



## Research article

# Student perspectives on preferences and reported instructor practices of written feedback in the Moroccan EFL university context

Abderrahim Mamad<sup>a,\*</sup>, Tibor Víggh<sup>b</sup><sup>a</sup> Doctoral School of Education, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary<sup>b</sup> Institute of Education and MTA-SZTE Reading and Motivation Research Group, University of Szeged, Szeged, Hungary

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## ABSTRACT

Written feedback (WF) in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing has been explored from two perspectives, including product-based WF, which is provided on completed drafts, and process-based WF, which can be used during pre-, while-, and post-writing. Students' perceptions have been mainly investigated in relation to product-oriented WF preferences and practices, but not in comparison to the two WF approaches. This exploratory quantitative study examined students' preferences and reported instructor practices of the product and the process approaches of WF in the higher education EFL writing context. Data were collected from 468 Moroccan students through a questionnaire covering the characteristics of the two WF types using nine different subscales, enabling several comparisons during data analysis. Four principal component analyses were employed to validate the questionnaire. The data and sampling in each case were appropriate for factor analysis ( $0.78 \leq \text{KMO} \leq 0.93$ ). Reliability values ( $0.71 \leq \text{Cronbach's alpha} \leq 0.95$ ) were acceptable. 1) Students reported higher preferences for receiving written corrective feedback; effective WF modes containing specific, personalized, and detailed WF supporting the identification of the next steps in the writing process; and content-based WF related to macro-aspects (e.g., the range of ideas and the development and relevance of a topic, purpose, genre, context, and audience). 2) Moreover, they reported that their instructors used these approaches more often than other WF techniques. 3) However, there were discrepancies between the two constructs in the case of all subscales. Students perceived that mostly all the techniques of the two approaches of WF are of great importance in EFL writing classes; however, they mostly all reported that, in comparison to their preferences, instructors applied them less frequently. The study suggests adapting instructor WF practices to students' preferences to effectively develop their writing skills.

## 1. Introduction

In feedback research, feedback, according to its narrow and conventional interpretation, is conceptualized as information provided to students by teachers as key providers [1]. A widely used broader definition provided by Hattie and Timperley [2] emphasizes that feedback is defined as "information provided by an agent (e.g., teacher, peer, book, parent, self, experience) regarding aspects of one's

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [abderrahim.mamad@edu.u-szeged.hu](mailto:abderrahim.mamad@edu.u-szeged.hu) (A. Mamad), [vigh.tibor@edpsy.u-szeged.hu](mailto:vigh.tibor@edpsy.u-szeged.hu) (T. Víggh).

performance or understanding” (p. 81). In English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL), written feedback (WF) has been interpreted distinctively on the basis of its effectiveness on the development of students’ writing and their learning outcomes. Some researchers (e.g., [3,4]) have conceptualized written corrective feedback (WCF) as feedback that would improve students’ writing accuracy, whereas others (e.g., [5–7]) have considered process-based feedback that engages students in revision and editing processes. The first perspective, WCF, has been a source of debate between researchers supporting it as an effective strategy to correct linguistic errors in students’ written products (e.g., [3,4,8–13]) and other researchers who assert that it is ineffective (e.g., [14,15]). The second perspective, process-based feedback, supports new researchers’ innovative calls to move beyond the correction of the surface aspects of student writing and instead consider feedback to be a set of processes in which learners hold an active role, such as by both providing and receiving feedback from multiple sources and by assessing themselves and others [6,16].

Several studies have examined students’ perceptions in relation to WF. These perceptions are often considered crucial indicators of language learning success, particularly in writing development. Most existing research [17–32] has examined students’ perceptions of WF based either on the type, mode, technique, source, and scope of feedback they prefer or the usefulness or effectiveness of such feedback in improving EFL and ESL writing and academic writing. Reported practices are related to the concept of teacher practice. The latter is commonly examined through various means, including student perceptions, researcher observations, and teacher self-reports [33]. The reported practices come from these agents’ perspectives on the kinds, how often, and ways of different teaching activities [34]. They need to be compared with other points of view [35] to see how closely they align with perceptions. Despite the extensive focus of this previous research within various contexts on the controversial issue of WCF [24], it has become necessary to conduct such research in the Moroccan context because WCF is considered as an effective strategy for developing students’ accuracy and writing skills [36]. Another reason is the rarity of this research among Moroccan EFL university students. The few studies conducted in Morocco focused only on students’ perceptions of teacher feedback [37] and EFL teachers’ beliefs about WCF as a tool of formative assessment [38], but not on both students’ perceptions and their reported instructor practices of these types of feedback.

Similar to the findings of Styati and Rodliyah [39]’s study, some Moroccan studies [40,41], which targeted EFL writing in higher education, revealed that Moroccan university students face many problems in writing, especially in areas related to grammar, vocabulary, and organization. These problems may be explained if teachers rely frequently on the product approach to writing and do not provide effective feedback [37,42]. To address the specific challenges faced by these students, conducting a study on how students perceive their preferences for WF practices in EFL writing and how they align with instructors’ practices is warranted. Hence, the objective of this study was to explain the perspectives of Moroccan EFL students regarding their preferences for WF’s product and process approaches, as well as their reports of their teachers’ practices using these WF approaches. Explaining and comparing these approaches can reveal the extent to which students’ reported instructor WF practices are in line with their perceptions and the kind of teacher feedback techniques used by teachers and preferred by students. The specific objectives of this study are threefold: first, to determine students’ perceived preferences concerning product and process-based WF; second, to investigate instructors’ reported practices regarding these two approaches to WF; and third, to assess the alignment between students’ preferences and instructors’ reported practices concerning the two WF approaches.

## 2. Theoretical background

### 2.1. Paradigm shift in WF research: from product-based to process-based feedback

Ferris [43] argued that research that started in the early 1990s has begun to move beyond the linguistic focus of teacher WF into other important characteristics of writing composition. Consistent with this, many researchers (e.g., [44,45]) from the early-to-mid-1990s reported that teachers were increasingly providing feedback on a wide range of compositional issues that went beyond error correction of grammatical structures, such as developing students’ ideas, rhetorical abilities, and revision skills. Over the last two decades, teachers have become familiar with the limitations of the product-dominated approach to feedback provision (single-draft, error-focused models of writing, and feedback) and have moved toward considering a multiple-draft process approach and revision model as focal areas when responding to student writing [43]. Similarly, pedagogical practices in feedback have also shifted from single-direction-oriented WF to teacher–student conferences and peer-feedback sessions [43].

