

***Marking Techniques and the Use of Scoring Rubrics in EFL Classes: Problems and Implementation Guidelines  
The Case Study of Teachers of English at Khenchela University.***

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**Abstract:**

The scoring process has always been considered burdensome and challenging for teachers, especially those in charge of foreign language classes. Scoring rubrics represent one evaluation technique that can ease the burden of grading students through offering details on how and what to score. This article aims to explore teachers' attitudes about the usefulness of this technique in EFL classes, the challenges associated with designing and implementing scoring rubrics, and the solutions that can guarantee a fair yet less complicated scoring. To achieve this aim, a semi-structured interview was conducted with eighteen EFL teachers at Khenchela University. Findings demonstrate that EFL teachers embrace the idea of using rubrics in their classes. However, they are still facing challenges in relation to the way they should design these rubrics, especially in writing and speaking classes. Recommendations to improve the scoring process include collaboration among teachers to design the rubrics' criteria and gathering students' attitudes about the scoring techniques their teachers employ.

**Keywords:** Evaluation; marking; scoring rubrics; fairness; teachers' attitude.

**Introduction:**

Leki (1990) points out that '[t]he role of the writing teacher is schizophrenic, split into three incompatible personas: teacher as real reader (i.e., audience), teacher as coach, and teacher as evaluator' (p.59). The last task is obviously the most strenuous, not just in writing classes, for the time it takes to grade students renders evaluation a dislikable chore for most teachers. Still, one particular stage of evaluation is reported to be the chief reason for teachers' dislike of the matter: Marking.

Marking, in essence, represents the culmination of the assessment process, and it has too often regarded as synonymous with correcting. In itself, the act of marking corrects nothing; it is merely an outcome of a long process of teaching and learning. Teachers, then, need to be cautious in regard to what and how much to mark as well as the tools needed to mark consistently and fairly. To this end, they should be guided by consistent and transparent principles and criteria that may help grading to be fair, time efficient, and conducive to students and teachers.

Scoring rubrics are criteria-based tools that enable teachers to attribute marks according based on specific standards dictated by the teachers themselves or the subjects they are in charge of. It is noteworthy that these rubrics are mostly used when evaluating students' writing or speech. However, EFL teachers can always resort to this technique whenever they find that many criteria should be involved in the evaluation process. Hence, even subjects like literature and history are better evaluated using scoring rubrics, considering the fact that students are supposed to answer questions through writing essays and paragraphs.

Many studies attempted to highlight the significance of implementing scoring rubrics in EFL classes. Bin Dahmash (2025) has shown how EFL learners can use analytic rubrics when writing their assignments, concluding that rubrics can be self-assessment tools in writing classes. Similarly, Sharma

(2024) has advocated the use of analytic rubrics to guarantee an objective and consistent assessment procedures. Trinh (2020) has demonstrated that implementing scoring rubrics can help improve students' academic writing and reduce writing-related errors. Yamanishi et al. (2019) have examined how a combination of analytic and holistic Rubrics can improve evaluation reliability. Within the same vein, Yavuz et al. (2025) have investigated the way teachers can enhance the marking reliability using automatic scoring with AI and the challenges associated with this technique. Research about marking and scoring rubrics in Algeria is very scarce; most of which have highlighted teachers' lack of awareness about rubric usage and literacy (Belarbi & Mehdaoui, 2024; Fersaoui, 2022). Benyounes (2022) has shown that there is an overall acceptance of using digital rubrics among EFL teachers in Algeria, especially in writing classes.

Considering previous studies about using rubrics in EFL classes, one can conclude that attention is mostly given to using scoring rubrics in writing classes, disregarding other EFL disciplines. Besides, only little research is made in regard to the real challenges encountered by teachers who use those rubrics in their classes or the guidelines that can maximize the efficacy of scoring rubrics in EFL classes. Therefore, this article aims at investigating the challenges associated with using rubrics along with their potential solutions. The questions addressed in this are as follows:

1. What are teachers' attitudes about the implementation of scoring rubrics in EFL classes?
2. Which EFL areas can be evaluated through scoring rubrics?
3. What challenges do EFL teachers at Khenchela University encounter when working with scoring rubrics?
4. What guidelines should teachers consider when using or designing scoring rubrics?

