STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF CRITERION-BASED ASSESSMENT RUBRICS IN WRITING TASKS AT JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

Rizky Apriani[1], Irra Wahidiyati[2]

[1-2]University of Prof. K.H. Saifuddin Zuhri State Islamic, Purwokerto, Indonesia

Corresponding author email: aprianirizky08@gmail.com

Abstract

Writing is an essential skill in English learning that requires clear guidance and appropriate assessment criteria to support students' writing development. Therefore, the use of criterion-based assessment rubrics is important to help students understand writing expectations and improve their writing performance. This study aims to investigate students' perceptions of the use of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks at SMPN 2 Sumbang. This study employed a mixed-methods approach, consisting of quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire administered to 209 eighth-grade students to examine their cognitive, affective, and behavioral perceptions. Qualitative data were obtained through interviews to support and clarify the questionnaire results. The findings reveal that students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics are generally positive. The cognitive aspect shows that 76% of students agree that the rubric helps them understand writing objectives, content, and structure. The affective aspect indicates that 71% of students feel more confident, motivated, and comfortable when using the rubric. Meanwhile, the behavioral aspect demonstrates that 77% of students become more careful and systematic in organizing ideas, applying grammar, and using appropriate punctuation in their writing tasks. Interview results reinforce the survey findings that rubrics help students understand structure and develop ideas, although there was initially some confusion. The results show that the use of criterion-based assessment rubrics plays a significant role in enhancing students' understanding, motivation, and writing performance. Therefore, English teachers are encouraged to implement clear and detailed assessment rubrics in writing tasks to facilitate better learning outcomes.

Keywords: Criterion-Based Assessment Rubric, Students' Perception, Writing Tasks

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the fundamental skills that is very important in learning English. Writing not only enhances language understanding but also serves as a means to express ideas and thoughts. Through writing, students can improve their mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and sentence structure while developing critical and analytical thinking skills. In the context of Curriculum Merdeka, writing activities are also important to support students' literacy practices, creativity, and active learning. Therefore, writing is considered an essential skill that supports students' academic development. However, writing is often considered the most difficult skill for students because they are required not only to generate ideas but also to organize and transform them into meaningful written texts. Junior high school students commonly face difficulties in organizing ideas, developing paragraphs, applying grammar, and selecting appropriate vocabulary in writing tasks. Students also frequently lack confidence in expressing their ideas through writing. Limited writing practice, low reading habits, and a lack of understanding of writing structure often result in disorganized writing and unclear ideas.

Assessment plays an important role in writing instruction because it helps teachers monitor students' progress and provide feedback to improve writing quality. One assessment tool commonly used in writing instruction is the criterion-based assessment rubric. Rubrics provide clear criteria and performance levels that help students understand the expectations of writing tasks. According to Andrade (2014), rubrics function as assessment tools that describe expected performance for each criterion and help students recognize the quality of their work. Rubrics also support students' selfassessment, motivation, and awareness of their strengths and weaknesses in writing. Students' perceptions of rubrics are important because they can affect students' motivation, participation, and understanding of assessment criteria. Positive perceptions may help students understand writing expectations and improve their confidence in writing tasks. Previous studies showed that rubrics help students understand assessment criteria and improve writing quality. Wang, (2017) found that rubrics supported students' reflection in writing classes, while Mphahlele (2022) reported that rubrics helped students organize their writing better. However, studies on junior high school students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics are still limited. Based on preliminary observations at SMPN 2 Sumbang, English teachers use criterion-based assessment rubrics to assess students' writing tasks. However, some students still feel confused about the assessment criteria because the rubric is only explained briefly. Therefore, students' perceptions are important to understand the usefulness and clarity of the rubric in writing tasks. This study aims to explore students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics in junior high school writing tasks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception is an important aspect in education because it influences how students understand, respond to, and evaluate their learning experiences. According to Robbins (2001), perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret information to give meaning to their environment. Similarly, Walgito (2016) explains that perception is influenced by internal factors such as motivation, emotions,

experiences, and knowledge, as well as external factors including teachers, teaching methods, learning environments, and assessment systems. Positive perceptions can increase students' participation, confidence, and motivation, while negative perceptions may reduce students' interest and performance. Rahman (2015) states that positive perceptions toward learning activities can improve students' achievement and participation. In writing tasks, students need to clearly understand the assessment criteria related to organization, grammar, vocabulary, and content.

