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CE > Vol.3 No.8, December 2012

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## Building a Better Mousetrap: Replacing Subjective Writing Rubrics with More Empirically-Sound Alternatives for EFL Learners

PDF (Size: 312KB) PP. 1320-1325 DOI: 10.4236/ce.2012.38193

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### ABSTRACT

Although writing rubrics can provide valuable feedback, the criteria they use are often subjective, which compels raters to employ their own tacit biases. The purpose of this study is to see if discreet empirical characteristics of texts can be used in lieu of the rubric to objectively assess the writing quality of EFL learners. The academic paragraphs of 38 participants were evaluated according to several empirically calculable criteria related to cohesion, content, and grammar. Values were then compared to scores obtained from holistic scoring by multiple raters using a multiple regression formula. The resulting correlation between variables ( $R = .873$ ) was highly significant, suggesting that more empirical, impartial means of writing evaluation can now be used in conjunction with technology to provide student feedback and teacher training.

### KEYWORDS

Writing Rubrics; Writing Evaluation; Cohesion; Grammar; Word Frequency

### Cite this paper

Schenck, A. & Daly, E. (2012). Building a Better Mousetrap: Replacing Subjective Writing Rubrics with More Empirically-Sound Alternatives for EFL Learners. *Creative Education*, 3, 1320-1325. doi: 10.4236/ce.2012.38193.

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