Answering these questions can help alter the way

teachers and students think about evaluation and improve marking techniques.

## **1.Literature Review:**

### **1.1. Marking in EFL Classes: Principles and Practice:**

Marking reflects teachers' assessment philosophies and perceptions of learning. This, nevertheless, does not make of it an arbitrary, erratic process. If taken as such, then the whole teaching- learning process will be affected. Teachers, especially those in charge of writing and speaking, are required to consider some marking and grading grids to be used in addition to their own philosophy of marking (Nott, 2016).

One significant marking principle lies in its being a means of communicating to students and their parents the sort of performance required as well as learners' strengths and weaknesses. In fact, marking provides students with feedback on their own learning, explaining for them what they understand, what they do not understand, and areas of potential improvement. Accordingly, marks ought to be justified by teachers' comments since there is nothing more arbitrary to a student than a paper returned with just a grade on it. If a learner is caught plagiarizing, for instance, the teacher should highlight the act as being improper by addressing a convenient punishment. Also, teachers should not be afraid to use the full range of marks: if they have a work which is very poor and/or excellent, this quality should be mirrored in their marking (Nott, 2016).

Following certain protocol of beginning, middle, and end is another marking principle. Before starting to attribute marks to students, the tutor ought to prepare model answers to all questions. The model presents a key that demonstrates the preeminent elements that students should tackle. This may help teachers to put marks rationally and efficiently. While correcting papers, teachers are required to score anonymously because knowing the learners' identity will obviously impact the teachers' overall impression of the work. It is also very

preferable to mark everyone's answers to question (1) before moving to question (2). Scoring a single student's entire work at once would not help teachers to keep focused on one answer key. When it is all done, it is better for teachers to rank papers from best to worst, just to make comparison among those that hold nearly equal marks (Gray et al., 2022).

Another principle defines marking as an adaptable, flexible phenomenon whose criteria differ not only from one teacher to another, but also according to the task itself. When marking problem sets, short answer questions, and multiple-choice questions; difficulties in marking may still arise. Sometimes, the teacher ascertains that more than one option can be used to answer the question. In this case, s/he must give credit for any answer, or better still, not count the question at all. If the task, however, is to be done collectively (group work or pair work), two main questions must be asked: what should be the focal point of the teacher's evaluation: the product or the process? And shall the teacher allocate a mark to each individual learner or to the group as a whole? As a solution, the teacher may allocate marks according to the role the learners played in the group after asking them to explain their contribution to the final project. The teacher may also attribute a group mark in addition to assessing learners individually so that each student will have two marks: One for the final product and another for the individual contribution to it (process). In case the task is in the form of essay writing or oral performance (a dialogue, a debate, an interview...), there will be no better tool for marking than Scoring Rubrics (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

### **1.2. Scoring Rubrics in EFL Classes: Definition and Types**

Scoring rubrics are descriptive charts that teachers design to guide their assessment of the students' products. According to Andrade (2000), "A rubric is a scoring guide that seeks to evaluate a student's performance based on the sum of a full range of criteria rather than a single numerical score"(p. 13). One common use of scoring rubrics is to guide the evaluation of writing and speech products because the process is often viewed as subjective; one evaluator may focus upon the linguistic structure while another may be more interested in the persuasiveness of the argument. By developing a pre-

defined scheme for the evaluation process, the subjectivity involved in the evaluation process is likely to decrease (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

Many other definitions have referred to the very components of scoring rubrics. Panadero & Jonsson (2013) have stated that “Rubrics are assessment tools that list evaluation criteria for an assignment, provide a gradation of quality for each criterion, and describe student performance at each level”(p.129). This definition highlights that rubrics do not merely include the evaluation criteria but also the type of performance associated with every criterion along with the marks that should be attributed to each level of performance (weak, average, strong...).

