**Example Rubrics for Linguistic Equity**

Effective rubrics are critical in any discipline. For illustrative purposes here, consider a hypothetical biology course. The professor assigns a response journal to ensure that students are identifying relevant course concepts from a reading. In this case, assessing language skills might not be particularly relevant: the journal is private and is only designed to see if students recognize when textbook concepts are coming into play in real-life cases. The rubric might look something like this:

**Rubric: Reading Response Journal**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Exemplary** | **Accomplished** | **Developing** | **Beginning** | **Absent** |
| **Chapter 4 concepts**  **(50 points)** | Student identifies at least 3 concepts from the chapter and explains relevant connections to the reading | Student identifies 3 concepts but lacks explanation; OR Student identifies 2 concepts from the chapter and explains relevance | Student identifies 1-2 concepts from the chapter, but explanation is limited | Student only identifies 1 key concept from the chapter; relevant explanation not present | Student does not identify key concepts from the chapter |
| **Thoroughness/Length**  **(40 points)** | Student addresses all questions in the prompt and writes at least 2 double-spaced pages | Student addresses most/all questions in the prompt but writes between 1-2 double-spaced pages | Student addresses most questions from the prompt and writes about one double-spaced page | Student addresses some questions from the prompt and/or writes a half to 1 page | Student does not address questions from the prompt and/or writes less than half a page |
| **Presentation/Formatting (10 points)** | Professional presentation and attention to detail; student follows all formatting guidelines in syllabus, including 1” margins, double-spacing, size 12 font, header, and page numbers | Student follows most formatting guidelines in syllabus; neat and consistent appearance | Student follows some formatting guidelines from the syllabus but has some inconsistencies and/or messy elements | Student makes effort at formatting but does not adhere to guidelines in syllabus | Little to no attention to detail on formatting; student does not follow formatting guidelines in syllabus |

In this case, the professor should not deduct points from either native speakers or ELLs for specific language issues such as spelling or subject-verb agreement. By sticking to the rubric, professors can avoid the temptation to count off for ELL errors (which tend to stand out more) but not more subtle native-speaker ones.

On the other hand, there are times when language and accuracy are absolutely relevant. In that same hypothetical biology course, the students also create lab reports. These are designed to clearly convey detailed results to an informed audience and to prepare students for potential publication in the future. Therefore, linguistic errors greatly affect the success of the reports and *should* be included in the rubric for all students. Note: There isn’t just one catch-all “Language” criterion. By breaking down into the specific expectations for language in the assignment/field of study, all students not just ELLs—will have a clearer picture of what their final product should be. Furthermore, a detailed rubric can be tool for students who are seeking help at the Writing Center, office hours, etc. since there isn’t typically time to teach language in other courses. Students are more likely to see connections to concepts learned in their foundational writing courses when specific language is used. (Pro tip: Coordinating with your school’s first-year writing program is a great way to find the best terms to include.) See the various language elements highlighted in the rubric below.

**Rubric: Lab Report**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Criteria** | **Exemplary** | **Accomplished** | **Developing** | **Beginning** | **Absent** |
| **Introduction**  **(10 pts)** | Student effectively introduces report with purposeful discussion of purpose, significance, and design | Student introduces purpose, significance, and design of the report but might lack specificity | Introduction missing key elements of purpose, significance, and/or design | Student introduces report in a vague manner that does not convey purpose, significance, or design | No introduction present |
| **Materials & Methods**  **(15 pts)** | Student uses specific terminology to clearly describe materials and methods; detailed descriptions allow reader to follow easily | Student clearly detailed steps but may lack specific language or rationale in places | Student describes most materials and methods but lacks specificity/descriptive elements | Relevant materials or methods are omitted; vague language does not allow reader to follow procedures | No meaningful description of materials or methods provided |
| **Results**  **(20 pts)** | All relevant data is presented in a logical way; tables and graphs are clearly and effectively labeled | Most relevant data are presented in a logical way; tables and graphs are labeled | Relevant data are missing, but overall presentation is logical; tables and graphs may not be labeled or follow presentation norms discussed in class | Data are presented is a disorganized way; reader cannot determine how results were obtained | Key data points are missing and/or irrelevant data are included; no connection between data and methods |
| **Discussion**  **(20 pts)**  ***(Note: Focus is on IDEAS here rather than language)*** | Student clearly understands all key concepts and provides original and insightful interpretations | Student understands most key concepts and provides original interpretations | Student understands some key concepts better than others and includes original ideas | Attempts at analysis present, but some misunderstanding or omission of key concepts | No original analysis is provided; student misunderstands key concepts |
| **Structure/Organization**  **(15 pts)** | Student organizes information into coherent paragraphs; effective transitions create smooth flow for the reader | Student organizes information into logical paragraphs, which may be connected with formulaic transitions | Reader can generally follow the information, although some places might be jumbled or not held together with effective transitions | Attempts at organization are present; information may be jumbled or redundant; transitions missing or inaccurate | No discernible structure to contribute to the presentation of information; transitions missing |
| **Clarity/Concision**  **(10 pts)** | Student conveys information clearly and concisely for target audience without extraneous information. | Student conveys information clearly and concisely for target audience; may use some extraneous information or repetition | Student includes some extraneous information or misused terms but, overall, conveys information logically to intended audience | Student attempts to use technical terms appropriate to the audience, perhaps with some misuse; repetition and/or extraneous information hinder readability | Target audience is unapparent; student includes extraneous information; student does not include technical terms |
| **Voice**  **(5 pts)** | Student effectively uses third-person, passive voice | | Student mixes third person with first and/or second person, but uses passive voice | | Student does not utilize norms of third person and passive voice discussed in class |
| **Spelling & Punctuation**  **(5 pts)** | No errors in spelling/punctuation | Very few errors in spelling/punctuation | Occasional errors in spelling/punctuation, but reader comprehension is not hindered | Frequent errors in spelling/punctuation that affect readability | Spelling/punctuation errors in most/all sentences of the paper, greatly affecting readability |

Creating rubrics like this in an LMS requires a bit of time up front but results in more thoughtfully designed, purposeful, equitable assignments (that take much less time to grade!). From the student perspective, expectations are clear, so it is easier to be confident while working and to understand grading results afterwards. Finally, from a linguistic diversity perspective, no student is being punished for linguistic differences that aren’t particularly relevant to the task. Rubrics like these not only address ELL matters, but also other types of linguistic diversity in your classroom. [hyperlink <https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2021/01/27/how-professors-can-and-should-combat-linguistic-prejudice-their-classes-opinion?utm_source=Inside+Higher+Ed&utm_campaign=6b001ca536-DNU_2021_COPY_02&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_1fcbc04421-6b001ca536-226860121&mc_cid=6b001ca536&mc_eid=39daa4fe00> ]