

**Course Topic: Language Assessment****Course Instructor:**

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**Course Synopsis:**

When you begin teaching, you must think about how you will grade and assess your students in a consistent way. You must determine the types of rubrics you will use and how you will develop these rubrics. In this course, we will discuss what a rubric is, the best scenarios in which to use a rubric, and why rubrics are used in ESL teaching and learning contexts. We will examine three types of rubrics including Primary Trait, Holistic and Analytic, and discuss some of their strengths and weaknesses. Lastly, we will introduce a framework for creating Analytic rubrics that includes scoring, subskill and descriptor considerations as well as general tips for making your rubric as effective and efficient as possible.

**Course Agenda:**

1. Rubrics: What, When and Why?
2. Types of Rubrics
3. A Framework for Creating Analytic Rubrics

## 1. Rubrics: What, When and Why?

### What is a rubric?

A rubric is an evaluation tool that outlines specific criteria for determining student proficiency in a particular language skill. It consists of a table containing a range of possible grades and descriptors for each grade level. Different types of rubrics are used for different test tasks.

### When are rubrics used?

Rubrics are used when you have an extended response from a student in speaking or writing that requires a subjective evaluation.

### Why are rubrics used by teachers and students?

Teachers use rubrics for a variety of reasons. Rubrics are practical, make scoring easier, ensure consistent and reliable scoring across multiple students, and provide feedback and accountability to students. Rubrics should always be viewed as a work in progress and should be continuously adjusted as you use them in different contexts. Rubrics are beneficial for students because they allow students to see the criteria for their success and help them to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses. The feedback provided to students through the use of rubrics can be engaging and motivating, while also providing a sense of stability across multiple assignments.

## 2. Types of Rubrics

Teachers frequently use different types of rubrics when evaluating students' speaking or writing. Each type of rubric has its own strengths and weaknesses that you should be aware of.

**Primary Trait Rubric:** Evaluates a single trait on a piece of writing or speaking. Primary trait rubrics are the least commonly used type of rubric. A primary trait rubric may, for example, evaluate the persuasiveness of student essay writing. This trait is determined to be the most important criteria for the assignment. This type of rubric is simple and limited. It does not provide detailed feedback for the student and does not recognize other important elements of essay writing, such as grammar, vocabulary, organization and form.

**Holistic Rubric:** Includes multiple marking criteria for a single assignment. There are several advantages to holistic rubrics. They speed up the marking process, ensure consistent marking across multiple students, and yield a single score that is useful for administrators in assigning placement levels. Holistic rubrics are also easier to create than analytic rubrics and are useful for high volume tests such as placement tests or final exams. However, holistic rubrics may also be disadvantageous because they collapse a lot of criteria into a single grade and make it difficult to assess students accurately. Holistic rubrics do not provide specific feedback to students about strengths and weaknesses and may be used inconsistently across multiple scorers.

**Analytic Rubric:** Includes a grade scale with multiple columns for subskills, each with its own descriptor. Analytic rubrics are advantageous because they provide specific feedback to students about their strengths and weaknesses, and allow the teacher to weight subskills differently according to importance.

Analytic rubrics also produce more accurate and reliable scores and are useful for research purposes. However, analytic rubrics may be disadvantageous because they require more time to score student texts and may be difficult to develop since more descriptors are required. It may also be difficult for teachers to avoid descriptor overlap and ambiguity and to assess the overall effect of a text.

### 3. A Framework for Creating Analytic Rubrics

The framework of your analytic rubric reflects your teaching philosophy and approach to learning English as a Second Language.

**Scoring Considerations:** You must decide how many scoring divisions you would like to have in your analytic rubric. The more divisions you have, the more difficult it is to write distinctive descriptors. You must also decide where you want to start your scoring scale; at either zero or one, depending on what you feel is fair to students.

**Subskill/Criteria Considerations:** You must decide what you want to evaluate. Common subskills for writing include content, organization and grammar/accuracy/form. You may choose to include other subskills such as spelling and vocabulary range. The inclusion of these subskills reflects what you value as measures of speaking or writing proficiency in your students.

**Descriptor Considerations:** Your descriptors must indicate the criteria you are looking for at each grade level for each subskill.

**General Tips for Creating Rubrics:** It is a good idea to draft and pilot test your rubric before using it with old assignments you have used in the past. Also, your colleagues may be a good source for feedback as well as your students in the context of peer evaluation. Remember to update and improve your rubric as necessary. Experiment with rubric websites as many programs are free and include a variety of predetermined subskills and prewritten descriptors to choose from, or prompts to write your own. These websites are particularly useful in tight timeframe marking situations.

**Remember:** When you are evaluating an extended student response in speaking or writing, you will probably require a rubric. Teachers typically choose between holistic and analytic rubrics; however, they may select primary trait rubrics for fast marking contexts. As you develop your rubrics, it is important to remember that all of your decisions, including the grading scale and subskill descriptors, reflect the ways in which you value student proficiency.

**Thanks for participating!**

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