Criterion-based assessment rubrics are important tools for evaluating students' performance objectively and systematically, based on specific criteria rather than comparing students with one another. According to Andrade (2005), criterion-based assessment rubrics describe specific criteria and performance levels that students must achieve in a task. Criteria refer to the aspects being assessed, such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics in writing tasks. According to Brown & Hudson (2002), clear criteria and descriptors can improve the validity and reliability of assessment because students and teachers share the same understanding of assessment standards. Rubrics also have several important purposes in assessment. Brown & Hudson (2002) explain that rubrics help teachers communicate learning expectations clearly and provide more transparent assessment processes. In addition, Panadero (2017) states that rubrics can increase consistency and objectivity in assessment because evaluators use the same standards when assessing students' work.

Writing tasks are structured activities that require students to produce written texts for different purposes and contexts. According to Barone & Taylor (2005), writing tasks help students develop writing skills, critical thinking, and the ability to organize ideas. Writing is considered a complex skill because students need to generate ideas, organize them logically, and express them using appropriate grammar and vocabulary (Sekarini & Marufah, 2021). Writing tasks can take various forms such as narrative, expository, argumentative, reflective, and report writing Brisk (2022). In addition, authentic writing tasks can prepare students for real-world communication Z. Wang & Chiu (2024).

Several previous studies have discussed the use of rubrics in educational assessment. W. Wang (2017) investigated university students' perceptions of rubrics in EFL writing classes in China. The study found that rubrics helped students in goal setting, selfmonitoring, and self-reflection during the writing process. The findings also showed that the effectiveness of rubrics was influenced by rubric design and students' individual characteristics. However, the study mainly focused on university students. Similarly, Mphahlele (2022) examined students' perceptions of rubrics and peer assessment in an online learning environment. The findings revealed that rubrics helped students understand learning goals, organize their writing, and improve critical thinking skills. However, most previous studies focused on university students and online learning contexts. Therefore, studies investigating junior high school students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks are still limited.

METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods approach with a descriptive design to explore students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks. According to Creswell & Clark (2017), mixed methods combine quantitative and qualitative approaches to obtain a deeper understanding of a research problem. Quantitative data were used to identify general patterns of students' perceptions, while qualitative data were used to gain more detailed explanations of students' experiences and opinions. This research was conducted at SMPN 2 Sumbang. The participants were 217 eighthgrade students who completed the questionnaire, while 10 selected students participated in semi-structured interviews using purposive sampling. The participants were chosen because they had experience using criterion-based assessment rubrics in English writing tasks.

The data were collected through questionnaires, interviews, and documentation. The questionnaire used a four-point Likert scale and was adapted from Wardhana (2017). It measured students' cognitive, affective, and behavioral perceptions toward the rubric. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to obtain deeper information regarding students' experiences and understanding of the rubric. Documentation such as students' writing tasks and assessment rubrics was also used to support the findings. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive statistics in the form of percentages, while qualitative data were analyzed using the interactive model of Miles & Huberman (2020), including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Finally, the quantitative and qualitative findings were integrated to provide a comprehensive understanding of students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore students' perceptions of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks at SMPN 2 Sumbang. The findings were obtained from questionnaires completed by 209 eighth-grade students and supported by interview data. Students' perceptions were analyzed through three dimensions, namely cognitive, affective, and behavioral perceptions. The findings of this study indicate that students generally had positive perceptions toward the use of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks, with an overall average percentage of 75%, categorized as good. The results were categorized into three aspects: cognitive, behavioral, and affective perceptions. The cognitive aspect obtained 76%, the behavioral aspect obtained 77%, and the affective aspect obtained 71%. These findings indicate that criterion-based assessment rubrics influence not only students' understanding of assessment criteria but also their learning behavior and emotional responses during writing activities.

Table 1. Perceptions Indicator Results

Aspect	Percentage	Category
Cognitive	76%	Good
Behavioral	77%	Good
Affective	71%	Good

In the cognitive aspect, most students agreed that the rubric helped them write according to the assignment instructions, with 78.95% agreeing. The findings indicate that clear assessment criteria enabled students to understand what should be included in their writing and how their work would be evaluated. Students also stated during interviews that the rubric helped them understand the rules and components of writing tasks. This finding supports Andrade (2005), who states that rubrics provide clear guidance regarding expected performance and help students understand assessment standards. The positive cognitive perception suggests that criterion-based assessment rubrics contribute to transparency in assessment. When assessment criteria are clearly presented, students can understand what constitutes successful performance. This understanding helps reduce uncertainty and allows students to prepare their work more effectively. Rather than guessing what the teacher expects, students can rely on the rubric as a guide throughout the writing process. Panadero & Jonsson, (2013) state that rubrics function not only as assessment tools but also as learning tools because they help students understand learning objectives and monitor their progress. The findings of the present study confirm that students perceive rubrics as valuable resources that support their understanding of writing assessment. Furthermore, the cognitive findings indicate that students use the rubric as a reference when planning their writing. Students become more aware of what should be included in their writing and what aspects need special attention. Consequently, the rubric helps students organize their ideas more effectively and improves their understanding of the writing process as a whole.

