

# **English as a Foreign Language Students' Perceptions and Reported Instructor Practices of the Teaching of Writing in Moroccan Public Universities**

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## **1. Introduction**

Writing is a process of writing and rewriting through which the writer develops and explores his or her thoughts and ideas to achieve the intended meaning (Zamel, 1982). English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing is one of the most difficult language skills to teach for teachers (Tseng, 2019) because students' acquisition of the skills to write effectively in another language is unclear. Ineffective teacher training programs and teachers' lack of confidence may be other reasons (Tseng, 2019). Two writing instruction methods have been debated. First, product-based writing in EFL emphasizes basic writing skills like punctuation, handwriting, and spelling (Guo et al., 2022). Due to its limitations, such as its focus on grammar and linguistic form (Hyland, 2003; Pramila, 2017; Puengpipattrakul, 2014), process-based writing, which engages students in planning, translating, revising, composing meaningful texts, and acknowledging self-reflection and evaluation in writing (Guo et al., 2022), has recently been emphasized in writing instruction. The present study examines product- and process-based writing approaches to determine students' preferred writing methods and their most frequently reported instructor practices.

Some studies (Bouzenirh, 1991; Abouabdelkader, 2018) on EFL writing in higher education have shown that Moroccan university students still struggle with grammar, vocabulary, and organization, despite the shift toward process-based writing. Despite progress over the last century in addressing university professors' complaints about students' writing errors and inability to distinguish sentences from phrases, only one-third of US students' writing is proficient (Brindle et al., 2016). These issues seem to stem from product-based writing (Javadi-Safa, 2018).

Examining "how writing is taught to determine if effective instructional practices are applied" (Brindle et al., 2016; p. 930) is necessary to meet teachers' writing improvement expectations. Thus, student perspectives on teacher practices of teaching writing approaches may explain how teachers teach writing skills. This study focused on students' perceptions as a key factor in their motivation and writing improvement (Pearson, 2022). The present study addresses the lack of research on writing instruction in Morocco (Abouabdelkader & Bouziane, 2016) and university EFL students' perceptions and reported instructor practices in higher education in diverse contexts. Most Moroccan studies, like Azmi (2014) and Bennani (2013), focused on how information and communications technology affects writing skills, not writing instruction. This study draws on empirical studies from various educational levels to determine how well students' perceptions match their reported instructor practices for the two writing approaches.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

### **2.1. Approaches to teaching writing**

Product-based writing, started in the 1950s and early 1960s, emphasizes language form (Nguyen & Truong, 2021). The most important aspect of students' second language (L2) writing is grammar (Frodesen & Holten, 2003). For instance, students may read a model text and analyze its language. Most writing assignments in this method require students to copy, alter, and imitate instructor or textbook models. The product approach to writing includes

familiarization, guided writing, controlled writing, and free writing, according to Badger and White (2000) and Hyland (2003). In the beginning, teachers give students grammatical and lexical exercises to apply textual concepts. Teachers give students controlled vocabulary and grammar exercises in the second phase. Using target vocabulary and grammar, students write longer pieces, like letters to friends during guided writing. Students use their patterns to write compositions during free writing. This model limits writing to linguistic application.

The product approach to writing instruction helps low achieving learners correct and eliminate their own errors (Tribble, 1996). This approach is criticized because it focuses solely on language and grammar (Hyland, 2003; Puengpipattrakul, 2014). Pre-writing, planning, drafting, revision, and editing become less familiar to students. Its reliance on models or written patterns of imitation limits student creativity. Pramila (2017) argues that it ignores audience and context and focuses on student output. This product-based writing ignores cognitive writing processes and learning strategies (Badger & White, 2000; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005).

Since the 1980s, the process-based approach has led second language (L2) writing instruction (Annisa et al., 2021). It was a response to the product-based approach. In this approach, teachers focus on the cognitive processes of writing. Writing involves prewriting, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing, according to most researchers (Goldstein & Carr, 1996; Hedge, 2005; Nguyen & Truong, 2021). Keh (1990) defines the process-based strategy as “a multiple-draft process which consists of generating ideas (pre-writing); writing a first draft with an emphasis on content (to ‘discover’ meaning/author’s ideas); second and third (and possibly more) drafts to revise ideas and the communication of those ideas” (p. 294). Freeman and Freeman (2004) found several advantages to using the process approach. First, it considers writing as cognitive practice rather than a linguistic demonstration. Second, it considers teacher-student conferencing as a key element to addresses grammar and spelling errors in students’ writing. Third, it focuses on peer feedback and discussions between teachers and students. Fourth, it encourages student information sharing.

Though it is advantageous (Puengpipattrakul, 2014), the process-based approach has its critics. Primary criticism is that it neglects cognitive development, language proficiency, differences between individuals, writing tasks, and situations in L2 writing (Kroll, 1990). Pramila (2017) claims that the process-based approach ignores L2 students’ unique writing challenges because it assumes all writing processes are the same. It also claims students write for the same audience in the same style. Unlike the product-based approach, this approach places less emphasis on the final product and instead focuses on the writing processes from planning to evaluation. Based on one of the current study’s objectives, it is also critical to use various teaching approaches to EFL/ESL writing, such as product- or process-based writing. According to Abouabdelkader and Bouziane (2016), EFL writing teachers should use any approach, or a combination of approaches, to meet the needs of their students.