Scoring Rubrics are of two types: Holistic and analytic. A holistic rubric requires the teacher to score the product as a whole, without assessing the component parts separately. It presents a description for each level of achievement and provides a single mark, generally based on the mere impression of the teacher (Table 1). It is particularly selected in situations when a teacher wants to get a quick snapshot of achievement (or when s/he does not have enough time to consider all the details of the student's performance) (Nitko & Brookhart, 2014).

**Table 1: An Example of a Holistic Rubric (Mertler, 2001, p.1)**

| Score | Description                                                                                            |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 5     | Demonstrates complete understanding of the problem. All requirements of task are included in response. |
| 4     | Demonstrates considerable understanding of the problem. All requirements of task are included.         |
| 3     | Demonstrates partial understanding of the problem. Most requirements of task are included.             |
| 2     | Demonstrates little understanding of the problem. Many requirements of task are missing.               |
| 1     | Demonstrates no understanding of the problem.                                                          |
| 0     | No response/task not attempted.                                                                        |

In contrast, with an **analytic rubric**, the teacher scores separate parts of the product first, and then sums the

individual scores to obtain a total score (table 2). It gives a description of each level of achievement for each criterion and provides a separate score for each criterion. It is mostly used when a teacher prefers to obtain detailed feedback about student performance (Jonsson & Svingby, 2007).

Designing one's own rubric is easy if taken step by step. Above all, the teacher needs to decide about the criteria needed to be found in the learners' performance. For instance, if the teacher wants students to argue for or against a given issue, s/he would probably advocate quality of argumentation, grammatical and structural accuracy as well as overall style and organization as the most required criteria while meanwhile giving priority to one item (strength of arguments, for instance). The second step is to describe levels of success. When the criteria have been set, the teacher should define what is weak, satisfactory, or strong for each criterion. In other words, s/he should take the criteria one at a time and articulate expectations for different levels: good paper, average paper and so on. Taking grammar as an example, a "good" paper would be free of most grammatical errors (the paper will get 04/05, for instance). An "average" paper would have some mistakes but use generally correct grammar (03/05 or 02,5/05). A "weak" paper would show frequent grammatical errors (01/05 or 0.5/05). The same will be done with the other criteria (Mertler, 2001).

**Table 2: An example of an Analytic Rubric (Mertler, 2001, p.1)**

|          | <b>Beginning<br/>1</b>                                | <b>Developing<br/>2</b>                                             | <b>Accomplished<br/>3</b>                                          | <b>Exemplary<br/>4</b>                              |
|----------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1</b> | Description reflecting beginning level of performance | Description reflecting movement toward mastery level of performance | Description reflecting achievement of mastery level of performance | Description reflecting highest level of performance |
| <b>2</b> | Description reflecting beginning                      | Description reflecting movement                                     | Description reflecting achievement                                 | Description reflecting highest level                |

|   |                                                       |                                                                     |                                                                    |                                                     |
|---|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
|   | level of performance                                  | toward mastery level of performance                                 | of mastery level of performance                                    | of performance                                      |
| 3 | Description reflecting beginning level of performance | Description reflecting movement toward mastery level of performance | Description reflecting achievement of mastery level of performance | Description reflecting highest level of performance |

Those definitions then go into the rubric in the appropriate locations to complete the chart. Once teachers design their scoring rubrics, they may decide to share those criteria with students or even with other colleagues, what is referred to as the process of calibration (Hamp-Lyons, 2003).

## 2. Methodology:

Since this research is attitude based, a qualitative descriptive design was implemented through conducting an interview with eighteen (18) teachers from the department of English at Khenchela University. This design was selected to obtain in-depth insights into using scoring rubrics in EFL classes as way to answer the study's questions and achieve the aim being underlined.