In the behavioral aspect, students showed positive responses toward the use of rubrics in improving their writing performance. The statement “criterion-based assessment rubric makes me more careful in writing correctly structured sentences” obtained the highest percentage 79.67%. These findings suggest that the rubric encouraged students to pay greater attention to grammar, sentence structure, vocabulary, and writing organization. Interview results also showed that students became more aware of grammatical accuracy and punctuation in their writing. This finding is consistent with Panadero (2017), who explains that rubrics function not only as assessment tools but also as learning tools that help students improve the quality of their work. The findings suggest that criterion-based assessment rubrics encourage active engagement in the writing process. Instead of completing assignments solely to fulfill classroom requirements, students appeared to use the rubric as a tool for self-monitoring. They checked whether their writing met the required standards and attempted to improve areas that were still weak. Such behavior demonstrates the development of greater responsibility toward learning. This result is consistent with W. Wang (2017), who found that rubrics support self-regulated learning through goal-setting, selfmonitoring, and reflection. The rubric provides students with a framework that enables them to evaluate their own performance independently. As students become familiar with the assessment criteria, they gradually develop the ability to assess the quality of their own work without depending entirely on teacher feedback. In addition, the findings indicate that rubric use encourages revision practices among students. Revision is an important component of writing because it allows students to improve content, organization, grammar, and vocabulary before submitting their work. The rubric provides specific

indicators that students can use during the revision process. Consequently, students become more engaged in improving their writing and developing better writing habits.

The affective aspect revealed moderately positive perceptions. Most students disagreed with the statement that detailed assessment criteria made them confused in writing activities. The interview findings also showed that students perceived the rubric as helpful guidance that made writing tasks easier and clearer. These findings indicate that criterion-based assessment rubrics can reduce students' confusion and increase their confidence during the writing process. This result is in line with Walgito (2016), who explains that positive perceptions influence students' emotional responses and learning motivation. The rubric appeared to reduce uncertainty regarding assessment and provided students with a clearer direction during writing activities. When students understand how their work will be evaluated, they are more likely to feel confident in their ability to complete assignments successfully. This confidence can positively influence their willingness to participate in writing activities and improve their overall learning experience. The findings support Deci & Ryan (2000), who emphasize that motivation increases when learners clearly understand goals and expectations. Likewise, Hattie & Timperley (2007) argue that clear assessment information contributes to students' confidence and learning improvement. The rubric helps create a learning environment in which students feel supported because expectations are communicated clearly. However, several students reported difficulties in understanding some rubric criteria. Some students felt that the rubric contained numerous detailed indicators that were sometimes difficult to interpret. Although these difficulties did not significantly affect the overall positive perception, they suggest that teacher support remains essential. Teachers need to explain assessment criteria clearly and provide examples so that students can fully understand how the rubric is applied.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that students perceived criterion-based assessment rubrics positively across cognitive, behavioral, and affective dimensions. The rubric helped students understand assessment criteria, encouraged positive writing behaviors, and increased motivation and confidence during writing tasks. These findings are generally consistent with previous studies conducted by W. Wang (2017) and Mphahlele (2022), which reported that rubrics help students understand learning objectives, improve learning engagement, and support academic performance. The present study extends previous findings by providing evidence from the context of junior high school students. While much previous research has focused on higher education settings, this study demonstrates that younger learners also benefit from criterion-based assessment rubrics. The findings suggest that rubrics can function as effective assessment and learning tools when accompanied by adequate teacher guidance. Therefore, criterion-based assessment rubrics can be considered valuable instruments in writing instruction. They provide transparency, clarify expectations, encourage self-regulated learning, and support students' motivation and engagement. As a result, the implementation of criterion-based assessment rubrics has the potential to contribute positively to the development of students' writing skills and overall learning experiences.

