL PROFICIENCY)**

**GENERAL ASPECTS**

During this stage, the C1 proficient user is capable of understanding a wide range of demanding and longer texts. He or she is able to recognize implicit meaning and interpret by induction. "...Can express him/herself fluently and spontaneously without much obvious searching for expressions..." or ideas. This user can perform effectively and effectively in language situations, whether this is a social oriented or an academic and professional scenario. (Government of Saskatchewan, 2013)

Criteria	C1 (Effective Operational Proficiency)
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	Shows a great deal of originality and insight of creative thinking. Is capable of imprinting his/her writing with a personal touch and express a clear sense of individuality.
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	Can write clear, well-structured texts of complex subjects, underlining the relevant salient issues, expanding and supporting points of view at some length with secondary points, reasons and relevant examples, and rounding off with an appropriate conclusion.
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	Shows controlled use of organization patterns, connectors, and cohesive devices.
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	Consistently maintains a high degree of grammatical accuracy; errors are rare and difficult to spot.
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	Has a good command of a broad lexical repertory and of idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms. Shows minor slips, but no significant vocabulary errors.

### C1 User "Can Do" Statements for Writing Skills

1. I can express myself in clear, well-structured text, expressing points of view at some length.
2. I can write about complex subjects in a letter, an essay or a report, underlining what I consider to be the salient issues.
3. I can select a style appropriate to the reader in mind

### THE PROFICIENT USER: C2 (MASTERY)

#### GENERAL ASPECTS

This is practically the ultimate user. He or she can "...understand with ease virtually everything heard or read..." For them summarizing information is not an issue. They can have different spoken and written sources of information and reconstruct arguments to create and elaborate a coherent presentation or written paper. These users express themselves "...spontaneously, very fluently and precisely, differentiating finer shades of Proficient meaning even in more complex situations".(Language Policy Unit, 2001)

Criteria	C2 (Mastery)
<b>Creativity:</b> Student originally states or express own point of view and feelings.	Consistently shows proficiency in elaborating ideas with originality and insight of creative thinking. His/her writings express a clear and well established sense on individuality.
<b>Content/Format:</b> Student shows a clear and identifiable main idea and provides evidence to support it.	Can write clear, smoothly flowing, complex texts in an appropriate and effective style and a logical structure which helps the reader to find significant points.
<b>Coherence:</b> The sequence of Thought follows a logical order.	Creates a coherent discourse, and uses a variety of organization patterns, and a wide range of connectors and other cohesive devices.
<b>Grammar:</b> There is a demonstration of Grammar Convention rules.	Maintains a consistent grammatical control of complex language.
<b>Vocabulary/Word Choice:</b> There is a considerable use and variety of words.	Has a good command of a very broad lexical repertoire including idiomatic expressions and colloquialisms; shows a consistently appropriate use of vocabulary, and awareness of connotative levels of meaning.

**C2 User "Can Do" Statements for Writing Skills**

1. I can write clear, smoothly-flowing text in an appropriate style.
2. I can write complex letters, reports or articles which present a case with an effective logical structure which helps the recipient to notice and remember significant points.
3. I can write summaries and reviews of professional or literary works.

**4 TASK III – SAMPLE POPULATION SELECTION**

<b>Difference in composition grades: with and without rubric</b>			
<i>Student</i>	<i>Grade w/o rubric</i>	<i>Grade with rubric</i>	<i>Difference</i>
Diana	94	93	1
José	80	75	5
Domingo	65	51	14
Isabel	92	91	1
Estela	97	97	0
Sonia	96	97	-1
Nellys	86	75	11
Allam	95	95	0
Maria	96	95	1
Ana	85	80	5
Kelmi	95	82	13
Yvelise	97	91	6
Anthony	100	98	2
Richard	96	88	8
<b>Average</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>86.285714</b>	<b>4.7142857</b>

**5 TASK IV – RUBRIC IMPLEMENTATION****IMPLEMENTATION**

Our project took place in a period of ten to fifteen weeks that fall within the duration of a cycle in the Adults Advanced program of the Instituto Cultural Dominicano Americano (ICDA), and during which four tasks are being completed. Of these ten weeks, the first two were dedicated to the first task of needs analysis by way of literature, interviews and surveys applied to both teachers and students. Rubric design is the second task, taking place between week 2 and week 5, period in which the relevant books were consulted to design an effective rubric. During the second and third week, the participants were selected among the Adults Advanced class population, provided by the coordinator of the program. The rubric implementation task is going to be held from week 3 until week 9, during which the students are assessed with written compositions twice. The last task occurs in the 10th week, which is when an evaluation of the project is done.

