COMPARING TWO DIFFERENT INSTRUCTOR-RATERS IN ASSESSING EFL STUDENTS' PARAGRAPH WRITINGS: AN ACTION RESEARCH

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Abstract

A grade that students received after learning a writing course determines their writing performance in the course. Quite rare for writing instructors, especially those who teach in the EFL setting in a parallel classroom setting of more than one, to reflect on what does it mean to assess a piece of writing composed by EFL students. Therefore, this research was conducted to investigate the aspect above. It is action research in nature. Data were collected from 102 students' final examination answer sheets. The instrument used is analytical scoring rubrics. Findings show that the different raters might show a similar pattern of using the scoring rubrics, but the tendency of arriving at the same conclusion for each item in the scoring rubrics is low.

Keywords: Assessment, EFL, Paragraph, Scores, Writing

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Abstrak

Sebuah nilai yang diterima oleh mahasiswa setelah belajar di mata kuliah writing *menggambarkan nilai unjuk kerja mereka di mata kuliah tersebut. Sangat jarang bagi instruktur* writing*, terutama bagi yang mengajar di lingkungan EFL yang berada di sistem kelas paralel lebih dari satu, untuk merefleksikan apa makna menilai sebuah dokumen tulisan yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa berlatarbelakang EFL. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini dilaksanakan dengan tujuan untuk menginvestigasi asepct di atas. Penelitian ini adalah penelitian tindakan. Data yang dikumpulkan berupa 102 lembar jawaban ujian akhir semester mahasiswa. Instrumen penelitian ialah* analytical scoring rubrics*. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa para penilai yang berbeda mungkin menunjukkan pola penggunaan* scoring rubrics *yang hampir sama untuk setiap item, namun tendensi untuk sampai kepada kesimpulan yang sama cukup rendah.*
Kata kunci: Assessment, EFL, Paragraph, Scores, Writing

Introduction

Once in a semester, course instructors of all subjects in higher education of Indonesia do an assessment. Assessment is an important part of knowing learning achievement that should be met by students. In particular, English Paragraph Writing (EPW), as part of required courses in the English Education Study Program has certain processes and forms of assessment. It was usually done by giving students a grade after one semester has ended. The process of giving the grade was started with conducting numerical assessments toward the students' works in the midterm test, weekly exercises, and final examination. Unfortunately, as many Indonesian instructors would agree, reflecting on one's process of assessment after giving the grade to students seems to exist in such less attention. Once the semester is done and the grade is given to students, then the job is done. The question we should ask at this point, also as the research question for this research, is that "how do the two different writing instructors assess their students' works in a piece of final examination

document?" By knowing this question in mind, therefore, this study became important to be conducted.

This research has one goal to reach. It is to see how two different instructors, who would also play a role as the raters, assess their students' final examination by applying scoring rubrics in their assessment. The instructors taught the same course, which was English Paragraph Writing (EPW). Although the students, who were also the participants in this research, were different between Instructor 1 and Instructor 2; however, research that deals with how two different instructors provided the rating scores to their students in the final examination is indeed relatively new. This research article, in particular, addresses such an issue through a solid numerical investigation. It leads to the form of action research that the purpose is to find a reflection of one's teaching.

The basic and foremost aspect of learning to write well in English is to recognize what the EFL students need actually. Each and individual student might come from the same background, which was an EFL background, but to an extent, they are linguistically in different needs individually. Current research informed us that certain needs emerge among EFL students in response to academic writing challenges, such as learning how to write in such a coherent development of ideas (Ratnawati et al., 2018). This sort of needs is one aspect that is being assessed by writing instructors and raters in the writing classroom. Besides, teachers and students in an EFL writing classroom equally both facing challenges on how to reach the point where they can succeed to write well (Ariyanti, 2016). To be called *successful* in writing class is another story. It is more than just being successful in obtaining the highest mark or grade in the classroom. Such challenges occur partly because of the system of teaching the courses or simply known as curriculum stages. Current research shows that content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics are aspects of writing that are

difficult for students to handle because each of these items is taught through separate courses and subjects (Toba et al., 2019). This notion is indeed true; in a sense that, if we look at the Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' academic transcript, all courses are connected one another just to reach the point where the students could be able to compose a thesis in English. This sort of gap influenced the researches to reflect on 'what happens in these students' grading scores?' From there, the researchers would like to see the visualization of the prediction of students' writing ability to write a thesis, a form of academic writing in the field of English.