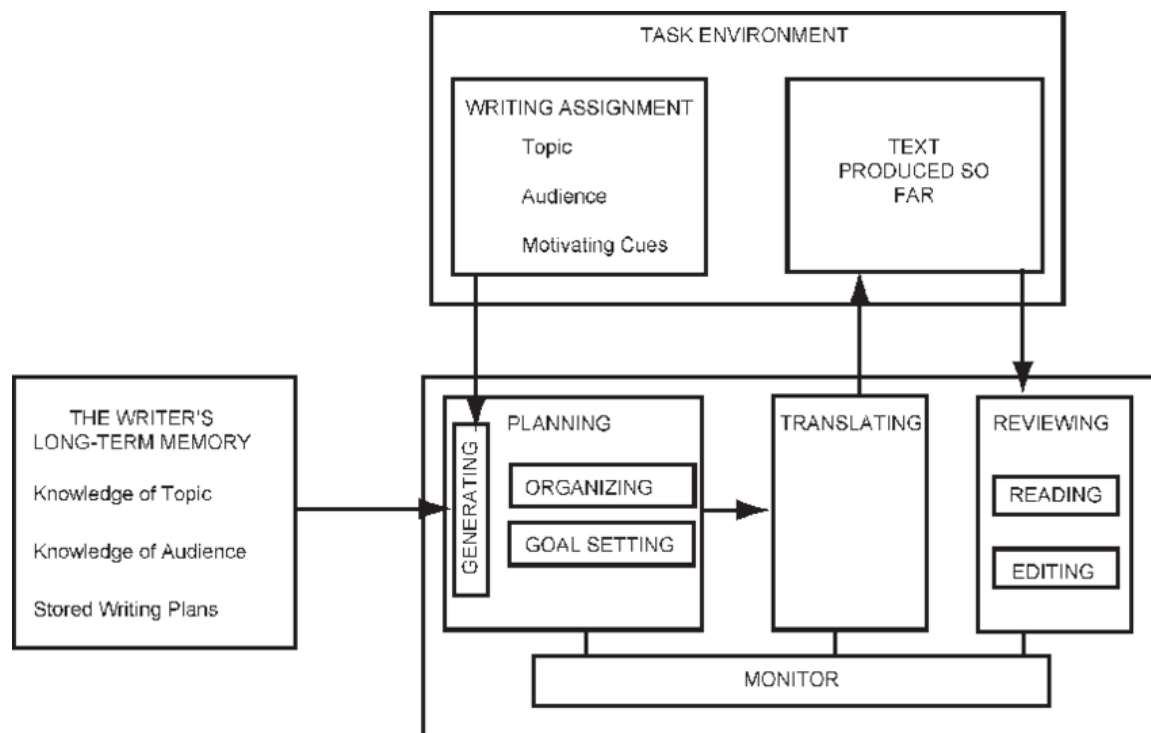
## **2.2. Writing models**

Flower and Hayes’ (1980) model, as shown in Figure 1, was developed in response to the need for a better understanding of the cognitive processes involved in writing instead of focusing on isolated aspects, such as grammar and syntax. Flower and Hayes’ (1980) writing model has three main parts. The first is the task environment, where many factors affect writing. Social factors like a teacher’s writing assignment and physical factors like the writer’s text are included. Flower and Hayes’ second component, cognitive processes (planning, translating, and reviewing), reacts to the linear sequence models of L2 and L1 writing. This section also explains how skilled writers generated and organized ideas, revised their writing, and managed the writing process. This section clarifies how novice and expert writers write and review (Becker, 2006). A monitor function can support planning,

translating, and reviewing, according to Flower and Hayes (1980). This activates writers' long-term memory and essential roles. Writers decide what and how to write in the planning phase and translate plans into texts in the translating phase. In the reviewing phase, writers assess their texts and make changes (Becker, 2006). Flower and Hayes' (1980) model concludes with writers' long-term memory, which involves their knowledge of the topic, audience, and genre.

**Figure 1**

*A Model of the Writing Process (Flower & Hayes, 1980, p. 11)*



Zimmermann (2000) highlighted the subprocesses of Flower and Hayes' (1980) model in L2 translation. To avoid confusion in the L2 context, he called Flower and Hayes' (1980) translating phase formulating, the heart of the writing process. This includes important subprocesses like tentative formulation in L1/L2, modified, repeated, and simplified tentative formulation, and metaprocesses like evaluating, rejecting, accepting, postponing, and simplifying.

Hayes (1996) added the task environment and the individual to Flower and Hayes' (1980) model to better understand the writing process. Instead of the social environment (the audience and collaborators are vital) and the physical environment (the writer produces a text and a writing medium), the second component includes motivation and effect (goals, predispositions, beliefs, and attitudes), cognitive processes (text interpretation, reflection, and text production), working memory, and long-term memory. The social-cognitive writing model has given way to the individual-environmental model. Hayes (1996) stated that his focus on individual components does not diminish other social and cognitive factors. Instead, they are essential to writing comprehension. This requires proper combination of social, physical, affective, and cognitive conditions.

As another addition to the subprocesses of writing, Hayes' (2012) study suggested the integration of the role of motivation into the earlier models of the writing process which did

not adequately address it. To rectify the omission of motivation, Hayes (2012) argues that understanding how motivation and cognitive processes interact in writing is crucial. Hayes cited previous research findings (e.g., Kaufer, Hayes & Flower, 1986) to demonstrate how motivation influences various aspects of writing, such as whether people engage in writing, the length of their writing, and their attention to the quality of their writing. In his study, Hayes (2012) calls for the need to improve the representation of motivation in writing models to better account for its influence on different phases of the writing process, beyond just goal setting.