### 2.1. Research Tool:

One qualitative research tool was employed in this study: A semi-structured interview. A census sampling approach was selected in order to include the whole population of 30 teachers. However, not all teachers were available or willing to participate, for participation relied on consent, and hence, the final sample comprised only 18 teachers. The whole population was initially selected because every teacher at the department is in charge of at least one subject that can be assessed through scoring rubrics (writing, speaking, or essay-based subjects like literature, civilizations, psychology...). The interview respondents differed in terms of academic specialization, teaching experience, and gender. Overall, the group included eleven women and seven men.

Their professional experience spans from three to eighteen years. Regarding their fields of interest, seven participants are specialized in didactics, four in linguistics, four in literature, and three in civilization studies.

The interview consists of seven questions that revolved around teachers' attitudes about the implementation of scoring rubrics, the problems encountered, and the potential solutions. To enrich the discussion about teachers' experience with scoring rubrics, the interviewees were also asked about the marking techniques they employ in class, the frequency of using scoring rubrics, their preferred type of rubrics (holistic or analytic) as well as the criteria that should be incorporated in these rubrics. The interview was face-to-face interaction, and their answers were recorded. The interviewer has even taken notes of teachers' reactions to the questions being asked.

A thematic analysis was made to gauge teachers' attitudes about the implementation of scoring rubrics in EFL classes through comparing and contrasting responses to the same question. An initial open coding stage was conducted to spot the recurring concepts, followed by axial coding to group related perspectives and ideas into broader thematic categories. To enhance the credibility and validity of the analysis, the coding process was reviewed twice by the researcher at different levels to guarantee consistency and interpretive stability.

## **2.2. Main Findings:**

After analyzing the teachers' responses to the interview's questions, the following results were obtained:

### **Q1: What are the marking techniques that you employ in your class?**

Since this question was found opaque by most teachers, the interviewer had to provide further explanations of the question along with some options for teachers to consider. Several techniques were named by teachers, including comparative marking (comparing various work pieces to

reach relative quality), rubric-based marking (using either holistic or analytic rubrics), electronic or digital marking (resorting to software and platform like Grammarly and Turnitin), Self-scoring, and peer scoring. Teachers have maintained that selecting the appropriate technique relies mostly on the subject being taught and the level of students, for if students are still beginners, they cannot quite mark themselves or their colleagues. One of the teachers has claimed the following:

I generally use scoring rubrics in my writing classes, but I have recently figured out that students are getting bad marks because the criteria I selected are very demanding, so I started to compare papers against each other and mark students according to the elements that all the students have included in their papers.

The two most preferred scoring techniques for teachers were scoring rubrics and comparative marking because, according to them, they are more reliable and transparent than all the other techniques.

## **Q2. how often do you make use of scoring rubric in your evaluation of students' products?**

The majority of the teachers being interviewed have claimed that they use scoring rubrics very frequently when correcting their students' writing or speech. According to them, there are so many elements to be corrected for every student; attributing marks without following clear guidelines and criteria will just make the evaluation process more challenging. Two teachers, who are the most experienced amongst the interviewees, have mentioned that they are no longer in need of any rubrics; listening to students talk or reading what students draft will suffice to judge their linguistic and communicative competence. For them, using those rubrics can be a waste of time and effort. One of the teachers mentioned that "for a teacher who spent more than ten years teaching Oral Expression, the evaluation criteria are becoming common sense".

**Q3: In what way (s) do you think that scoring rubrics can be beneficial/harmful to teachers and students?**

The majority of teachers agreed on the idea that scoring rubrics are very useful, especially in EFL classes. One of the teachers points out to the uses of scoring rubrics, saying:

we are not the native speakers of the language...there must be always some criteria to help us proceed through the very intricacies of our students' performance, even in questions that require direct answers and even in Oral Expression sessions or literature and history classes. In addition to ideas, we need also to verify other language-related aspects like spelling, grammar, pronunciation, word choice...