In response to the system of how writing as a skill is taught in the EFL learning atmosphere, it is undoubtedly believed that writing ability is closely connected to the ability to think well, beyond the scope, or the prescriptive norm standards of right-and-wrong. In this respect, a combination of "explicit teaching" and "cooperative learning" is important to improve students' writing competence and their critical thinking ability (Aunurrahman et al., 2017). In spite of the fact that such explicit teaching and cooperative learning could be possibly played out in the EFL writing classroom, it is hypothesized that it could lead to another layer of pedagogical challenges, such as the confusion on grading standards among the writing instructors.

Furthermore, research describes us that attitude toward writing triggers students' motivation to learn writing in such a positive nuance or a negative one, where it can be seen from the writing outcome afterward (Setyowati & Sukmawan, 2016). Henceforth, it is quite interesting to know that attitude can play an important part to create such a contributing atmosphere in students' minds to compose good writing. Another research also informs us that the interest toward writing increases along the way and it cannot be achieved solely from subjects taught at schools or even at the university; indeed, writing as a skill can be a signal to competence as time moves on (Abas & Aziz, 2016). It illustrates to us that writing as a skill is an ongoing skill to master. This circumstance is the gap that this research article would fill in and the answers to this research could

provide another clue for readers whose field is related to EFL Assessment, TEFL, or Writing studies in dealing with writing assessment.

Studies that have a close relation to the topic of this research are quite numerous, but those studies that resemble a similar approach to this research are relatively low in numbers. For example, research conducted by Indah suggested that topic familiarity in writing seems to be closely connected to the level of critical thinking and the students' writing performance for many Indonesian EFL learners (Indah, 2017). Writing can indeed be done and completed when we know what we want to write, and the same principle can be played out for students. This situation may lead to the conception of applying summative assessment for a writing course. In many Indonesian colleges and universities, for instance, summative assessment is common to be found; meanwhile, measuring writing performance in the country is considered to be necessary (Sukandi & Sani, 2019). In terms of measuring writing as a skill, measuring writing competence is rare to be existed in many Indonesian universities, simply because summative assessment deals with the assessment after a semester is over.

Before the assessment takes place at the end of the semester, we should see for the medium that was used in the teaching writing process. As an example, the use of YouTube videos as a medium in assisting the process of learning writing for EFL students does not equip students to reach the writing outcome as expected (Styati, 2016). Videos were only videos where these media cannot equip the students well unless the students themselves could link what is being told in the videos to what they are expected to reach in the writing classroom. Nevertheless, as it had been mentioned earlier, writing in the EFL context is challenging. Research informs us that some of the contributing factors to the low level of writing products among EFL students are "linguistic difficulties, fear of teachers' negative comments, insufficient writing practice, and time pressure" (Wahyuni & Umam, 2017). This research indicates that the use of videos does not interfere with accomplishing the writing abilities, but it is only influential

to an extent that it does not help that much for students to reach the desired standards to achieve in the writing classroom. The design and construction of academic writing classrooms should be based on challenges that EFL students encounter, so it means that the writing instructor should start the writing class with proper needs analysis toward the students (Alharbi, 2019). Such needs analysis might be useful to be conducted before a writing class can be started in an Indonesian EFL setting.