### **2.3. Students' perceptions vs. reported instructor practices**

This study warrants the clarification of two constructs based on student perspective. The first construct of *perceptions*, which constitutes the central focus of this research, encompasses the thoughts, ideas, concepts, individualized experiences, personal/mental constructions, assumptions, propositions, opinions, views and beliefs that learners hold regarding second language (L2) instruction and learning, as well as the language itself (McDonald, 2012; Pajares, 1992; Richards & Schmitt, 2010). Benson and Lor (1999) posit that the beliefs of learners are dependent upon the context, are influenced by their previous encounters, and can be classified as functional or dysfunctional. For example, Blanton (1987) argued that the majority of students experience intense fear when it comes to writing in English. More precisely, they are terrified that their English writing skills will not be proficient enough to successfully complete their English exams, hindering their progress towards obtaining a university degree. The broader concept of teacher practice, which the second construct, *reported instructor practices*, pertains to, can be analyzed in a variety of ways contingent upon the agents' viewpoints. Therefore, teacher practice is commonly examined through various means, including student perceptions, researcher observations, and teacher self-reports (Muijs, 2006). Reported practices, which are derived from the assessments of these agents regarding the nature, frequency, and methods of various instructional activities (Richards & Schmidt, 2010), must be cross-referenced with other viewpoints (Lawrenz et al., 2003) to determine the degree to which they significantly correspond with perceptions. In relation to the interconnections between these two concepts, the judgments, decisions, and teaching practices of teachers can be affected by perceptions (Aguirre & Speer, 1999; Burns, 1992; Borg, 2001). Therefore, there can be significant agreement between reported practices and perceptions (Brown, 2009), or opposite. Discrepancies between perceptions and practices may arise as a result of personal and contextual factors that have an impact on teachers, students, and the working environment, as stated by Basturkmen (2012) and Borg (2006). So, despite the rarity of this comparison, it is critical to examine the relationship between students' perceptions and their reported instructor practices. In this way, the degree of (mis) alignment in this relationship regarding writing instruction approaches can be investigated.

### **2.4. Previous Research on writing instruction in Morocco based on students' perspectives.**

Given the current emphasis on investigating the alignment between teachers' perceptions and their reported practices in writing instruction (e.g., Hsiang et al., 2020), it is also necessary to fill the existing gap regarding the consistency between students' reported experiences with writing instruction and their own perceptions. In regards to Morocco, there is a dearth of research examining students' perspectives and reported teaching methods in the context of writing instruction. Abouabdelkader and Bouziane (2016) noted a lack of research on EFL writing in the specific context of Morocco. However, most of the previous studies conducted in Morocco, such as Azmi (2014) and Bennani (2013), have primarily examined the influence of information and communications technology on writing skills, rather than on the

instruction and acquisition of writing. This study aims to address the gap in EFL writing research in Morocco by investigating Moroccan students' preferences and reported instructor practices in product- and process-based writing. The study is based on the future research recommendations made by Abouabdelkader and Bouziane (2016), who suggested adapting process-oriented approaches to writing instruction and aligning it with the linguistic abilities of EFL learners. By examining the students' perceptions and reported instructor practices, the study seeks to gain insights into how their perceptions align with their reported experiences in writing instruction. Thus, this study is guided by three research questions:

1. What are the students' preferences towards product- and process-based approaches in teaching writing?
2. What teaching practices do the students report their instructors use for the two writing approaches?
3. To what degree do students' preferences align with their reported instructor practices in terms of teaching writing approaches?

### **3. Methods**

The current study was subjected to a thorough review and received approval from the Institutional Review Board at the Doctoral School of Education at the University of Szeged. Each student who participated in the research was given the opportunity to give his/her informed consent, as confirmed by the authors.

#### **3.1.Data Collection and Participants**

This study was conducted in Morocco. The survey method was utilized. A random selection of data was gathered from a group of 492 Moroccan university students who are studying EFL at various universities in Tétouan, Marrakesh, Fez, Casablanca, Agadir, Kenitra, Oujda, Rabat, Meknès, Beni Mellal, or El Jadida. The participants took the questionnaire in English because they do not share the first language and are mostly from different cultural backgrounds. Their mother tongue can be either Arabic or Amazigh language. It was logical to use English to avoid language barriers or translation issues for the participants and therefore reducing the risk of misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the questions because Moroccan students can speak two types of Arabic (Moroccan and modern Arabic) or one of the three types of Amazigh language (Tamazight, Tachalhit, or Tarifit). In Morocco, English is the language of instruction in the English department at the university and using it as the language of the questionnaire ensures that the responses align with the subject matter and the participants' academic context. The English department assigns Bachelor of English students a weekly two-hour writing course (e.g., writing paragraph, composition I and II, advanced writing) during their initial two years of college, as stated by Ouahidi and Lamkhanter (2020). This course covers the following topics: transitions, sentence variety, punctuation, coherence, cohesion, paragraph structure, thesis statements, essay structure, the writing process, research methodology, and various types of essays. These writing skills are utilized by senior-year undergraduates when composing their research papers. Writing courses frequently prioritize writing that is process and product-oriented. Reports, reviews, and research projects are required of master's students in applied linguistics or English studies in order to develop their writing and research abilities.

Table 1 displays the attributes of the sample based on the background variables included in the questionnaire. The sample consisted of 289 females and 203 males. The dominant subsample was composed of students between the ages of 17 and 25. The majority of these students were pursuing a Bachelor's degree (79%). Additionally, most students had been

studying English for duration of 6-10 years. When questioned about their comprehension of the questionnaire, 47% of students indicated that it was appropriate, while 33% regarded it very appropriate. This suggests that the majority of the participants were able to understand and answer the questions with certainty. The study excluded first-year BA students due to their limited proficiency in writing.

**Table 1**

*Characteristics of the Participants*

Baseline characteristic	Full sample (N= 492)	
	N	%
Gender		
Male	203	41.3
Female	289	58.7
Age		
17–25 years old	435	88.4
26–30 years old	36	7.3
31–35 years old	11	2.2
Over 35 years old	10	2
Academic level		
Second-year BA student	211	42.9
Third-year BA student	179	36.4
First-year MA student	32	6.5
Second-year MA student	70	14.2
English learning period		
Between 1–5 years	216	43.9
Between 6–10 years	229	46.5
Between 11–15 years	39	7.9
Between 16–20 years	8	1.6
Students' understanding of the questionnaire		
Very inappropriate	24	4.9
Inappropriate	13	2.6
Neutral	68	13.8
Appropriate	232	47.2
Very appropriate	155	31.5

### 3.2. Instrument and Procedure

The primary tool utilized in this study was a student-designed questionnaire. Because there is a lack of research on the specific elements of product- and process-based writing and no existing comparisons between students' perceptions and their instructors' reported practices of these two approaches, it was not possible to use any other questionnaires. The content validity of the developed instrument was ensured by constructing the sub-scales and formulating the items using relevant literature on writing, such as Badger & White (2000), Becker (2006), Flower & Hayes (1980), Frodesen & Holten (2003), Hayes (1996), Hedge (2005), Hyland (2003), Pramila (2017), and Zamel (1982). Additionally, the questionnaire items were modified according to input from researchers with expertise in education and EFL instruction. The readability and appropriateness of the questionnaire were evaluated by Moroccan English university teachers in a pilot study. The suggestions and feedback provided by the teachers were incorporated into the final version of the questionnaire.