Recently, with the adoption of a learner-centered, process-oriented approach to feedback, students can understand and utilize information from different sources to improve their work or learning strategies [46]. The learner-centered process-based approach to feedback differs from the teacher-centered transmission-oriented approach in terms of the quality of learning. Whereas the first approach views feedback as a one-way communication, where the teacher is considered the source of feedback (e.g., providing corrections to the students) and the student is the recipient [47,48], the second recognizes feedback as a collaborative process that involves both learners and teachers. The student-centered approach emphasizes the active involvement and engagement of students in this feedback process, allowing them to play an active role in analyzing, discussing, interpreting, and applying feedback to their learning processes [49]. Whereas Malecka et al. [1] argued that perceiving feedback as mainly the responsibility of teachers frees students of the obligation to actively seek, interact with, and utilize feedback, Chong [50] clarified that when feedback is regarded as a process, it usually involves two dimensions: the interpersonal process, which is influenced by relationships and emotions, and the intrapersonal process, which is influenced by students’ cognitive readiness and experience.

Several empirical studies have demonstrated that students frequently express dissatisfaction with the feedback they get on what they have written [51–53], and various institutions have been seeking strategies to tackle this challenging issue. Consequently, current research efforts globally have largely centered around enhancing the efficacy of written comments. To achieve this goal, Nicol [49] emphasized that there is a need to move away from the perspective of monologues to dialogues regarding WF and argued that its

improvement in writing requires the provision of immediate and comprehensive feedback to students, highlighting both the strengths and weaknesses of their work, along with clear recommendations for improvement. Thus, if this approach is considered independently, it would signify a transmission perspective of feedback. This can be achieved through both dialogic and peer feedback. The former reinforces the joint responsibility between students and teachers in feedback processes, whereas the latter encourages peers to make evaluative judgments on the quality of their own work and that of others [54]. Learners' capability for evaluative judgments can be developed through strategies that involve peer-assessment, self-assessment, and self-regulated learning [54]. The student's role in the feedback process should receive more attention in the teaching and learning process. Lack of understanding of the role of feedback processes, their effective employment, and their influence on students' learning have been considered to be common problems in higher education [52,55].

As a result of the paradigm shift in WF research, a distinction was made between two perspectives that have been referred to by Bowen et al. [56] as product- and process-based feedback. According to them, product-oriented feedback is any feedback given on finished drafts with the goal of making drafts better in terms of audience awareness, content, organization of rhetoric, and language, whereas process-oriented feedback refers to specific tasks that happen before, during, and after writing, such as setting goals, planning, editing, revising, and using resources. Thus, the first orientation of feedback is related to the product approach of writing, which is perceived as the outcome of what students write in one draft paper [57] and is expected to be developed on the basis of microaspects such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, organization, mechanics, and syntax [58]. As explained by Mamad and Vígh [59], product-based feedback aims to improve students' writing accuracy; students receive it from teachers and other sources, and it includes metalinguistic explanations, error corrections, grades, or scores, general praise, and criticism. The second orientation of feedback is associated with the process approach to writing that involves students in writing through different subprocesses, such as planning, prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing [26,60,61]. In the process-based approach, writing develops when the seven standards of textuality (cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, and intertextuality), defined by Beaugrande and Dressler [62], are considered in the writing process. Process-based feedback focuses on cognitive processes, social factors, and content development and aims to encourage learner self-regulation, self-editing, and social processes to improve writing by providing supportive, specific, personalized, and detailed praise, criticism, and suggestions [59]. As highlighted by Bowen et al. [56], the product and process approaches to feedback are commonly integrated and accomplished through face-to-face or written comments, questions, and suggestions given by instructors and/or peers on completed drafts. Although the shift in WF research is presented and the difference between product-based and process-based feedback is discussed, evidenced criticisms within the literature have not yet been investigated in the EFL writing context. Thus, product- and process-based feedback do not need to appear as contradictory methods, but rather as complementary to each other. Thus, identifying how these two feedback approaches were investigated is warranted to explain the research focus of the current study.

## 2.2. Research on students' perceptions and perceived practices of product- and process-based WF

Regarding students' perceptions of WF, most studies have examined two issues: preferences and the usefulness (or effectiveness, helpfulness, or benefits) of feedback. Students' preferences of feedback in previous studies [17,18,20–24,27,28,31] were associated with the feedback mode (detailed, handwriting WF, anonymous, or face-to-face peer review), types (implicit or explicit WCF, direct or indirect WF, metalinguistic feedback with codes or direct correction depending on the student's proficiency level), techniques (locating the error or indicating its type), strategies depending on students' proficiency levels (high-, low-, and no-demand feedback), forms (learner-driven feedback formats or traditional forms of feedback), source, tone, scope, explicitness, and occasionally feedback related to personal variables (sex, anxiety level, and proficiency level). The perceptions of students regarding the usefulness of feedback, as found in some studies [19,23,25,26,29,30,32], were linked to feedback types (asynchronous peer feedback or synchronous corrective feedback modes), sources (teachers' or peers' review), modes (peer-written or spoken feedback, in-text changes, in-text comments using comment bubbles, feedback emails, and feedback in an audio recording), benefits (based on students' roles as providers and recipients of dialogic feedback), revision of drafts and learning about writing based on the student's role (as writers or reviewers), peer feedback changes over time, and use of a rubric. Regarding students' reported practices, Bonilla López et al. [22] targeted affective factors (low self-efficacy, high self-efficacy), whereas Saliu Abdulahi [63] focused on the practices used by teachers for WF that were based on the source, mode (oral or written peer feedback), focus (content, structure), assessment criteria, and grading.

Unlike some previous studies [64–68] that explored the relationship between teachers' perceptions and their reported practices, to our knowledge, only Rummel and Bitchener [69] examined whether or not students' perceptions matched with their reported practices of WF and pertained to preferences for feedback types in relation to the improvement of the students' linguistic accuracy. Investigations of the relationship between students' perceptions and their perceived practices are absent in the few Moroccan publications. For example, Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37] explored how Moroccan university students perceive teacher feedback on writing and how it affects their writing. Zyad and Bouziane [70] investigated the effect of corrective feedback practices on developing Moroccan students' English writing skills. Despite its non-explicit focus on WF, Larouz and Abouabdelkader's [71] study explored how supervisory feedback is conceived of in Moroccan universities. The scarcity of research on students' perceptions and practices of WF from the product and process perspectives was the main motivation for conducting the present study. Therefore, given the current need to engage students in feedback processes, peer review, and teacher–student discussions, the study aimed to explain product- and process-based WF by examining students' perceptions and their perceived practices regarding teacher WF, with the goal of gaining insights into the new concept of feedback as a process. Three research questions were addressed.