Moreover, relevant studies on writing show that "there is no significant correlation between writing apprehension and writing performance for academic writing in higher education level" (Sundari & Febriyanti, 2017). It leads to an obvious gap to understand how writing as a skill is best understood in the EFL writing classroom. What this research article address is connected to the notion of how EFL writing instructors teach writing and assess the students' writings with analytical scoring rubrics. In essence, the internal and external challenges influence how EFL instructors and teachers conduct the writing classroom fully to its extent and function (Hidayati, 2018). Meanwhile, focusing on "improving students' linguistic capabilities and writing techniques through modeling" is considered to be an effective way to increase the confidence among EFL students who learn writing in the mode of a foreign language (Kusumaningputri et al., 2018). Although this technique is proven to be correct and acceptable to do, the results, as they are determined through EFL students' writing scores, are somehow questionable. The scores, sometimes, do not reflect the EFL students' writing performance. Indeed, the way students organize their writing within the conception of academic writing is an aspect that is challenging for EFL students, as it is indicated to be one of the poor qualities to be seen in their writing (Qonitatun, 2016). In other words, EFL students face multiple layers of challenges to arrive at the success of writing in English as a foreign language. It is then a challenge for us to question how well we assess their writing. As such, this research article describes findings on how two

different rates might come up with different-but-similar results in terms of providing assessment through analytical scoring rubrics.

Method

This research, in particular, can be categorized as action research in the field of English, particularly research in the area of Composition studies. The approach toward the data in this research was quantitative. It was initially started since the beginning of the even semester of the 2018/2019 academic year. Four classes of EPW course were assigned to be taught by the researchers. Class A and Class B were taught by Instructor 1 and Class C and Class D were taught by Instructor 2. Instructor 1 and Instructor 2 performed as raters in this research.

Participants

The participants of this research were students who studied the English Paragraph Writing (EPW) course in the Even Semester of 2018/2019 academic year. 102 students enrolled in the course. Their final examination answer sheets were used as documents in this research.

Population and Sample

Since participants of this research were students taking the EPW course in the 2018/2019 academic year; therefore, the population of this research was 102 documents in the form of final examination answer sheets. The sample of this research was total sampling, which means that the researchers used all of the documents to be analyzed quantitatively.

Instruments

This research used scoring rubrics as instruments. The rubrics can be seen in Table **1**. Range of Scores per Item (Scoring Rubrics). The rubrics are an adapted version of Jacob's et al scoring rubrics for ESL writing, a form of analytical scoring rubrics.

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Table 1. Range of Scores per Item (Scoring Rubrics)

Item	A	B	C	D	E	*Score:*
Content / Ideas	30 - 27	26 - 22	21 - 17	16 - 13	13 - 0	………..
Organization	20 - 18	17 - 14	13 - 10	9 - 7	6 - 0	………..
Vocabulary	20 - 18	17 - 14	13 - 10	9 - 7	6 - 0	………..
Language Use	25 - 22	21 - 18	17 - 11	10 - 5	4 - 0	………..
Mechanics	5	4	3	2	1	………..

Table 1 shows the range of scores for five different items in the assessment. Students who get A grade have to achieve 30 scores as the highest and 0 as the lowest for Content/Ideas item. For the Organization item, students should achieve 20 for its highest score and 0 for its lowest score. Similarly, the Vocabulary item has the same range of scores to be graded. In terms of Language Use, students need to achieve 25 as its highest score and 0 for its lowest score. Mechanics, as the last item, only has 5 as its highest score and 0 as its lowest score. Therefore, the total score for all of the items in a piece of writing document being assessed should reach 100 points as the highest and 1 as the lowest point.

The Collected Data
The following two tables show the numerical display of data after the instructors used the scoring rubrics to assess the students' final examination answer sheets. Data collected by instructor 1 can be seen in Table 2. List of Data Scores in the Rubrics of Instructor 1, while data collected by instructor 2 can be seen in Table 3. List of Data Scores in the Rubrics from Instructor 2.