The questionnaire items pertained to either the three research questions (as indicated in the Appendix) or the background information of the participants (refer to Table 1). The latter was excluded from data analysis and interpretation, and was solely utilized for describing the

sample. The two specific inquiries pertaining to the two aspects of students' perceptions and their reported instructor practices of writing exhibited similarities across all five sub-scales and the overall number of items that described the characteristics of product- and process-based writing. Nevertheless, there were disparities in the phrasing of the items in the two inquiries. Regarding the initial question, students were asked to express their level of agreement or disagreement on 21 items related to their perceived preferences of writing teaching approaches. This was done using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A scale with an odd number was provided to represent a participant's neutral position. The second inquiry inquired about the frequency at which students reported the implementation of teacher practices related to the teaching approaches of writing. This was assessed using a five-point intensity scale, ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always), across all 21 statements. The results of the first and second questions were subsequently contrasted to identify whether the students' preferences for instructional writing methods aligned with their reported instructor practices. Table 2 provides a summary of the scales and sub-scales associated with the two writing approaches, along with the total number of items. The serial numbers of the items are displayed in the Appendix.

**Table 2.**

*Overview of the Scales and Sub-scales Related to the Two Dimensions*

<i>Scales and sub-scales</i>	<i>Number of items</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	
		<i>Perceptions</i>	<i>Reported instructor practices</i>
<b>Product-based approach</b>	8		
Stages of product-based writing	4	1., 7., 12., 19.	19., 8., 13., 2.
Writing as a final product	4	3., 10., 15., 21.	15., 5., 1., 21
<b>Process-based approach</b>	13		
Socio-cognitive processes of writing	4	2., 9., 13., 18.	20., 11., 3., 17.
Engagement in the revision process of writing	4	4., 6., 17., 20.	4., 7., 14., 10.
Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing	5	5., 8., 11., 14., 16	16., 18., 12., 6., 9.

*Note.* The serial numbers in the dimensions column indicate the serial numbers of the questionnaire items in the Appendix.

Table 2 demonstrates that the product-based approach to writing consists of two sub-scales. The initial sub-scale, labelled as *Stages of product-based writing*, comprises a total of four items. According to Badger and White (2000) and Hyland (2003), the product-based approach is taught using four stages: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. These stages include specific features that are incorporated into the items. The second sub-scale, *Writing as a final product*, consists of three items that emphasize the importance of accuracy and form in students' final writings. This includes the evaluation and correction of their writings as well (e.g., Frodesen & Holten, 2003; Pramila, 2017; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

Concerning the scale of the process-oriented approach to writing, there exist three sub scales. The first sub-scale, *Socio-cognitive processes of writing*, comprises four items pertaining to the activities of planning, translating, and reviewing, as described by Flower and Hayes (1980) and Becker (2006). The second sub-scale, titled *Engagement in the revision process of writing*, comprises four items that specifically address the beneficial impact of teacher-student discussions and peer involvement on the process of revising written work.

The latter also engages students in various writing tasks such as pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Hedge, 2005), which can enhance their overall writing proficiency. The third sub-scale, *Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing*, comprises five items that pertain to Hayes' (1996) writing model, specifically the individual components of long-term memory (task schemes and knowledge of the topic, audience, language, and genre), motivation, and affect (goals, predispositions, and beliefs).

Convergent validity, construct validity, and reliability of the questionnaire items were all assessed to show their applicability and the extent to which they meet the following two goals in this research study: 1) to investigate students' perceptions and reported instructor practices regarding the teaching of writing, and then 2) to examine the relationship between these two dimensions at the sub-scale level. To be more precise, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was used to confirm and contrast the questionnaire's empirical and theoretical structures in order to guarantee its construct validity. Another objective of using EFA was to reduce the dataset to a manageable size while preserving the original information of the questionnaire items (Field, 2009; Pituch & Stevens, 2016). Similarly, based on the two dimensions and scales, four principal component analyses (PCAs) with varimax rotation were carried out to identify the purpose of each item in the factor structure and to generate composite scores of the five sub-scales. To be able to assess the questionnaire's convergent validity, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to show how student perceptions and reported instructor practices of the various sub-scales related to each other. Cronbach's alpha coefficients were also used to determine the scales' reliability.

The results of the four principal component analyses (PCAs) to assess the suitability of the items for factor analysis are shown in Table 3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) sampling adequacy values ranged from 0.74 to 0.88 in all cases, surpassing the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.5. Furthermore, Bartlett's test of sphericity yielded significant results in all of the models ( $p < 0.001$ ), indicating that the correlation coefficients between the items were suitable for the PCAs. All items, except one related to the reported instructor practices' dimension in the scale of product-based writing, had communalities above the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.3. In regards to the other factors, the cumulative variance accounted for by the generated factors was approximately 55% or greater. Therefore, by incorporating these factors into subsequent analyses rather than considering the individual items separately, the information loss was reduced to less than 45%.