- 1) What are students' preferences regarding the techniques of the product and process approaches of WF, both in the whole sample and across academic years?
- 2) What are students' reported instructor practices concerning the different techniques of the two approaches of WF, both in the whole sample and across academic years?
- 3) To what extent do students' preferences align with their reported instructor practices regarding the two approaches of WF?

The intent of the first question is to explain how students perceive certain practices of the product- and process-based approach of WF as effective in English classrooms. The second question aims to examine how frequently these practices are targeted by instructors based on students' reporting. The last question seeks to explain how students' preferences are related to their reports of instructor WF practices.

### 3. Context of the study

Due to the increasing number of students in Moroccan public tertiary education institutions, EFL teaching has grown immensely in recent years [72]. After completing the three-year study of high school with a baccalaureate degree, Moroccan students must complete a 38-course curriculum over the three years of their studies at the university level. Unlike university departments that use French or Arabic as the medium of teaching, English departments exclusively use English. As explained by Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37], in their first two years of college, bachelor's students in English studies take a weekly 2-h writing course provided by the English department. This course focuses on the mechanics and substance of composition, covering topics such as transitions, punctuation, coherence, cohesion, sentence variety, paragraph structure, thesis statements, essay structure, the writing process, different types of essays, and an introduction to research methodology. In their final year of undergraduate studies, students use these writing skills to write their final research project. Consequently, the syllabus of these writing courses frequently emphasizes the product and process writing approaches [40]. Master's students in English studies or a related field, like applied linguistics, have to do a lot of writing assignments, like reviews, reports, and research projects, to improve their writing and research skills. The large number of students enrolling and studying in English departments has recently become a challenge for the limited number of English professors and facilities. For instance, Ibn Zohr University in Agadir has a ratio of 587 students per teacher [73]. This issue of overcrowded classrooms has impacted teachers' instructional strategies, making them difficult and inapplicable for diverse groups of students. Overcrowding also decreases learners' and teachers' motivation to maintain a sustainable understanding of the needs and motivation to learn [74]. At the institutional level, there is no standardized English language teaching syllabus since English department instructors have a lot of flexibility in deciding what to cover and how to teach it [72]. Although department-level course objectives may be accessible, official texts that define these goals and objectives are crucial [75]. Without such guidelines, instructors lack clear objectives and goals for what they are teaching [75].

Assessment in Morocco is characterized by important exams [76] and is frequently teacher-centered, with little involvement from students. At the tertiary level, students enrolled in Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Master of Arts (MA) study programs take three types of

**Table 1**  
Characteristics of the participants.

Baseline characteristic	Full sample (N = 468)	
	N	%
Gender		
Male	192	41
Female	276	59
Age		
18–25 years old	412	88
26–30 years old	35	7
31–35 years old	11	2
Over 35 years old	10	2
Year of enrolment		
Second-year BA student	193	41
Third-year BA student	173	37
First-year MA student	32	7
Second-year MA student	70	15
English learning period		
Between 1 and 5 years	195	42
Between 6 and 10 years	225	48
Between 11 and 15 years	40	9
Between 16 and 20 years	8	2
Questionnaire's understanding		
Very inappropriate	23	5
Inappropriate	10	2
Neutral	59	13
Appropriate	222	47
Very appropriate	154	33

exams each semester (continuous assessment, an exam at the end of the semester, and a retake exam for those who fail the end-term exam) [76]. Thus, formative assessment that encourages the provision and receipt of product- and process-based feedback is needed for Moroccan students and instructors. However, Moroccan EFL university instructors face several challenges when implementing formative or alternative assessment practices, including lack of time and resources, insufficient training, and students' lack of readiness for self-assessment and engagement [72,76,77]. Students' ability to learn when part of a large class also makes it difficult for instructors to provide effective feedback and employ continuous assessment [78]. These difficulties might impact the feedback strategies that instructors use during the revision process [37]. For example, students at a Moroccan university reported that their instructors rarely used teacher–student conferencing or dialogic feedback, and that they rarely provided feedback during the writing process, leading Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37] to conclude that instructors primarily provide feedback on the final text. Therefore, examining teachers' WF practices in the context of Moroccan higher education and their relation to instructors' and students' perceptions is warranted.

The present study was conducted in Morocco and aimed to involve EFL public university students who are learning writing at faculties of arts and humanities. The sample comprised 468 students studying at universities in Tétouan, Marrakesh, Fez, Casablanca, Agadir, Kenitra, Oujda, Rabat, Meknès, Beni Mellal, and El Jadida. Table 1 presents the background variables and characteristics of the participants included in the questionnaire. There were 276 females and 192 males; students between 18 and 25 years old were the dominant subsample; most of them were BA students (78 %); and the majority of students had been learning English for 6–10 years. The language of the questionnaire was English and not the first language (Arabic or Tamazight) because students were enrolled in the English department and all their courses, including writing, are taught in English. When asked about their understanding of the questionnaire, 47 % of students marked that it was appropriate, and 33 % perceived it as very appropriate. This indicates that most of the participants could comprehend and respond to the questions accurately. First-year BA students were not involved in this study because they had less experience in writing, especially process-based writing.

## 4. Methods

The present research was substantially reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at the Doctoral School of Education, University of Szeged, Hungary (permit number: 20/2021). Written informed consent was obtained from all students who were involved in the study, emphasizing their voluntary participation and right to agree or disagree with taking part in the study.

### 4.1. Data collection

An exploratory quantitative study using a survey method was designed for its suitability in investigating the research questions related to WF techniques based on students' preferences and their reports on teacher application of these techniques. Initially, the heads of the English departments were contacted in advance to obtain approval of the data collection process. To recruit enough participants, the constructed questionnaire was administered both online and face-to-face. The electronic version via Google Form was used by emailing the questionnaire's link with information to instructors, who also shared it with students and other instructors. Participants were informed that their anonymity would be guaranteed, their participation would expand the existing research in Morocco, and completing the questionnaires would not take more than 15 min of their time. Thus, data collection was done randomly.