Table 2. List of Data Scores in the Rubrics of Instructor 1

Even Semester 2018/2019				*2018 Enrollment*			*Instructor 1*
		Item					
No	Student's Initial	Content/Ideas	Organization	Vocabulary	Language Use	Mechanics	Σ
1	SSD	27	17	16	18	5	83
2	R	22	15	15	18	4	74
3	SR	27	18	17	18	5	85
4	R	23	17	16	17	5	78
5	FW	21	17	16	11	5	70
6	AS	20	13	12	12	4	61

7	VK	18	16	14	12	5	65
8	SRA	21	13	12	15	4	65
9	SA	23	15	15	20	5	78
10	F	25	17	17	15	5	79
11	EN	18	16	17	17	5	73
12	SY	26	17	17	19	4	83
13	VO	23	13	13	16	4	69
14	SA	26	17	17	18	4	82
15	RN	23	15	15	12	4	69
16	SH	23	15	15	17	4	74
17	MN	26	18	17	16	5	82
18	J	26	14	17	18	5	80
19	DNB	25	14	17	17	4	77
20	ASE	21	17	15	17	4	74
21	HPR	20	13	13	17	4	67
22	DFY	18	12	12	11	4	57
23	HPH	25	17	15	18	4	79
24	WM	22	17	15	17	4	75
25	YM	23	15	17	18	4	77
26	AN	27	14	17	17	5	80
27	LKS	23	13	15	16	4	71
28	DF	17	10	10	12	5	54
29	RK	26	15	17	11	5	74
30	DA	20	15	15	17	4	71
31	NN	20	15	15	17	5	72
32	SRP	20	15	15	17	5	72
33	NIK	23	15	17	17	4	76
34	SN	25	17	16	17	5	80
35	NIQ	23	15	17	17	4	76
36	AS	25	15	15	18	4	77
37	YE	25	15	17	17	4	78
38	KA	21	17	17	18	4	77
39	FHA	27	17	18	19	5	86
40	AFH	25	16	17	17	4	79
41	JP	25	13	17	17	4	76
42	MT	25	15	17	18	4	79
43	YAS	22	16	16	17	4	75
44	YC	26	17	17	18	5	83
45	RC	25	16	17	17	5	80
46	NI	22	15	15	17	5	74
47	SD	26	17	17	19	5	84
48	FZ	26	17	18	20	5	86
49	ML	23	17	16	17	5	78
50	MSW	25	17	18	18	5	83
51	FOI	25	17	17	20	5	84
52	VHW	23	16	16	17	5	77
	Average	23	15	16	17	5	76
	Lowest	17	10	10	11	4	54
	Highest	27	18	18	20	5	86

Table 3. List of Data Scores in the Rubrics from Instructor 2

No	Student's Initial	Content/Ideas	Organization	Vocabulary	Language Use	Mechanics	∑
	Even Semester 2018/2019			2018 Enrollment			Instructor 2
				Item			
1	PL	28	15	18	12	5	78
2	AK	28	18	18	13	5	82
3	APA	20	16	18	14	4	72
4	SV	18	15	17	18	4	72
5	DUN	25	18	15	22	4	84
6	ZA	20	18	15	20	3	76
7	IY	22	18	14	15	3	72
8	NS	20	18	15	15	4	72
9	MRD	20	14	15	15	4	68
10	ANK	20	14	18	12	4	68
11	TH	22	18	16	12	4	72
12	DIU	26	20	16	12	4	78
13	BA	22	18	15	12	3	70
14	NBT	22	18	16	11	3	70
15	YNP	20	18	15	12	3	68
16	RA	28	18	18	14	4	82
17	A	22	16	14	12	4	68
18	R	20	18	16	13	3	70
19	MD	18	16	14	12	4	64
20	ATP	18	16	15	11	4	64
21	HN	20	18	18	10	4	70
22	RA	20	18	16	14	4	72
23	SAP	18	14	10	16	4	62
24	AS	22	18	16	18	4	78
25	PMA	22	18	15	12	3	70
26	AQ	20	18	15	12	3	68
27	NDS	20	18	14	12	4	68
28	SIW	20	18	16	12	4	70
29	NF	18	15	12	12	3	60
30	AYS	18	16	16	12	4	66
31	MR	18	14	16	12	4	64
32	SIP	20	18	16	14	4	72
33	JNZ	20	18	17	15	4	74
34	SALS	22	18	17	15	4	76
35	RS	20	18	16	16	4	74
36	AP	18	17	14	12	3	64
37	RA	20	18	18	14	4	74
38	KP	20	12	10	15	3	60
39	SF	18	16	13	12	3	62
40	DRA	18	16	14	12	4	64
41	AM	18	16	14	10	4	62
42	FFS	20	16	14	12	4	66
43	MJ	20	18	14	10	3	65
44	WIF	20	12	10	17	3	62
45	HHG	18	12	10	17	3	60
46	MRMM	20	14	16	18	4	72