Most of the teachers have clarified that rubrics can be the only way to ensure fairness and objectivity of the evaluation process. When it comes to students, however, not all teachers agreed on the efficacy of those rubrics. Some teachers have maintained that students might not understand those criteria, which would result in total confusion while others have claimed that students have all the right to know how the mark was attributed. Three teachers, however, have stated that those rubrics will do more harm than good to teachers, for they consider them a form of restriction to the evaluation process and a mere waste of time. One teacher stated: "If I'm teaching 700 students, would it be efficient to evaluate all their works using rubrics?"

**Q4. Do you design your rubrics yourself or do you rather make use of ready-made rubrics?**

All the interviewed teachers have highlighted the significance of designing a rubric instead using ready-made rubrics, which was reported to be a very frustrating task. According to them, the nature of the subject being taught along will the level of students dictate the type of the rubric to be used as well as the criteria that should be incorporated. Teachers, however, have also argued that designing rubrics does not mean that teachers should exclusively depend on their knowledge about the subject and about students; they

should always refer to the theoretical background related to rubrics' making, evaluation, and marking. One teacher argued that "there must be always an assessment reference to resort to when designing our rubrics, even if we have enough knowledge about the subject we are teaching".

**Q5. What criteria do you think a good scoring rubric should incorporate?**

According to the majority of the interviewed teachers, the best scoring rubric is the one that can be described as "all-encompassing". This means that they should include criteria related to both linguistic and communicative competence, with a particular focus on the teaching element around which the lesson revolves (if the lesson is about tenses, more emphasis should be put on grammar). Some teachers, however, have claimed that within an EFL context, the priority should be given to language-related criteria even when correcting students' answers to a psychology or a didactics exam. As one of the teachers explains: "A good scoring rubric should be language-based; we are teaching our students a foreign language for the sake of making them good users of the language; other types of knowledge can be acquired later". Another teacher adds: "I cannot give a full mark if the student's content is 100% relevant while the language is incorrect or inappropriate." One teacher has suggested that in addition to all the previously-named criteria, some points should be left to students' creativity; according to him, a good rubric is one that caters for students' individual differences, including creative and critical thinking skills.

**Q6. What type of scoring rubrics do you prefer to use?**

Here again, teachers were provided with explanations about the two types of scoring rubrics (holistic and analytic). Despite acknowledging that analytic rubrics are usually more accurate and can prevent teachers from falling into the trap of subjectivity and bias, most teachers have demonstrated preference towards holistic rubrics, claiming that they are experienced enough not to go through all the details that an

analytic rubric might include. Besides, according to them, none of the students will be able to understand all those criteria, and none of the teachers will have enough time to consider multiple criteria for multiple students. A teacher stated: “I prefer all that is holistic...I correct essays of five pages each, and my students are only interested in the final mark or in the general feedback I provide, so why the whole fuss?”

**Q 7: What do you suggest to the make rubric-based evaluation easier and more efficient?**

Teachers agreed that in order to make the process of rubric-based evaluation successful, teachers ought to consider the issue of collaborating with other teachers to suggest the criteria that are most appropriate for a given subject or a given category of students. According to one teacher of Civilizations, “collaboration is a rule of thumb; I always consult teachers of Didactics to obtain information about the assessment trends and the criteria that can be used when assessing essays”. Teachers have also recommended the inclusion of students in the process of selecting those criteria and discussing with them the evaluation modes they use so that students can use those criteria when they do self or peer assessment. Explaining the reasoning behind selecting specific criteria can always build trust and transparency between teachers and students. Another suggestion that can help teachers to overcome the obstacle of time-constraints is employing digital rubrics as way to align with the requirements of the digital age.