### 4.2. Instrument and procedures

#### 4.2.1. Content validity of the questionnaire

In this study, a questionnaire was designed. Some of the existing student questionnaires (e.g., [79–87]) were not adopted because they only measured WCF and not other parts of process-based WF, or because they did not compare students' views and self-reported practices in relation to the two approaches of WF. There were three steps taken to ensure the questionnaire's content validity. First, a review of the relevant literature was used to develop and formulate the questionnaire's structure, subscales, and items [3,5,7,43,49,54,62,83,88,89].

Second, a group of researchers specializing in English language teaching and education, as well as Moroccan university instructors specializing in English writing, evaluated the first version of the items in terms of their necessity and relevance. Third, after revising and developing the items based on the received feedback, a pilot study was initiated among Moroccan EFL university students, and the functioning of the items was examined to control the reliability of the scales and subscales, compare the empirical structure with the theoretical structure, and modify, improve, and finalize items based on the results of exploratory factor analysis. The sample from the pilot study was not included in the final analysis of this present study. The questionnaire is provided in the appendix, which also consists of background questions, but these were only applied to characterize the sample (Table 1).

In this study, the student survey consisted of two questions that pertained to the dimensions of “students' perceptions” and “reported instructor practices”. The 40 items comprising both dimensions correspond to the subscales that can be linked to the features of the product and process approaches of WF. First, students were asked about their preferences concerning WF practices. Students were required to rate the degree of agreement with the provided statements on a five-point Likert scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree) for each item. Participants were able to indicate their neutral positions by utilizing a scale consisting of an odd number. Second, Students were asked to rate the frequency with which their instructors implemented various WF practices using a five-point intensity scale. The scale ranged from one (never) to five (always).

As Table 2 shows, there were three subscales within the product-based WF approach. Through the first subscale, *written corrective*

feedback, errors in students' writing are identified and corrected, by correcting them directly or indirectly, underlining them, and using specific codes (such as "sv" for subject-verb agreement) to categorize the type of errors [3,4]. In the second subscale, *WF modes on written text*, feedback is delivered based on the structural aspects of the final written text and offered in a form-based or a single-draft format as the final version of the writing, with the teacher playing a key role in feedback provision [3,43]. The third subscale, *judgmental WF on the written text*, explain how teachers assess students' final writing without providing detailed justifications. This can be seen through assigning scores without explanations, offering general praise (e.g., great work) or criticism (e.g., poor work) without specific feedback, and focusing on the overall evaluation of the final written product [88].

The process-based approach of WF included six subscales (Table 2). The first subscale, *content-based WF related to standards of textuality*, corresponded to the main characteristics of the seven standards of textuality (intentionality, cohesion, coherence, informativity, situationality, acceptability, and intertextuality) developed by Beaugrande and Dressler [62]. The second subscale, *content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing*, targeted specific aspects such as the text's genre, purpose, and developmental aspects [43] that can serve as revision areas. *Developing evaluative judgment* was the third subscale, which required students to assess their own and others' work [54] and could be supported by predefined assessment criteria against which students could make sound decisions. The fourth subscale, *supportive WF in the writing process*, targeted the new conceptualizations of feedback in the literature, primarily dialogic and peer feedback, and its actualization during the revision and rewriting process [49,54]. When developing the fifth subscale, *effective WF modes in the writing process*, different features of effective feedback were covered, including WF that is supportive, specific, personalized, detailed, or identifies next steps [83,88,89]. The last subscale, *judgmental WF in the writing process*, is related to justified praise or criticism and supportive suggestions to develop writing [5,7]. In general, the previously mentioned nine subscales were selected due to the fact that they capture important aspects of WF approaches (product and process-oriented). This selection is backed by both theoretical frameworks and empirical research evidence.

#### 4.2.2. Construct validity, convergent validity, and reliability of the questionnaire

To make sure the questionnaire was valid, exploratory factor analysis was used to see how the structure of the data matched up with the structure of the questionnaire. This was followed by principal component analyses (PCA) with Varimax rotation along the two dimensions and scales to get the composite scores. This Varimax rotation method was selected because it can improve factor loadings by making the range of loadings for each factor bigger and reducing the number of items that have high loadings on each factor. This helps identify distinct and related factors. The outcomes of the four PCAs conducted to assess the factorability of the items are presented in Table 3. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy yielded values ranging from 0.75 to 0.94, which, according to Kaiser's [90] recommendations were average and satisfactory. All models yielded significant results from Bartlett's tests of sphericity ( $p < 0.001$ ), suggesting that the correlations among the items were adequate for performing principal component analyses (PCAs). Moreover, in every instance, the communalities of the items surpassed the minimum acceptable threshold of 0.2 [91], and their mean values across all models surpassed 0.5. The total variance explained by the factors that were generated was approximately 50 % for the perception dimension and around 60 % for the reported practice dimension. The determination of the number of factors was conducted using scree plots. The eigenvalues for both dimensions are presented in Figs. 1 and 2, given that the number of components in both dimensions was identical. Eigenvalues exceeding 1 were regarded as factors. This means that process-oriented WF is determined by six factors (Fig. 2), whereas product-oriented WF is governed by only three factors (Fig. 1). All of the above factors are consistent with the theoretical framework of this study, as evidenced by the dimensions of reported practices and perceptions.

Table 4 displays the item-level factor loadings for the product approach of WF subscales. All item loadings were above the suggested level of 0.4 [92], which means that each item in both dimensions was in line with the theoretical background. Regarding process approach of WF subscales, most of the items with factor loadings above 0.4 made it possible to identify the different factors. However, some cross-loading items were found that could be put into a different factor. This suggests that the structure of the factors related to the process-oriented WF should be checked on a larger sample.

To check the convergent validity of the questionnaire, the correlations between students' preferences and reported instructor

**Table 2**  
Scales, subscales, and items related to two dimensions.

Scales and subscales	Number of items	Dimensions	
		Perceptions	Reported practices
<b>Product approach of WF</b>	11		
Written corrective feedback (WCF)	4	9., 15., 28., 40.	2., 14., 20., 37.
WF modes on the written text	3	1., 24., 26.	1., 25., 27.
Judgmental WF on the written text	4	19., 13., 32., 37.	8., 13., 32., 39.
<b>Process approach of WF</b>	29		
Content- based WF related to the standards of textuality	7	3., 5., 8., 20., 22., 31., 33.	3., 5., 7., 10., 16., 29., 36.
Content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing	4	6., 10., 12., 30.	9., 11., 18., 31.
Developing evaluative judgment	4	11., 14., 21., 38.	15., 22., 33., 40.
Supportive WF in the writing process	4	7., 17., 23., 25.	17., 21., 23., 26.
Effective WF modes in the writing process	6	2., 4., 18., 27., 29., 35.	6., 19., 24., 28., 30., 35.
Judgmental WF in the writing process	4	16., 34., 36., 39.	4., 12., 34., 38.