47	SF	18	18	16	14	4	70
48	LM	18	18	18	13	3	70
49	MS	18	18	18	12	4	70
50	NT	18	18	14	13	3	66
	Average	20	17	15	14	4	70
	Lowest	18	12	10	10	3	60
	Highest	28	20	18	22	5	84

The above tables show a list of data scores for each item in the scoring rubrics. The average score, lowest, and highest score per item can also be seen at the end of each table above.

Data Analysis Procedure

When the even semester of 2018/2019 was over, the two writing instructors worked together to collect the students' final examination answers sheets from students in class 2018 sessions A, B, C, and D. Instructor 1 collected 52 answer sheets, while instructor 2 collected 50 answer sheets. Each instructor collected the answer sheets from two classes that each taught. After the answer sheets had been collected, the instructors changed their role that is to be the writing raters. These raters used analytical scoring rubrics. After the rubrics had been used accordingly, the researchers analyzed the collected data to see the lowest and highest average score from each instructor. This can be seen in Figure 1. The Lowest and Highest Average Score in Assessment from Each Instructor.

The next step that the researcher did in analyzing the data was to see the average score for each item in the scoring rubrics and compare the scores from each instructor. It can be seen in Figure 2. The Lowest and Highest Average Score per Item in the Scoring Rubrics from Each Instructor. Then, the researcher also analyzed the list of data to see the lowest and highest score per item of assessment in the scoring rubrics. This one can be seen in Figure 3. The Lowest and Highest Score per Item of Assessment of the Two Raters. The last aspect that the researchers analyzed was to see the frequency of scores on each item of assessment in line with the grade for each item as it is shown in Table 4. Frequency of Scores in Each Item of Assessment in the Scoring Rubrics from *Instructor 1*, and Table 5. Frequency of Scores in Each Item of Assessment in the Scoring Rubrics from *Instructor 2*. To display the frequency in the form of a percentage, then Figure 4. Percentage of Frequency of Each Item in Assessment / Scoring Rubrics can be seen in the Findings section.

Findings

The findings of this research are displayed in the form of tables and figures. Description of the tables and figures can be seen below each table and figure, along with a relevant explanation on the data as to how they relate to the answer to the research question in the discussion section.
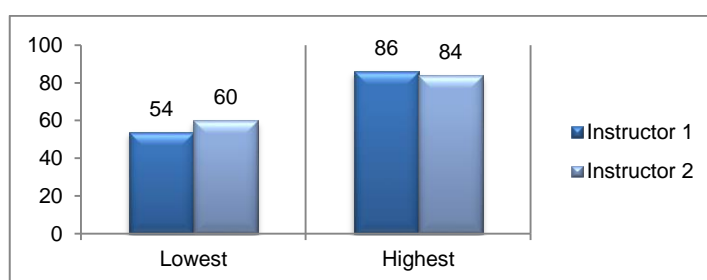