When examining the factors, all of the eigenvalues were found to be greater than 1, except for the perceptions' dimension in the product-based writing scale, which had an eigenvalue of 0.96. Although the value was lower, the two-factor resolution was preferred due to its alignment with the theoretical structure and its ability to facilitate comparisons between students' perceptions and reported instructor practices. According to the theoretical framework, there were two factors that formed product-based writing and three factors that shaped process-based writing based on the two dimensions of "perception" and "reported instructor practices".



**Table 3.***Summary of the Four PCAs*

<i>Dimensions and scales</i>	<i>KM O</i>	<i>Bartlett's test of sphericity</i>			<i>Communalities</i>			<i>Total variance explained (%)</i>
		$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>M</i>	
<b>Perceptions</b>								
Product-based writing	0.87	1224.86	28	<0.001	0.45	0.69	0.59	59.12
Process-based writing	0.88	2556.08	78	<0.001	0.50	0.77	0.63	63.41
<b>Reported instructor practice</b>								
Product-based writing	0.74	787.79	28	<0.001	0.47	0.66	0.55	55.02
Process-based writing	0.88	2336.34	78	<0.001	0.45	0.73	0.60	59.66

*Note.* KMO = Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy.

In both dimensions of the student perceptions and reported instructor practices, the factor loadings of each item within the product- and process-based writing scales were higher than the suggested value of 0.4. Furthermore, the majority of the individual factor items complied with the theoretical framework.

Ultimately, the self-developed questionnaire's structure allowed for the control of its convergent validity, particularly because the sub-scales measuring students' perceptions and reported writing practices from instructors were identical. Table 4 provides the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for these two dimensions as well as the Pearson's correlation coefficients between them along the sub-scales. The relationships between students' perceptions and reported instructor practices were found to be moderately positive and significant in all cases, suggesting a theoretical and empirical relationship between these two constructs. Regarding the reliability of the subscales, most of the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were respectably high. Based on students' perceptions or their reported instructor practices, it was observed that these values were higher in the process-based approach than in the product-based approach.

**Table 4***Summary of Factor Loadings, Pearson's Correlations, and Cronbach's Alphas Regarding the**Two Writing Approaches*

Scales and subscales	Factor loadings				Correlations		Cronbach's	
	P		RP		between P– RP		alphas	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	P	RP
<b>Product-based approach</b>								
Stages of product-based writing	.60	.76	.69	.78	-0.02	0.58	.71	.70
Writing as a final product	.61	.81	.69	.81	0.21	<0.001	.81	.75
<b>Process-based approach</b>								
Socio-cognitive processes of writing	.61	.77	.48	.76	0.15	<0.001	.74	.75
Engagement in the revision process of writing	.66	.85	.66	.82	0.19	<0.001	.83	.84
Developmental macro aspects of the	.72	.80	.63	.76	0.24	<0.001	.86	.78

### 3.3 Data Analysis

The data was analyzed and the three research questions answered using IBM SPSS V25. Composite scores from principal component analysis were used to assess students' perceptions of sub-scale items and teachers' use of them. Descriptive statistical analyses were used to determine students' perceptions and instructor practices of product- and process-based writing. Additionally, paired sample t-tests were used to compare subscales, and correlation coefficients were used to determine their internal relationships. The differences between student perceptions and instructor practices and the sub-scales were analyzed to compare them.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Research Question One

The findings presented in Table 5 demonstrate that Moroccan students unanimously prioritize the significance of Writing as a final product, rather than the various stages of product-based writing. The means and standard deviations of these two sub-scales exhibited a significant difference ( $t(491) = -6.99, p < 0.001$ ). Additionally, there was a significant correlation between these two sub-scales ( $r = 0.60, p < 0.001$ ).

The students' preferences for process-based writing showed significant differences in relation to the Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing compared to the other two sub-scales ( $t(491) = -3.24, p < 0.001$ ;  $t(491) = -5.30, p < 0.001$ ). The two sub-scales, Socio-cognitive processes of writing and Engagement in the revision process, did not show a significant difference ( $t(491) = 1.24, p = 0.21$ ). Furthermore, there were statistically significant moderate positive correlations ( $0.34 \leq r \leq 0.52, p < 0.001$ ) observed among all of the sub-scales.

**Table 5**

*Moroccan EFL Students' Perceptions of the Two Writing Approaches*

Scales and subscales	BA				MA				Total	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year		3 <sup>rd</sup> year		1 <sup>st</sup> year		2 <sup>nd</sup> year		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
<b>Product-based writing</b>										
Writing as a final product	4.15	0.84	4.26	0.80	3.80	0.76	3.90	0.65	4.13	0.80
Stages of product-based writing	3.91	0.80	4.04	0.71	3.64	0.60	3.73	0.65	3.91*	0.74
<b>Process-based writing</b>										
Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing	3.81	0.79	3.95	0.65	3.83	0.86	3.72	0.62	3.85	0.73
Socio-cognitive processes of writing	3.70	0.87	3.61	0.77	3.81	0.72	4.00	0.65	3.72*	0.80
Engagement in the revision process of writing	3.60	0.74	3.64	0.73	3.19	1.05	4.16	0.61	3.67	0.77

Note. In the case of all subscales, the values can range between 1 and 5. \* Mean significantly differs from the previous subscale at  $p < .05$ .

### 4.2. Research Question Two

Table 6 shows that the standard deviations of *Writing as a final product* and *Stages of product-based writing* differed based on the students' reported instructor practices. There was a significant difference in their means ( $t(491) = -11.79, p < 0.001$ ). The correlation between these two sub-scales was weak but significant ( $r = 0.14, p < 0.001$ ).

Regarding the process-based writing approach as reported by the students, there were notable distinctions between the two sub-scales and *Engagement in the writing revision process* ( $t(491) = -9.38, p < 0.001$ ;  $t(491) = 8.64, p < 0.001$ ). The students also stated that their teachers regarded socio-cognitive writing processes as equally important as the sub-scale of Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing ( $t(491) = 0.11, p = 0.90$ ), as they were not significantly different. In addition, all sub-scales of process-based writing showed moderate positive significant correlations ( $0.45 \leq r \leq 0.59, p < 0.001$ ).