*Note.* The numbers given in the dimensions' columns indicate the serial numbers of the questionnaire items in the student questionnaire that was placed in Appendix.

**Table 3**  
Results of the principal component analyses.

Dimensions and scales	KMO	Bartlett's Test of Sphericity			Communalities			Total Variance Explained (%)
		$\chi^2$	Df	p	Min.	Max.	M	
<b>Perceptions</b>								
Product-based WF	0.75	726.74	55	<0.001	0.28	0.63	0.50	49.75
Process-based WF	0.92	3754.92	406	<0.001	0.36	0.59	0.50	50.28
<b>Reported practice</b>								
Product-based WF	0.81	1158.26	55	<0.001	0.46	0.76	0.57	56.66
Process-based WF	0.94	7752.11	406	<0.001	0.52	0.79	0.65	64.58

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

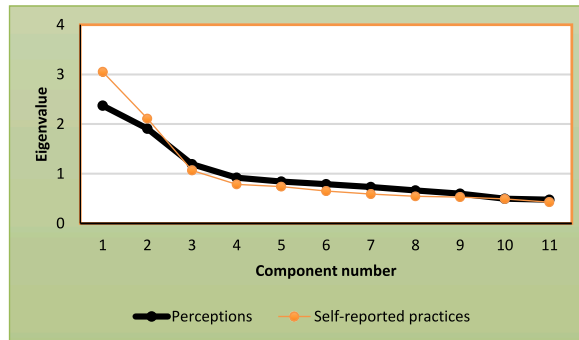


Fig. 1. A scree plot concerning the product approach of WF in the two dimensions.

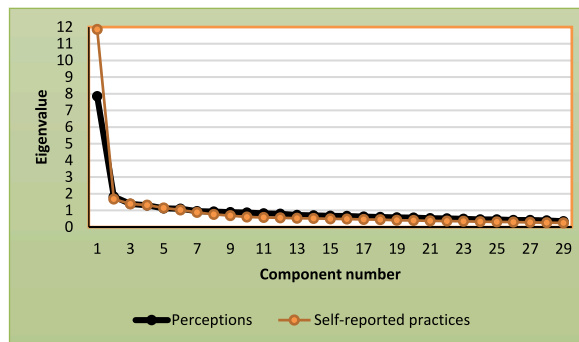


Fig. 2. A scree plot concerning the process approach of WF in the two dimensions.

**Table 4**  
Factor loadings, Pearson's correlations, and Cronbach's alphas of the two approaches of WF.

Scales and subscales	Factor loadings				Correlations between P- RIP		Cronbach's alphas	
	P		RIP		r	p	P	
	Min.	Max.	Min.	Max.			P	RIP
<b>Product approach of WF</b>								
Written corrective feedback	0.50	0.73	0.70	0.82	0.16	0.001	0.66	0.73
WF modes on the written text	0.51	0.74	0.51	0.67	0.17	<0.001	0.65	0.69
Judgmental WF on the written text	0.64	0.78	0.69	0.78	0.26	<0.001	0.51	0.60
<b>Process approach of WF</b>								
Content-based WF related to the standards of textuality	0.33	0.69	0.31	0.76	0.24	<0.001	0.74	0.70
Content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing	0.48	0.73	0.36	0.73	0.20	<0.001	0.90	0.95
Developing evaluative judgment	0.46	0.63	0.43	0.72	0.16	0.001	0.72	0.84
Supportive WF in the writing process	0.34	0.71	0.35	0.70	0.16	0.001	0.63	0.78
Effective WF modes in the writing process	0.39	0.70	0.58	0.70	0.09	0.06	0.63	0.78
Judgmental WF in the writing process	0.44	0.67	0.36	0.62	0.11	0.02	0.57	0.79
							0.74	0.87
							0.62	0.80

Note. P = Perceptions; RIP = reported instructor practices.

practices were calculated. Except the subscale of *effective WF modes in the writing process*, there were small positive and significant correlations between perceptions and the practices that were reported (Table 4). This may mean that these constructs are also empirically linked. The values of Cronbach's alphas were calculated to check how reliable the subscales were. Table 4 shows that the values for most of the subscales were acceptable, and the values were higher for the reported practice dimension than the perception dimension. However, the Cronbach's alpha of *WF modes on written text* in the perception dimension was low, and for the *supportive WF in the writing process*, it was below the recommended and preferred limit of 0.6. These values were acceptable in the other dimension. These subscales were not eliminated from further analysis because of this. However, the results should be interpreted with caution. There are not many items on these subscales, and therefore it appears like they must have additional items to be more reliable.

#### 4.3. Data analysis

In this study, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) V25 was used to answer the research questions. The data were analyzed in three major steps. First, composite scores were created based on the results of the PCAs. These scores indicated students' preferences in terms of the extent to which they agreed with the importance of using the different practices of the product and process approach of WF in EFL writing courses. In the case of the other dimension, the composite scores expressed the perceived frequency of applying the given modes of WF in their instructors' practices. Second, to analyze students' preferences and their reported instructor practices, descriptive statistical analyses were performed on these composite scores in the whole sample and among different subsamples to determine how uniform the students' responses are and whether there are significant differences along education level (BA and MA) and study year between preferences and reported practices. To accomplish these objectives, the differences between the subsamples for each subscale were identified using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and its post-hoc analyses. To analyze the statistical variances between the subscales in the product and process scales within the two dimensions, paired-samples t-tests were utilized. Pearson's correlation coefficients were computed to examine the internal relationships among the subscales. In the end, a series of paired-samples t-tests along the subscales were used to investigate any differences between students' preferences and reported instructor practices.