Figure 1. The Lowest and Highest Average Score in Assessment from Each Instructor

Figure 1 shows that the lowest score of instructor 1 is 54, while instructor 2 is 60. Meanwhile, the highest score from instructor 1 is 86, and the highest score of instructor 2 is 84.
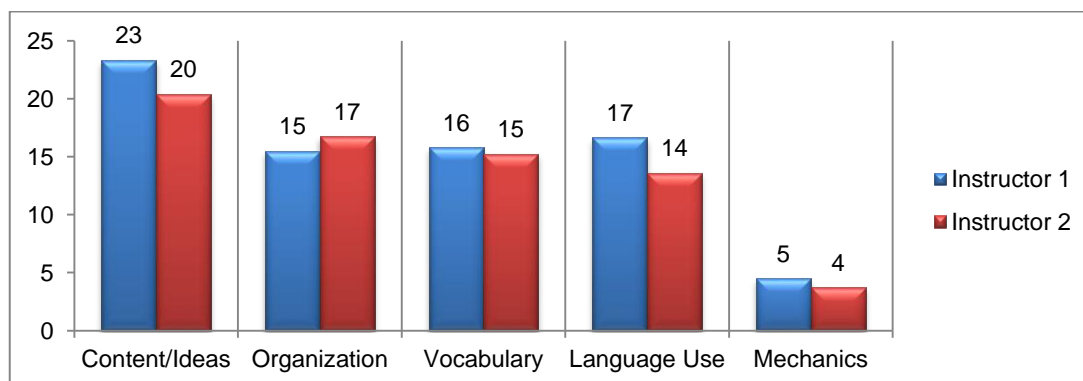
Figure 2. The Lowest and Highest Average Score per Item in the Scoring Rubrics from Each Instructor

Figure 2 indicates that in terms of content/ideas, instructor 1 has four items higher than instructor 2. The items are Content/Ideas, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics. Meanwhile, instructor 2 has given a higher score for Organization item.
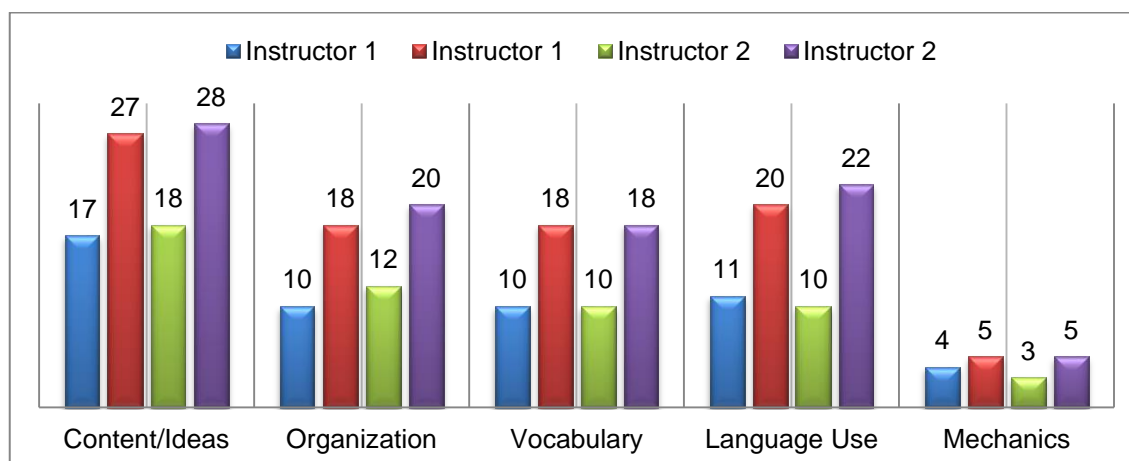
Figure 3. The Lowest and Highest Score per Item of Assessment of the Two Raters

Figure 3 presents informative data in more detail than Figure 2 on the previous page. In the Content/Ideas item, the difference between the lowest and highest score is only 1 point for both raters. For the Organization item, instructor 2 has given 2 points higher than instructor 1. For Vocabulary items, both instructors have given the same score. For the Language Use, the difference is a bit complex. The lowest score has a 1 point difference between the two raters, while the highest score has 2 points difference. In the Mechanics item, instructor 1 has 1 point different from instructor 2, but for the highest score, both raters have given the same score.