CONCLUSION

This study found that eighth-grade students at SMPN 2 Sumbang generally had positive perceptions toward the use of criterion-based assessment rubrics in writing tasks, with an overall percentage of 75%, categorized as good. Students stated that the rubric helped them understand writing expectations, organize ideas, improve grammar and vocabulary usage, and revise their work more carefully. The cognitive aspect reached 76%, the behavioral aspect 77%, and the affective aspect 71%, indicating that the rubric positively influenced students' understanding, writing behavior, and motivation. However, some students still found detailed criteria confusing, indicating the need for clearer teacher explanations. This study has several limitations. First, the research was conducted only at SMPN 2 Sumbang, limiting the generalizability of the findings. Second, not all students completed the questionnaire due to technical and attendance constraints. Third, the study focused only on students' perceptions and did not quantitatively measure the direct impact of rubrics on writing achievement.

Based on these findings, English teachers are encouraged to consistently use criterionbased assessment rubrics and provide clearer explanations of assessment criteria. Students are also expected to use rubrics as writing guidelines and actively seek clarification when needed. In addition, schools should support rubric implementation through adequate learning resources and teacher training programs to improve the quality of writing instruction.

REFERENCES

Andrade. (2014). *Understanding Rubrics by Heidi Goodrich Andrade*. *3*, 1–7.

Andrade, H. (2005). Teaching With Rubrics: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. *College Teaching*, *53*, 27–31. https://doi.org/10.3200/CTCH.53.1.27-31

Andrade, H., & 2005, Y. D. P. A.-. (2005). Student perspectives on rubric-referenced assessment. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, *10*(1). https://doi.org/10.7275/g367-ye94

Barone, D. M., & Taylor, J. M. (2005). *Improving Students' Writing, K-8: From Meaning-Making to High Stakes!* SAGE Publications. https://books.google.co.id/books?id=5fs3AwAAQBAJ

Brisk, M. (2022). *Engaging Students in Academic Literacies: SFL Genre Pedagogy for K-8 Classrooms*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003329275

Brown, J. D., & Hudson, T. (2002). Criterion-Referenced Language Testing. In *Cambridge Applied Linguistics*. Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/DOI: 10.1017/CBO9781139524803

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*. SAGE Publications. https://books.google.co.id/books?id=eTwmDwAAQBAJ

Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "What" and "Why" of Goal Pursuits: Human Needs and the Self-Determination of Behavior. *Psychological Inquiry*, *11*(4), 227–268. https://doi.org/10.1207/S15327965PLI1104_01

Hattie, John, & Timperley, Helen. (2007). The Power of Feedback. *Review of Educational Research*, *77*(1), 81–112. https://doi.org/10.3102/003465430298487

Miles, H., & Huberman, A. M. (2020). Saldana.(2014). Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook. In *New York: Sage Publications, Inc*.

Mphahlele, L. (2022). Students' Perception of the Use of a Rubric and Peer Reviews in an Online Learning Environment. *Journal of Risk and Financial Management*, *15*(11). https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm15110503

Panadero, E. (2017). A review of self-regulated learning: Six models and four directions for research. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*(APR), 1–28. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00422

Panadero, E., & Jonsson, A. (2013). The use of scoring rubrics for formative assessment purposes revisited: A review. *Educational Research Review*, *9*(October), 129–144. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2013.01.002

Rahman, R. abdul. (2015). Belajar Dan Faktor-faktor Yang Mempengaruhinya. Jakarta: Rineke Cipta. *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, *53*(9), 1689–1699. https://adoc.pub/queue/slameto-belajar-dan-faktor-faktor-yangmempengaruhinya-jakar.html

Robbins, S. P. (2001). Organizational behavior. In *TA - TT* - (9th ed). Prentice Hall. https://doi.org/LK - https://worldcat.org/title/42476044

Sekarini, S., & Marufah, D. W. (2021). *Journal of Applied Linguistics*. *0316*, 52–72.

Walgito, B. (2016). *Pengantar Psikologi Umum/Bimo Walgito* (IV). ANDI.

Wang, W. (2017). Using rubrics in student self-assessment: student perceptions in the English as a foreign language writing context. *Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education*, *42*(8), 1280–1292. https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2016.1261993

Wang, Z., & Chiu, M. M. (2024). Multi-discourse Modes in Student Writing: Effects of Combining Narrative and Argument Discourse Modes on Argumentative Essay Scores. *Applied Linguistics*, *45*(1), 20–40. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amac073

Wardhana, I. M. (2017). *IMPROVING THE STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING THROUGH RUBRICS AND PEER CORRECTION*. https://api.semanticscholar.org/CorpusID:149847094