## 5. Results

### 5.1. Moroccan EFL students' preferences of the product and process approaches of WF

The results presented in Table 5 concerning the product approach of WF demonstrate that students' preferences regarding *WCF* and *WF modes* did not differ significantly based on study year, and significant differences were identified between the subsamples in the case of *judgmental WF*,  $F(3, 464) = 3.28, p = 0.02, \eta^2 = 0.02$ ; however, eta-squared indicated small effects of this background variable. The applied post-hoc test, Tukey's B test, revealed that second-year MA students' mean was significantly lower than that of second-year BA students,  $p = .03$ . Regarding the order of the subscales' means, the same pattern could be identified in the whole sample and within the subsamples. *WCF* had the highest mean, and *WF modes* had a significantly lower mean than that of *WCF*,  $t(467) = 6.55, p < 0.001$ , from which the *judgmental WF* subscale's mean differed significantly,  $t(467) = 26.26, p < 0.001$ ; regarding this latter scale, all subsamples could be considered more heterogeneous compared to the previous two subscales. Concerning the relationships between the subscales, there were weak positive significant correlations,  $0.12 \leq r \leq 0.37, p < 0.05$ .

Concerning the six subscales covering process-based WF, one-way ANOVA indicated significant differences in the case of the two *content-based WF* subscales associated with *the standards of textuality*,  $F(3, 464) = 2.91, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = 0.02$ , and the *macroaspects of writing*,  $F(3, 464) = 4.70, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ . Regarding both scales, the means of second-year MA students were significantly higher than those of second-year BA students,  $p < 0.05$ , but the effect size of this background variable was small. In the case of the other subscales, there were no significant differences between the subsamples, and thus, in all groups, a similar order between the subscales

**Table 5**  
Moroccan EFL students' preferences of the product and process approaches of WF.

Scales and subscales	BA				MA				Total	
	2nd year		3rd year		1st year		2nd year		M	SD
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
<b>Product approach of WF</b>										
Written corrective feedback	3.86	0.66	3.88	0.65	3.96	0.64	4.01	0.57	3.90	0.64
WF modes on the written text	3.67	0.58	3.75	0.63	3.54	0.64	3.63	0.65	3.68*	0.61
Judgmental WF on the written text	2.54	0.93	2.40	0.93	2.23	0.83	2.18	0.90	2.41*	0.93
<b>Process approach of WF</b>										
Effective WF modes in the writing process	4.14	0.51	4.20	0.61	4.15	0.45	4.20	0.61	4.17	0.56
Content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing	3.84	0.59	3.96	0.58	3.85	0.56	4.13	0.60	3.93*	0.59
Judgmental WF in the writing process	3.84	0.59	3.94	0.63	3.98	0.57	4.03	0.62	3.91	0.61
Developing evaluative judgment	3.85	0.59	3.87	0.66	4.00	0.57	4.07	0.67	3.90	0.63
Supportive WF in the writing process	3.77	0.52	3.75	0.62	3.67	0.49	3.80	0.63	3.76*	0.57
Content-based WF related to the standards of textuality	3.65	0.56	3.71	0.53	3.68	0.48	3.87	0.58	3.71	0.55

Note. In the case of all subscales, the values can be ranged between 1 and 5. \* Mean significantly differs from the previous subscale at  $p < 0.05$ .



could be identified as in the total sample. First, most questionnaire respondents agreed that *effective WF modes* are crucial in the writing process. The mean of this subscale differed significantly from all other subscales, with a significant difference between it and the second subscale,  $t(467) = 16.14, p < 0.001$ . Second, there were no significant differences between the averages and standard deviations of *content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing*, *judgmental WF*, and *developing evaluative judgment*. Third, students preferred these more than the strategies of *supportive WF*. This subscale showed a significant difference from *developing evaluative judgment*,  $t(467) = 3.93, p < 0.001$ , but differed from *content-based WF related to textuality standards*,  $t(467) = 2.09, p = 0.04$ , a less favored practice. When comparing the standard deviations of the six subscales, the entire sample appeared homogeneous,  $0.55 \leq SD \leq 0.63$ . Moderate positive correlations,  $0.43 \leq r \leq 0.66, p < 0.001$ , were found between all the subscales of process-based WF.

### 5.2. Moroccan EFL students' reported instructor practices of the product and process approaches of WF

Regarding the subscales of the product-based WF, there were no significant differences between the four subsamples; thus, in each group, the same pattern could be identified concerning the frequency of perceived instructor practice. As shown in Table 6, the differences between the means of the subscales were identical to those identified when analyzing students' preferences. The mean of *WCF* was the highest, the average of the *WF modes* was significantly lower,  $t(467) = 3.13, p = 0.002$ , and the *judgmental WF* subscale had the lowest mean,  $t(467) = 3.22, p = 0.001$ . When comparing the standard deviations among the three subscales, the whole sample was heterogeneous,  $0.91 \leq SD \leq 0.96$ . As for the relationships between these subscales, weak and moderate significant correlations were identified,  $0.27 \leq r \leq 0.65, p < 0.001$ .

Among the six subscales related to process WF approach, there were significant differences between the subsamples in the case of three subscales, including *developing evaluative judgment*,  $F(3, 464) = 3.05, p = 0.03, \eta^2 = 0.02$ , *supportive WF*,  $F(3, 464) = 5.44, p < 0.001, \eta^2 = 0.03$ , and *effective WF modes*,  $F(3, 464) = 4.03, p = 0.01, \eta^2 = 0.03$ . In all cases, the size of the difference was small, and the means of second-year MA students were significantly lower than those of second-year BA students,  $p < 0.05$ . Regarding the other subscales, there were no significant differences between the subsamples. Significant differences were found among the subscales in descending order of means. First, respondents indicated that their instructors primarily used *content-based WF practices related to macroaspects*. The average of this subscale differed significantly from the means of all other subscales. The difference in means between this subscale and the second in the order was significant,  $t(467) = 4.31, p < 0.001$ . Second, students who participated in the current study perceived using the strategies of *effective WF modes in the writing process*, *judgmental WF*, *developing evaluative judgment*, and *content-based WF related to textuality standards* in the same way because the means and standard deviations were similar. Third, the participants reported that their instructors used these practices more frequently than *supportive WF in the writing process*. As an indicator, the mean of this subscale differed significantly from the *content-based WF related to textuality standards*. The sample was heterogeneous,  $0.87 \leq SD \leq 0.98$ , with strong significant correlations between all subscales,  $0.63 \leq r \leq 0.83, p < 0.001$ .