Table 4. Frequency of Scores in Each Item of Assessment in the Scoring Rubrics from *Instructor 1*

f	Item of Assessment				
	Content/Ideas	**Organization**	**Vocabulary**	**Language Use**	**Mechanics**
A	4	2	3	0	26
B	35	42	43	18	26
C	13	8	6	34	0
D	0	0	0	0	0
E	0	0	0	0	0
Total	52	52	52	52	52

Table 5. Frequency of Scores in Each Item of Assessment in the Scoring Rubrics from *Instructor 2*

f	Item of Assessment				
	Content/Ideas	**Organization**	**Vocabulary**	**Language Use**	**Mechanics**
A	3	29	9	1	2
B	10	18	35	4	31
C	37	3	6	42	17
D	0	0	0	3	0

E	0	0	0	0	0
Total	50	50	50	50	50

Table 4 and Table 5 present the frequency of each item of assessment that belongs to grade A, B, C, D, or E. Across the board, we can see that the highest frequency from the instructor 1 can be seen in the B category. Meanwhile, data of frequency from instructor 2 show a more complex pattern. More C grade falls into Content/Ideas item and the Language Use, but in terms of Organization, more frequency belongs to A grade. Vocabulary and Mechanics are located more in the B grade category.
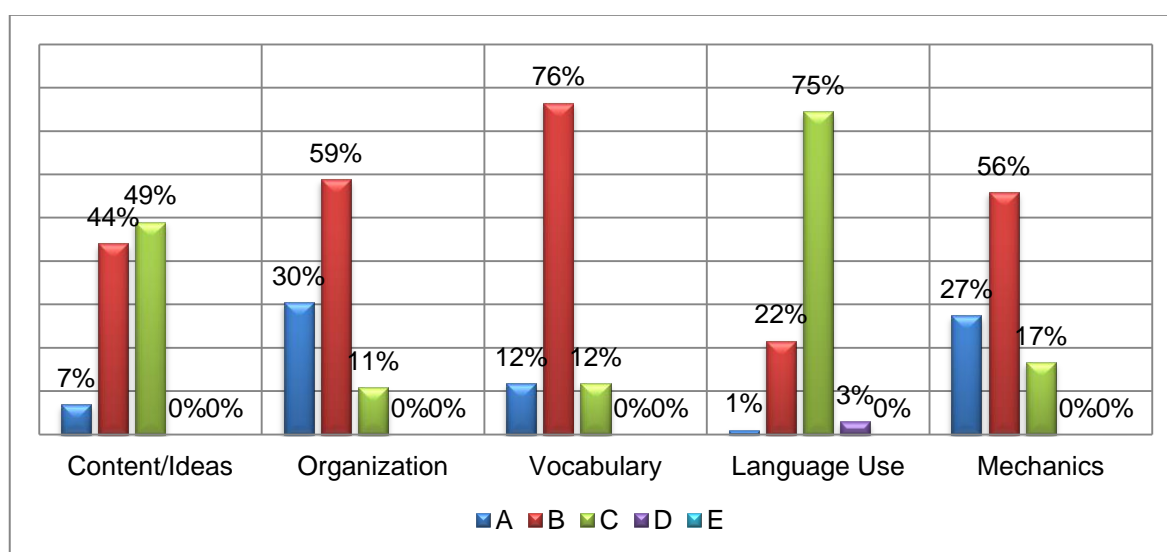
Figure 4. Percentage of Frequency of Each Item in Assessment / Scoring Rubrics