The methods displayed above yielded a set of findings that elucidated teachers’ positive attitudes about scoring rubrics in EFL classrooms despite the encountered challenges. In the following discussion, these findings are analyzed and interpreted in relation to existing literature and to the objectives of this paper.

**3. Discussion:**

Considering teachers’ answers to the seven questions

and the literature review about scoring rubrics in EFL classes, the following conclusions were drawn:

➤ **Teachers' Attitudes about scoring rubrics:**

Unlike what previous research has indicated (Benyounes, 2022; Sharma, 2024), not all teachers embrace the idea of using scoring rubrics when marking students' work. Experienced teachers, in particular, refuse to be guided by pre-determined criteria. Even the majority of teachers who welcomed the implementation of rubrics in their classes were against the use of analytic, very detailed rubrics due to the challenges that the latter might engender. Teachers' resistance appears to result from various intertwined factors, including lack of experience with technology-based evaluation tools, worries about losing pedagogical autonomy, and limited institutional training.

➤ **EFL Areas of Using Scoring Rubrics:**

Teachers have claimed that all EFL subjects (including literature, civilizations, psychology, didactics...) and all types of questions can be evaluated using scoring rubrics. It is true that rubrics are more useful in writing and speaking classes, but all other subjects are tested via written questions and assignments. Since EFL students are concerned with both language and content, teachers should devote criteria linked to these two elements and decide in advance which of the two should be prioritized. Teachers' answers to this particular question are different from previous research papers, for they put much emphasis on writing at the expense of other subjects (Trinh, 2020).

➤ **Challenges Linked to Rubrics Making and Implementation:**

The interviewees revealed three primary challenges; the first of which is time. Both designing and using scoring rubrics when evaluating students' work is time-consuming, especially because most institutions do not allow teachers to take more than two days correcting papers. The second challenge is the lack of enough

training, which was referred to by Fersaoui (2022) along with Belarbi and Mehdaoui (2024). Teachers are still unaware of the way scoring rubrics should be designed and the criteria that ought to be considered. Despite preferring personalized rubrics, teachers manifested how challenging is the process of making rubrics relevant to students' level, lessons' content, and theoretical background about marking. The last challenge lies in potential subjectivity; even with the use of rubrics, teachers can still be subjective in the way they select criteria or allocate the marks relevant to each criterion.

➤ **Guidelines on Implementing Rubric-Based Evaluation in EFL Classes:**

Considering teachers' answers to questions five, six, and seven; the following guidelines can be extracted:

-Involving colleagues and students in the process of evaluation and criteria selection, which was highlighted by Hamp-Lyons (2003) and Bin Dahmash (2025).

- It is always a good idea to use both types of rubrics: analytic when doing formative and detailed assessment and holistic when doing quick and summative assessments. This idea was embraced by Yamanishi et al. (2019), who suggested a hybrid mode of evaluation that includes holistic and analytic strategies.

-Resorting to technology and digitalized rubrics when time does not suffice to select the rubrics' criteria., which is a point that was stressed by Yavuz et al. (2025).

-The criteria incorporated in the rubrics should not only be consistent with the learning objectives as stated by but also with the students' level and learning styles.

-Workshops related to assessment, marking, and evaluation should be organized for teachers who are still struggling to formulate their own teaching philosophy.

**Conclusion:**

Discussing matters pertinent to scoring is beneficial for both students and instructors. Teachers should make it clear

for their learners that grades do not reflect students' inherent abilities or identity, for a "D" paper does not necessarily stand for a "D" student. Because learners' ego and motivation may be affected by how assessment is conducted, adopting scoring rubrics that promote clarity and constructive feedback becomes essential. The findings of this study demonstrate that EFL teachers support the idea of using rubrics in their classes despite mentioning challenges linked to designing and implementing these rubrics. Accordingly, future research could focus on developing collaborative rubric designs, organizing workshops related to rubric-based assessment, and examining the impact of digital or interactive rubrics on students' engagement and performance.

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