Project: Implementing rubrics to assess writing skills in an Adults Advanced EFL Class - Activity Chart											
Tasks	Staff	W1	W2	W3	W4	W5	W6	W7	W8	W9	W10
<b>Task I - Needs assessment</b>											
I. 1. Via Literature	All										
I. 2. Via Interviews	RS										
I. 3. Via Surveys	JR										
<b>Task II - Rubric design</b>											
II. 1. Look for materials (Books)	RS; PC										
II. 2. Develop writing rubric v1	All										
II. 3. Prepare copies of rubric	RS										
<b>Task III - Participants</b>											
III. 1. Select Adults Advanced group(s)	JR										
<b>Task IV - Rubric implementation</b>											
IV. 1. Present rubric to program coordinator	RS										
IV. 2. Teacher instruction about rubric use	All										
IV. 3. Implementation on groups	PC										
<b>Task V - Evaluation</b>	All										
<b>Identification of Staff</b>	Additional notes:										
PC = Pablo Castillo											
JR = Jayza Rosario											
RS = Ruth Sánchez											
All = All three members											

For the completion of the first task, we directly interacted with the coordinator of the Adults program, Deyvis Sanchez, and, as per our request, he provided us with four teachers that had an Adults Advanced session, and with sixteen students randomly selected from the classes currently available, whom we applied the surveys to.

In order for us to complete the fourth task, which is rubric implementation, we provided the study group's teacher with a bundle of documents that includes a self-explanatory and user-friendly set of instructions that the teacher will have to go through before implementing the rubric on either of the Adults Advanced classes, as well as with a crossreference table that expands on all the criteria descriptors according to reference levels, and, of course, the final version of the rubric to be used.

The 'Teachers Instruction Manual' is composed of six instructional points illustrated for ease of use; we went over each of these points with the teacher at the moment in which we instructed him on the use of the rubric.

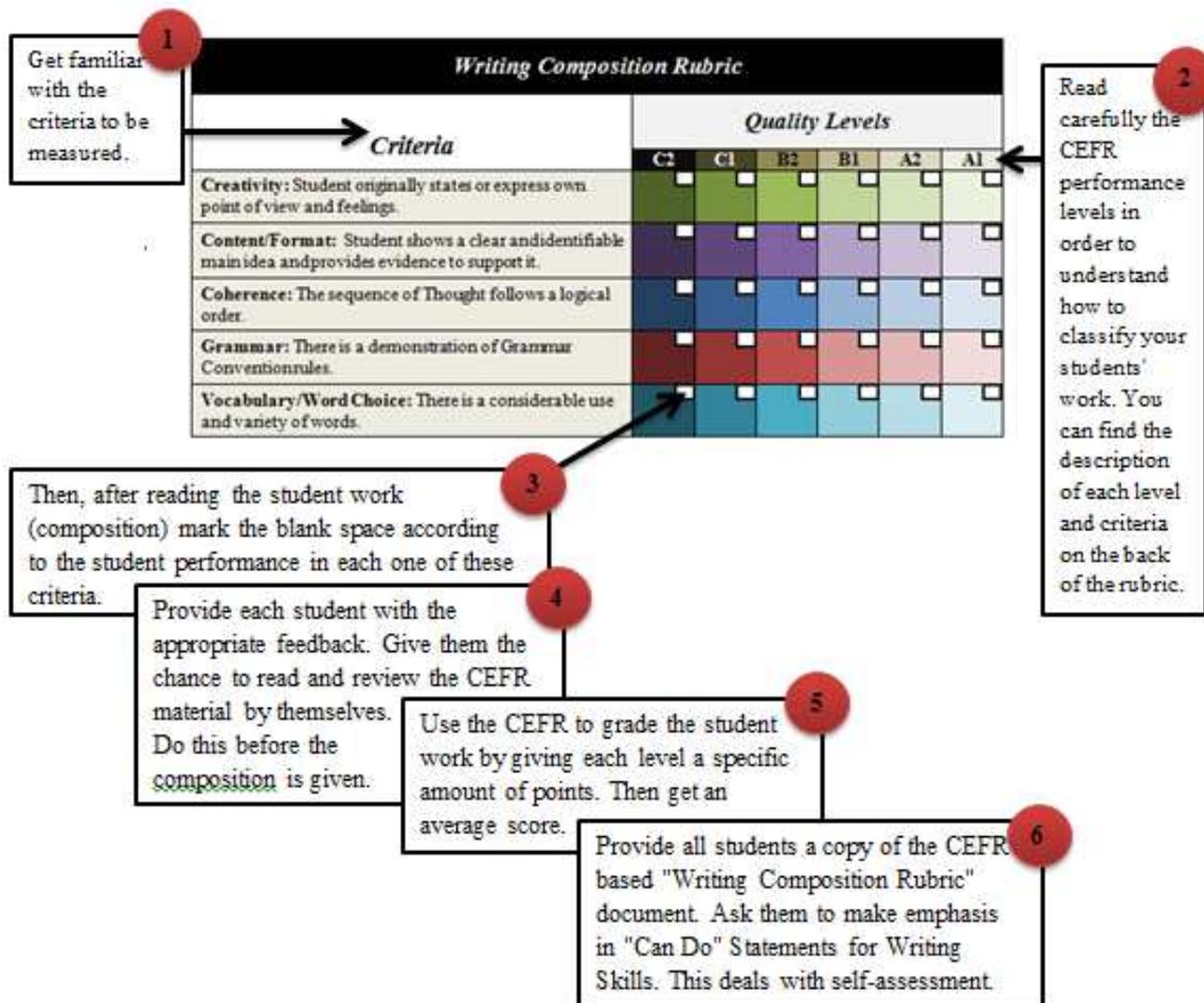
The crossreference table details all criteria and reference levels descriptions, and it strongly resembles the rubric; each level standard and criteria is explained according to the color given to that reference level and criteria, whether it's a B2 or A1, or if it's related to grammar or creativity. The teacher used to go back and forth between the table and the rubric and be sure which box to check.