Figure 4 shows that from both instructor-raters, the dominant score for each item of assessment is dynamic. No students got E grade in all items of assessment. Students got B (44% of 102 students) and C (49% of 102 students) for Content/Ideas. The rest goes to A grade (7% of 102 students). In the Organization section, 59% of them got B grade, 30% of 102 students got A grade, and 11% of them got C grade. In the Vocabulary item, 76% of 102 students obtained B grade, while 12 % got A and C grade. For the Language Use item, 75% of 102 students got C grade, where it is only 1 % got A grade, 22% got B grade, and 3% got D grade. The last item is Mechanics. 56% of 102 students got B grade, 27% of them got A grade, and 17% got C grade.

Discussion

If we go back to the earlier part of this article, the research question raised in this research is 'what happens in these students' grading scores?' The second question worth asking concerning this research is: 'how do two writing instructors assessing different students gave scores to the students' final examination?' In this section, answers to these questions are provided in the form of interpretive explanation toward the findings.

From Figure 1. The Lowest and Highest Average Score in Assessment from Each Instructor, we can see the two different raters indeed have different average scores results in giving the score. From Figure 2. The Lowest and Highest Average Score per Item in the Scoring Rubrics from Each Instructor, we can see that the two different raters provided an almost similar pattern of giving lowest and highest average scores on each item of assessment in the scoring rubrics. This tendency shows that different raters might end up in similar results in terms of providing an average score to EFL students' final examination grade. From Table 4. Frequency of Scores in Each Item of Assessment in the Scoring Rubrics from Instructor 1 and Table 5. Frequency of Scores in Each Item of Assessment in the Scoring Rubrics from Instructor 2, we can interpret that the function of the item of assessment in the scoring rubrics becomes real. At this point, the instructor-raters have their independency and variety in terms of giving scores on each item of assessment in scoring rubrics. A grade given is indeed a holistic picture of a student's performance in the final examination; thus, scores on each item of assessment as they are displayed in Table 4 and Table 5 show that the two instructor-raters have their interpretation toward which scores are given. There is no standard convention on giving a certain score to an EFL student. From Figure 4. Percentage of Frequency of Each Item in Assessment / Scoring Rubrics, the items of assessment have variation in terms of the grade.

The point that we can make after analyzing the above numerical scores data is that a combination of scores from both raters indicate that these 102 students enrolled at the English Paragraph Writing (EPW) course had higher performance in terms of Vocabulary. What they need to improve later on in the English Essay Writing (EEW) course is Content/Ideas and Language Use. For the Mechanics and Organization, the students might already be able to reach the B grade, while they still need to improve better when they are about to compose essays in English. Two different instructor-raters are not a bigger threat for EFL students' scores; indeed, they provide richer data in terms of how complex each rater might interpret students' writings through numbers. Therefore, the answers to the first research question that beneath the students' holistic

scores, in the form of a grade, there is complexity happening. Each student has a different writing performance on each different item of assessment. The answer to the second research question is that, indeed, the two different instructor-raters assessed the students' writings within their interpretation toward each item of assessment in the scoring rubrics. Numbers, indeed, have shallow representation over verbal expression in response to providing solid measurement, but if the raters have higher consistency when they do the assessment process, then the validity and reliability of the students' scores are relatively high.

Although this research has a higher level of quantitative data measurement based on the real phenomenon, which happened in the writing classroom, this study has one obvious limitation. The source of data came from different students, as this research was not experimental. This research is action research where data were taken from the writing classroom as they were, without any changes. There were no manipulations of the data. However, the data can be used for this research, so that they can have high-reliability measurement. It is suggested that each rater can go on using the scoring rubrics, but the assessment process needs to be done concisely, so holistic scores can be achieved in brief.

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