**Table 6**

*Moroccan EFL Students' Reported Instructor Practices of the Two Writing Approaches*

Scales and subscales	BA				MA				Total	
	2 <sup>nd</sup> year		3 <sup>rd</sup> year		1 <sup>st</sup> year		2 <sup>nd</sup> year		M	SD
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Product-based writing										
Writing as a final product	3.97	0.63	3.93	0.65	3.68	0.55	3.80	0.71	3.91	0.65
Stages of product-based writing	3.72	0.94	3.10	0.82	2.99	0.83	3.02	0.78	3.34*	0.93
Process-based writing										
Engagement in the revision process of writing	4.19	0.75	4.26	0.80	3.33	0.95	3.30	1.03	4.03	0.90
Socio-cognitive processes of writing	3.83	0.63	3.86	0.76	3.10	0.89	3.15	0.92	3.70*	0.79
Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing	3.61	0.77	4.06	0.69	3.10	0.82	3.30	0.82	3.70	0.81

*Note.* In the case of all subscales, the values can range between 1 and 5. \* Mean significantly differs from the previous subscale at  $p < .05$ .

### 4.3. Research Question Three

At the sub-scale level, Table 7 shows a comparison of the students' preferences with what they said their teachers did when it came to product-and process-based writing. Except for the one that looked at *Socio-cognitive processes of writing*, all of the other subscales showed significant differences. There were some weak correlations between the paired sub-scales, but most of them were statistically significant. This means that there was a consistent but not very strong relationship between how students view the teaching writing techniques and what they said teachers did for each subscale. The correlations were between  $0.15 \leq r \leq 0.24$  ( $p < 0.001$ ) (see Table 4).

**Table 7.**

*Moroccan EFL Students' Perceptions and Reported Instructor Practices of the two writing approaches*

Scales and sub-scales	Perceptions		Reported Instructor Practices		Mean Diff.	T-test	
	M	SD	M	SD		t (491)	p
<b>Product-based writing</b>							
Writing as a final product	4.13	0.80	3.91	0.65	0.22	5.32	< .001
Stages of product-based writing	3.91	0.74	3.34	0.93	0.57	10.40	< .001
<b>Process-based writing</b>							
Engagement in the revision process of writing	3.67	0.77	4.03	0.90	−0.36	−7.40	< .001
Socio-cognitive processes of writing	3.72	0.80	3.70	0.79	0.02	0.36	0.71
Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing	3.85	0.73	3.70	0.81	0.15	3.51	< .001

*Note.* In all of the sub-scales in both dimensions, the values can range between 1 and 5.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1.EFL Students' Perceptions of the Product- and Process-Based Approaches to Teaching Writing

The Moroccan students in this study agreed that *Writing as a final product* was more important than *Stages of product-based writing* based on how they perceived it. This reveals what the students think about how important it is to learn correct word usage and structure in the product-based writing process. This makes it clear that the students want the end result more than the required stages that are needed for product-based writing. Students preferred an accurate and cohesive written piece.

Moroccan students exhibited a greater emphasis on *Developmental macro aspects of the content* when evaluating process-based writing, as opposed to the two subscales of the *Socio-cognitive processes of writing* and the *Engagement in the revision process of writing*. This implies a focus on content-related aspects, including the quality of ideas, development and relevance of the topic. Thus, writing which focus on a step-by-step process, and which involves thinking, planning, writing, and revision were not highly perceived by students as the most preferred approaches of teaching the process-based writing.

### 5.2.EFL Students' Reported Instructor Practices of the Product- and Process-Based Approaches to Teaching Writing

At the product-based level, the Moroccan students reported that their teachers often focused on teaching *Writing as a final product* rather than using the *Stages of product-based writing*. This emphasis on accuracy and basic writing techniques aligns with the findings of Yang and Gao (2013) and Guo et al. (2022), who also found that teachers heavily emphasized spelling, punctuation, grammar, and handwriting when teaching writing skills. Brindle et al. (2016) found that teachers more frequently taught basic writing skills and had students imitate model essays when using the *Writing as a final product* approach. However, there is limited research on the application of the *Stages of product-based writing*. The only stage that was highlighted and frequently used by teachers was guided writing, as found in the study by

Brindle et al. (2016). The overemphasis on *Writing as a final product* by teachers can lead students to prioritize the basic features of writing, both in their assigned writing tasks and in their preparation for exams.

As for their reported instructor practices of the process-based approach to writing, Moroccan students reported that their teachers often employed strategies from the *Engagement sub-scale in the revision process of writing*, which aligns with previous studies by Hsiang et al. (2020) and Guo et al. (2022). These strategies included revision, editing, peer reviewing, and teacher-student conferencing. Moroccan students also found that their teachers considered the *Socio-cognitive processes of writing* more crucial than the *Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing*. In terms of *Socio-cognitive processes of writing*, Moroccan students reported that their teachers encouraged students to plan and self-regulate their writing strategies. They also encouraged them to put their plans into a written text and involved them in the advanced writing process. As an example of *Development aspects of the content of writing*, the use of genre features was the most referenced aspect of writing in Mariano et al.'s (2022) study, but this study did not identify a major focus on this aspect. Thus, it is implied by Moroccan students that teachers rarely asked students to write based on their knowledge of the genre of writing. It is also noted that Moroccan teachers did not pay more attention to the role of reader engagement in writing. Overall, Moroccan students' reported teacher practices highlight the importance of engaging students in the writing process.