### 5.3. Moroccan EFL students' preferences and reported instructor practices of the product and process approaches of WF

Table 7 contains the results of the relationship between students' preferences and perceived instructor practices along the subscales, indicating that there were significant differences concerning all of them. In the case of eight subscales, students' preferences were significantly higher than the frequency of the corresponding practices. Thus, WF practices covered by these subscales were considered more preferable by the students, while participants reported that they were much less frequently used by their instructors. There was one subscale, *judgmental WF on the written text*, in which students' preferences of its practices were lower and they indicated their instructors used them more often. Process-oriented WF practices showed a slightly larger difference than product-oriented WF subscales.

**Table 6**  
Moroccan EFL students' reported instructor practices of the product and process approaches of WF.

Scales and subscales	BA				MA				Total	
	2nd year		3rd year		1st year		2nd year		M	SD
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
<b>Product approach of WF</b>										
Written corrective feedback	3.36	0.90	3.19	0.91	3.48	0.92	3.19	0.95	3.28	0.91
WF modes on the written text	3.25	0.89	3.10	1.12	3.13	0.93	3.14	0.97	3.17*	0.95
Judgmental WF on the written text	2.91	0.98	2.93	0.96	2.96	0.95	3.04	0.94	2.94*	0.96
<b>Process approach of WF</b>										
Content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing	3.43	0.83	3.37	0.97	3.51	0.76	3.34	1.08	3.40	0.92
Effective WF modes in the writing process	3.42	0.84	3.17	0.98	3.03	0.95	3.05	1.10	3.24*	0.95
Judgmental WF in the writing process	3.35	0.87	3.20	1.01	3.14	1.07	3.00	1.14	3.23	0.98
Developing evaluative judgment	3.33	0.86	3.06	1.02	3.09	0.90	3.03	1.09	3.17	0.97
Content-based WF related to the standards of textuality	3.21	0.79	3.11	0.87	3.17	0.86	3.09	1.06	3.15	0.87
Supportive WF in the writing process	3.24	0.84	2.98	1.02	2.97	0.96	2.75	1.09	3.05*	0.97

Note. In the case of all subscales, the values can be ranged between 1 and 5. \* Mean significantly differs from the previous subscale at  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 7**  
Moroccan EFL students' preferences and reported instructor practices of the product and process approaches of WF.

Scales and subscales	Preferences		Practices		Mean diff.	T-test	
	M	SD	M	SD		t(467)	p
<b>Product approach of WF</b>							
Written corrective feedback	3.90	0.64	3.28	0.91	0.61	12.91	<0.001
WF modes on the written text	3.68	0.61	3.17	0.95	0.51	10.74	<0.001
Judgmental WF on the written text	2.41	0.93	2.94	0.96	-0.53	-9.89	<0.001
<b>Process approach of WF</b>							
Content-based WF related to the standards of textuality	3.71	0.55	3.15	0.87	0.56	13.20	<0.001
Content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing	3.93	0.59	3.40	0.92	0.53	11.61	<0.001
Developing evaluative judgment	3.90	0.63	3.17	0.97	0.73	14.88	<0.001
Supportive WF in the writing process	3.76	0.57	3.05	0.97	0.71	14.64	<0.001
Effective WF modes in the writing process	4.17	0.56	3.24	0.95	0.93	18.92	<0.001
Judgmental WF in the writing process	3.91	0.61	3.23	0.98	0.69	13.49	<0.001

Note. In the case of all subscales, the values can be ranged between 1 and 5.

## 6. Discussion

This section discussed the results of the three research questions in relation to previous research in Moroccan and other contexts. When comparing the results from other contexts, studies were selected that used quantitative or mixed research methods, dealt with students' perceptions in terms of their preferences and/or their report on teachers' WF practices, and included one or more subscales that were similar to those in the present study. Information based on students' different academic levels is discussed and supported by justifications from research conducted in the Moroccan context.

### 6.1. Moroccan EFL students' perceived preferences of the product and process approaches of WF

The results of the product-based WF showed that Moroccan EFL university students involved in the current study perceived the value of the WCF strategies as more preferable than WF modes on the written text and the strategies of judgmental WF. Regarding WCF, students agreed on the value of using WCF modes in EFL writing classes, which appears to be consistent with the findings of Bonilla López et al. [22], showing that 66 % of students acknowledged the value of locating and correcting their errors; however, others, especially high-proficiency students, did not highly appreciate this value. In other studies [17,18], direct and coded WCF were also perceived as preferable by the majority of students. In a study conducted in Morocco by Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37], most of the students also seemed to favor direct WCF, which is attributed to their unwillingness to exert effort and respond to teachers' feedback. Concerning the WF modes on the written text, Qasim Mahmood's [24] findings were consistent with those of the current study because the comprehensive feedback approach that focuses on all errors in terms of sentence structure, vocabulary, and grammar was perceived to be the least favorite in his study. However, the findings of the current study concerning instructor feedback as one strategy of the WF modes on the written text, were more emphasized in previous studies (e.g., [17,27,37]), which found that the majority of learners had a favorable perception of the teacher as a main provider of feedback in EFL writing. This indicates similar orientation towards teachers as sources of knowledge, illustrating why students value instructor WF. Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37] stressed that feedback should be a two-way communication between students and their teachers. Regarding judgmental WF, which was considered by the students to be the least preferable in this study, Qasim Mahmood [24] found the same, indicating that students did not prefer their teachers to only provide grades without any comments on their paper. These grades themselves are not helpful to enhance student writing performance [37]. The emphasis on exams in the Moroccan EFL context can explain why students did not prefer judgmental WF on the written text because it focuses on assigning grades rather than providing justified WF for improvement. As other types of judgmental WF on the written text, Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37] found that Moroccan students preferred to receive criticism or both positive and negative feedback.

Regarding the differences between the subsamples in terms of the product-based WF, all student groups viewed WCF and various WF modes on the written text as equally valuable. However, second-year BA students preferred the techniques of judgmental WF as more important than second-year MA students. These findings may illustrate that BA students "are interested in grades" ([78], p. 145), which are one form of judgmental WF, and may fail to consider feedback as a way to improve their skills and learning [78]. BA students' preferences toward these product-based WF practices may also be related to their first-year writing experience at university, in which the writing classroom primarily consisted of lectures and occasional assignments that required the production of one-draft essays, which were then corrected and returned to the students with a score, without any additional interaction between the teacher and student as reader and writer [93]. Therefore, BA students in English departments in Morocco are more engaged in product-oriented writing, while at the MA level, more writing activities that emphasize the importance of using process-based writing and WF practices are observed. Based on the current study's results, the positive correlation between WCF and WF modes might indicate that students who prefer receiving more WCF strategies also tend to value a greater variety of feedback modes. Similarly, the positive correlation between judgmental WF and the two other product-based subscales could imply that students who prefer judgmental WF practices also tend to prefer the receipt of WCF and the diverse WF modes to enhance their writing accuracy. Thus, instructors could consider adopting a holistic approach to feedback provision. Understanding these correlations can inform instructional strategies,

allowing instructors to tailor their feedback practices based on students' preferences and specific needs.