## Color-Coded Rubric – Teacher Manual

### Note to the user:

- This document is meant to serve as a user-guide for teacher to properly and effectively implement what our rubric brings in terms of fairer and more significant assessment.

### INSTRUCTIONS:



## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It is extremely evident that rubrics offer a tremendous potential as an assessment tool, not only for regular learners, but also for English language learners. The importance of this resides in that the assessment becomes completely authentic, and provides empowerment to the students, especially adults, who are goal-oriented and independent learners.

In order to apply our color-coded rubric for writing assessment in an EFL environment, the instructor must be aware that it is tailored to the English learner's writing skill needs. As such, we recommend that before applying it, the instructor must make the learners aware of what entitles the completion of each criteria. Nonetheless, by knowing the specific needs that each group of students have, the rubric that we proposed can also be personalized to target and fit the student's profile.

We present our conclusions and recommendations hoping that this modified rubric serves its purpose of becoming an extremely objective methodological tool, applicable not only to writing skills nor EFL environments nor adults, but also to learners of any age, any educational environment, and to all dimensions of

## REFERENCES

- [1] Abedi, J. (2010). *Performance Assessments for English Language Learners*. Stanford, California, United States: Stanford Center for Opportunity Policy in Education.
- [2] Ager, S. (n.d.). Omniglot: The Online Encyclopedia of Writing Systems and Languages. Retrieved June 24, 2016, from <http://www.omniglot.com/writing/definition.htm>
- [3] Allen, D., & Tanner, K., (2006). Rubrics: Tools for Making Learning Goals and Evaluation Criteria Explicit for Both Teachers and Learners. *Approaches to Biology Teaching and Learning*. Vol. 5, 197–203.
- [4] Andrade, H. G. (1997). Understanding Rubrics. *Educational Leadership*, IV, 54.
- [5] Andrade, H. L., Du, Y., & Wang, X. (2008). Putting rubrics to the test: The effect of a model, criteria generation, and rubric referenced self-assessment on elementary students' writing. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice*, 27(2), 3-13.
- [6] Arter, J.A, & Chappuis, I. (2006). *Creating and recognizing quality rubrics*. Boston: Pearson.
- [7] Arter, J.A, & McTighe, J. (2001). *Scoring rubrics in the classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- [8] Brookhart, S. (2013). *How to create and use rubrics for formative assessment and grading*. United States.
- [9] *Business Dictionary*. (2016). Retrieved June 24, 2016, from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/performance.html>
- [10] Coe, M., Hanita, M., Nishioka, V., & Smiley, R. (2011, December). *An investigation of the impact of the 6+1 Trait Writing model on grade 5 student writing achievement: Final report*. NCEE Report 2012-4010. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
- [11] Daniels, P. T. (1996). *The world's writing systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [12] *Diseño Curricular Nivel Primario Segundo Ciclo*. MINERD. 2014. P. 52.
- [13] Fischer, S. R. (2001). *The History of Writing*. London: Reaktion.
- [14] Goldberg, G. L., & Roswell, B. S. (1999-2000). From perception to practice: The impact of teachers' scoring experience on performance-based instruction and classroom assessment. *Educational assessment*, 6(4), 257-290
- [15] Korycinski, D. K. (2011). *Using Rubrics*. New York, West Point, United States.
- [16] Northern Illinois University, Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center. (n.d.). <http://facdev.niu.edu>. Retrieved April 2016
- [17] *Oxford Dictionaries*. (n.d.). Retrieved April 2016, from <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/es/definicion/ingles/rubric>
- [18] Tierney, R., & Simon, M. (2004, October 28). *PAREonline.net*. (U. o. Ottawa, Ed.) Retrieved April 2016
- [19] Zenaida Aguirre-Muñoz, C. K.-E. (2006, May). *Cresst.org*. Retrieved June 26, 2016, from <http://www.cse.ucla.edu/products/reports/r678.pdf>