### **5.3.The Relationship Between Students' Preferences and Their Reported Instructor**

#### **Practices of the Product- and Process-Based Approaches to Teaching Writing**

By conducting a sub-scale level comparison between students' perceptions and reported instructor practices concerning product-based writing, it was observed that the Moroccan students' perceptions of the strategies involved in *Writing as a final product* were inconsistent with their reported instructor practices. Moroccan students hold the belief that vocabulary and mechanics (including but not limited to spelling, punctuation, format, and handwriting) are of great importance. However, these students have found that university teachers employ these elements of writing only moderately or infrequently. Ding and Zhao (2019) identified that teachers placed less emphasis on these elements in their study. A discrepancy arose between the students' perceptions and the reported teacher practices with regard to the *Stages of product-based writing*. It indicates that the Moroccan students' views regarding the role of the four writing stages (familiarization, guided, controlled, and freewriting) were not highly evidenced in the product-based approach to writing instruction implemented by their instructors.

In regard with the essence of *Engagement in the writing revision process*, the students' perceptions diverged from their reported instructor practices. As a result, the students' expectations regarding the extent to which teachers promote learning how to write for improvement, participation in peer reviews, discussion of writing performance with instructors, and engagement in specific writing processes (e.g., pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, and editing) were not highly achieved. Concerning the subscale of *Socio-cognitive processes of writing*, students' reported instructor practices and perceptions are in agreement. This demonstrates how teachers meet the needs of students in accordance with what they said about their practices and the importance that students attribute to this subscale. For students, the value of encouraging creative and critical writing (i.e., student participation in the writing process) remains crucial (Yang & Gao, 2013). The sub-scale pertaining to *Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing* revealed a disparity between the perceptions of students and the teacher practices they reported. Therefore, the students'

beliefs in requiring students to write based on their knowledge of the purpose, topic, reader, context, and genre of writing were not largely enacted in their teachers' instructional practices.

## **6. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

This study focused on teaching EFL writing to university students in Moroccan faculties of arts and humanities. The study found that while it made valuable contributions to the field, there were certain limitations. The findings of the research cannot be generalized to other educational establishments, as it was specific to Moroccan EFL students. The study only examined the students' perceptions and reported instructor practices, without considering the preferences and actual practices of the teachers. The study also did not analyze variations in perceptions and reported practices based on background variables such as academic level, gender, and English learning experience. Additionally, the data collection was limited to a constructed questionnaire as the main instrument.

However, the study identified areas for future research, such as investigating the connection between teachers' and students' perceptions and practices. It also suggested using a wider range of research tools, such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, to address the limitations in methodology. The study recommended prioritizing both process-based and product-based writing practices in pedagogy and enhancing teachers' professional expertise through webinars, workshops, and training courses. Further investigation into the pedagogy of process-based writing practices in higher education was deemed necessary to improve instructional methods. Overall, the study provided insights for researchers and educators in the Moroccan educational setting and highlighted the importance of data on how writing is taught to enhance instruction effectively.

## **7. Conclusion**

This study compared product- and process-based writing approaches, based on Moroccan EFL university students' perceptions and reported instructor practices. The results of the first research question demonstrated that the students' perceptions were characterized by the frequent emphasis on *Writing as a final product* and *Developmental macro aspects of the content of writing*. This finding indicates that Moroccan students believe that the features targeted in these sub-scales can help them write accurately and engage in process-based writing, especially in terms of deciding what to write, planning, writing, and revising their drafts. However, *Stages of product-based writing* and *Engagement in the revision process of writing* were less frequently addressed in their writing instruction. Regarding the second research question, students reported that teachers frequently focused on writing strategies that are part of *Writing as a final product* and *Engagement in the revision process of writing*. This indicates that the Moroccan teachers' relied on writing techniques that included advanced writing processes (e.g., planning, translating, and reviewing), peer reviews of their classmates' writings, discussions with their teachers, and writing an accurate final text in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. Despite such reliance, students' reported findings revealed that teachers still employed other writing practices covered by the remaining sub-scales. Finally, mismatches were found in most of the writing approaches when comparing students' perceptions and their reported instructor practices. This suggests the need to find a balance between students' needs and instructional practices regarding the appropriate approaches to teaching writing skills. Thus teachers need to be aware of the overall techniques involved the study's targetted subscales and how they can incorporate them in their teaching to enhance students' writing performance and meet their expectations.

The questionnaire used in this study, which has been validated based on psychometric properties, can be utilized or adapted by other researchers. This questionnaire is not only

intended for investigating the students' perceptions and reported instructor practices of the various writing approaches, but also for identifying any discrepancies between these specific dimensions.

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## Appendix

### Questionnaire Items Regarding Moroccan EFL University Students' Perceptions and their Reported Instructor Practices of the Teaching of Writing

#### 1. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following teaching practices of writing to be targeted by teachers in English writing classrooms? Please, tick your answer.

1: Strongly Disagree    2: Disagree    3: Neutral    4: Agree    5: Strongly Agree

In teaching writing, teachers should ...	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1. ...give students grammar exercises (e.g., combining or completing sentences).	1	2	3	4	5
2. ...involve students in deciding what to write.	1	2	3	4	5
3. ...encourage students to practice writing for the final exam.	1	2	3	4	5
4. ...encourage students to learn how to write for improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
5. ...ask students to write following their knowledge of the genre of writing.	1	2	3	4	5
6. ...involve students in peer reviewing of each other's writing.	1	2	3	4	5
7. ...allow students to write freely their written text.	1	2	3	4	5
8. ...ask students to write in accordance with their knowledge of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
9. ...involve students in the process of putting their plans into written texts.	1	2	3	4	5
10. ...focus on learners' language accuracy (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, punctuations) when writing the final text.	1	2	3	4	5
11. ...ask students to write in accordance with their knowledge of the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
12. ...introduce grammatical components inductively through a text.	1	2	3	4	5
13. ...involve students in the processes of advanced writing (e.g., planning, translating, and reviewing).	1	2	3	4	5
14. ...ask students to write in accordance with their knowledge of the audience (reader).	1	2	3	4	5
15. ...encourage students to write accurately when writing their final draft.	1	2	3	4	5
16. ...ask students to write in accordance with their knowledge of context.	1	2	3	4	5
17. ...encourage students to respond to writing through teacher-student discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
18. ...involve students in reviewing by asking them to improve their existing text.	1	2	3	4	5
19. ...guide students to practice writing longer pieces using the target grammar	1	2	3	4	5

and vocabulary.

20. ...engage students in the processes of writing (e.g., pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, editing).	1	2	3	4	5
21. ...encourage students to follow the given text example when writing their final text.	1	2	3	4	5

**2. How frequently do teachers engage you in the following writing practices when they teach writing? Please, tick your answer.**

1: *Never*      2: *Rarely*      3: *Sometimes*      4: *Often*      5: *Always*

In the teaching of writing, teachers ...					
	never	rarely	sometimes	often	always
1. ...encourage me to write accurately when writing my final draft.	1	2	3	4	5
2. ...guide me to practice writing longer pieces using the target grammar and vocabulary.	1	2	3	4	5
3. ...involve me in the processes of advanced writing (e.g., planning, translating, and reviewing).	1	2	3	4	5
4. ...encourage me to learn how to write for improvement.	1	2	3	4	5
5. ...focus on my language accuracy (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, punctuations) when writing my final text.	1	2	3	4	5
6. ...ask me to write in accordance with my knowledge of the audience (reader).	1	2	3	4	5
7. ...involve me and other students in peer reviewing of each other's writing.	1	2	3	4	5
8. ...allow me to write freely my written text.	1	2	3	4	5
9. ...ask me to write in accordance with my knowledge of context.	1	2	3	4	5
10. ...engage me in the processes of writing (e.g., pre-writing, planning, drafting, revising, editing).	1	2	3	4	5
11. ...involve me in the process of putting my plans into written texts.	1	2	3	4	5
12. ...ask me to write in accordance with my knowledge of the topic.	1	2	3	4	5
13. ...introduce grammatical components inductively through a text to me.	1	2	3	4	5
14. ...encourage me to engage with writing through teacher-student discussion.	1	2	3	4	5
15. ...encourage me to practice writing for the final exam.	1	2	3	4	5
16. ...ask me to write following my knowledge of the genre of writing.	1	2	3	4	5
17. ...involve me in reviewing by asking me to improve my existing text.	1	2	3	4	5
18. ...ask me to write in accordance with my knowledge of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5

19. ...give me grammar exercises (e.g., combining or completing sentences).	1	2	3	4	5
20. ...involve me in deciding what to write.	1	2	3	4	5
21. ...encourage me to follow the given text example when writing my final text.	1	2	3	4	5

## **Institutional Description**

The research was conducted in collaboration with the Doctoral School of Education at the University of Szeged, Hungary, where the study received Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval.

The research itself takes place in Moroccan public universities, where English departments offer structured writing instruction for BA and MA students. Moroccan institutional factors strongly influence students' writing development: English is the medium of instruction for English Studies programs; students come from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Arabic and Amazigh); and writing classes follow a largely standardized curriculum focusing on paragraph and essay writing, research methodology, and both product- and process-oriented writing. Institutional constraints such as large class sizes, limited teacher training in writing pedagogy, and inconsistent implementation of writing approaches shape how writing is taught and experienced by students across universities.

## **2. Key Theorists**

### **1. Zamel (1982) – Writing as a Recursive Process**

Zamel conceptualizes writing as a process of continuous drafting and revising through which writers develop and refine their ideas. This perspective underpins the process-based writing approach and informs the study's focus on cognitive stages of writing.

### **2. Flower & Hayes (1980, 1986, 1996) – Cognitive Process Models of Writing**

Their models describe writing as a complex interplay of planning, translating/formulating, and reviewing, shaped by the task environment and long-term memory. Later extensions by Hayes integrate motivation, affect, and individual differences, providing the theoretical grounding for understanding how writers engage cognitively with writing tasks.

### **3. Hyland (2003) – Writing Pedagogy and Critique of Product Approach**

Hyland analyzes writing as a socially situated activity and critiques product-based instruction for overemphasizing language form at the expense of cognitive processes and audience awareness. His work supports the study's comparison between product- and process-based approaches.

#### **4. Badger & White (2000) – Product vs. Process Writing Approaches**

They distinguish between controlled, guided, and free writing within the product approach and highlight the pedagogical shift toward process-oriented writing. Their framework helps structure the study's examination of teacher practices and student preferences.

#### **5. Borg (2001, 2006) – Teacher Beliefs and Practices**

Borg's work demonstrates that teachers' beliefs significantly shape their instructional decisions, sometimes aligning and often misaligning with actual classroom practices. This perspective informs the study's investigation of alignment between students' perceptions and reported instructor practices.

### **3. Glossary**

#### **Amazigh**

A group of indigenous languages spoken in Morocco, including Tamazight, Tachalhit, and Tarifit. Many Moroccan students speak an Amazigh language as their mother tongue.

#### **Moroccan Arabic (Darija)**

The most widely spoken dialect of Arabic in Morocco, used in everyday communication but different from Modern Standard Arabic.

#### **Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)**

The formal variety of Arabic used in writing, media, and education across the Arab world, including Morocco.

#### **EFL (English as a Foreign Language)**

A context in which English is learned as an additional language in countries where it is not the primary medium of communication.

#### **Product-based Writing Approach**

A writing pedagogy that emphasizes accuracy, grammar, and imitation of model texts. Common stages include familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing.

#### **Process-based Writing Approach**

A writing pedagogy focusing on planning, drafting, revising, peer feedback, and multiple drafts. It views writing as a recursive cognitive activity rather than a linguistic exercise.

#### **Reported Instructor Practices**

Students' accounts of the teaching methods, strategies, and activities their instructors use in writing classes.

## **Perceptions**

Learners' beliefs, assumptions, attitudes, and interpretations regarding writing instruction, writing tasks, and their own writing abilities.