Concerning the results of process-based WF, the respondents in the current study found *effective WF modes* to be the most valuable. Chen et al. [17] also revealed that students regarded extended comments on the overall quality of writing as an important aspect of their learning process. Ferguson [83] found that students preferred timely, detailed, and personalized feedback that could guide them to improve their work, which matched the finding of Dowden et al.'s [82] study showing that students believed that WF should provide enough suggestions to help them enhance their future writing. Similar to the findings of the present study, Yenus [31] revealed the overall appreciation by students of the importance of content-based and subject-area feedback. Students in our study perceived the strategies of *supportive WF* and *content-based WF related to the standards of textuality* as the least favorable in comparison to those belonging to *judgmental WF in the writing process*, *content-based WF related to the macroaspects*, and *developing evaluative judgment*. The present study's findings regarding *supportive WF* did not echo previous researchers' findings (e.g., [28,29,94,95]) that indicated that the majority of students preferred offering and receiving written and oral peer feedback. Similarly, Hirose [19] found that Japanese university students had positive opinions about most written-plus-spoken peer-feedback activities (e.g., reading peers' feedback and compositions and discussing each other's compositions). The variation in preferences for supportive WF modalities among students could be attributed to differences in educational practices. Oral feedback, as one example of *supportive WF*, was not perceived as the preferred form in this study and in Ouahidi and Lamkhanter's [37] study. As part of *developing evaluative judgment*, the findings of the current study and those of Chen et al. [17] indicated that more than half of the participating students perceived self-correction to be an essential skill for EFL writing. However, Wang [30] found that students held mostly positive perceptions about the use of rubrics as a means for developing students' evaluative judgments in the peer-feedback process and guiding them in the assessment of their peers' EFL writing.

Regarding the differences between study years, second-year MA students differed in their process-based WF preferences from those of second-year BA students as far as the strategies of the two content-based WF subscales are concerned. Thus, MA students viewed *content-based WF related to the standards of textuality* and *macroaspects of writing* as their preferred focus more than second-year BA students. This may indicate that undergraduate Moroccan EFL students, in comparison to MA students, prefer feedback that fixes surface and microaspects in writing rather than content and macroaspects. This claim may be supported by the results of Haoucha's [93] exploratory study that revealed that the majority of Moroccan BA students focused more on microstructure changes with only a few who made macrostructure changes, and at the MA level, these content-based feedback activities become more important compared to the BA level, especially when students need to write their thesis or research papers. In this study, the significant correlations between content-based WF related to standards of textuality and those related to macroaspects of writing may indicate that students who prioritize addressing specific textual standards in their feedback process, such as coherence and cohesion, may also prefer WF focusing on the macroaspects of writing, like purpose and genre. Such relationships could encourage instructors to ensure that students receive multifaceted support throughout the feedback and writing process, enhancing their overall writing proficiency and skills.

## 6.2. Moroccan EFL students' reported instructor practices of the product and process approaches of WF

Regarding product WF approach, the participating Moroccan EFL university students, regardless of their study years, reported that their teachers appeared to use the practices of *WCF* more frequently than those of *WF modes on the written text* and *judgmental WF*. The non-significant differences between the four subsamples suggest consistency in how students perceive product-based feedback techniques and which ones they prefer to receive from instructors, regardless of their different academic years. In contrast to the present study's findings regarding *WF modes*, the teacher as the sole source of WF was highly preferred in the study conducted by Saliu Abdulahi [63]. The present study's findings regarding *WCF* echoed those of Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37] and those of Sinha and Nassaji [27], who found that the majority of the students received direct *WCF* from their teachers. These students' reported instructor practice of *WCF* indicates the importance given by Moroccan EFL instructors to this practice in improving the quality of student writing.

Regarding the process approach of WF, the study showed that Moroccan students reported that their teachers implement *content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing* more often than the WF practices that pertain to the remaining subscales. In descending order, these were *effective WF modes* and *judgmental WF in the writing process*, *developing evaluative judgment*, *content-based WF related to the standards of textuality*, and *supportive WF*. Similar to the present study's findings regarding a technique for *effective WF modes*, Elwood and Bode [18] and Leki [96] found that detailed feedback with support and guidance was more utilized by the students in their study. Unlike its moderate use in this study, *judgmental WF*, which is based on assessment criteria during the writing process, was not frequently used according to Saliu Abdulahi's [63] study. The findings of Saliu Abdulahi [63] were also not in harmony with those of the current study, where students have a moderate use of self-assessment when *developing evaluative judgment* because they regularly self-evaluated their written text before submitting and before receiving the grade, or after looking at the teacher's assessment criteria that helped them in their writing assignment. The current study's results indicating that students moderately participate in evaluative judgments, did not echo Zhu and Carless' [32] study, which revealed that students did not obtain sufficient in-task guidance (e.g., assessment criteria) on how to give peer feedback and develop their abilities to make sound evaluative judgments. Concerning the least used techniques of *supportive WF*, such as the use of peer feedback, the present study findings were consistent with Saliu Abdulahi's [63] findings, confirming that only approximately one third of the students received peer feedback on their writing tasks. Teacher-student conferencing and supportive follow-up activities were not implemented based on the students' reported findings of this study and that of Ouahidi and Lamkhanter [37] in the Moroccan context. However, Zhu and Carless [32] obtained opposing findings showing that students benefited from timely in-class discussion about written comments, which is a practice of *supportive WF*. In the current study, the correlation found between *developing evaluative judgment* and *supportive WF* may explain why students stated that

their teachers who prioritized fostering students' evaluative judgment skills may also be more inclined to provide supportive feedback (e.g., oral, dialogic, or peer feedback) to facilitate students' writing development. This can also imply the importance of considering varied opportunities for students to engage in self-assessment and peer feedback alongside teacher feedback. By supporting students' engagement in evaluating their own and their peers' written assignments, instructors can enable students to assume responsibility for their own learning and gain a greater understanding of writing assessment and WF practices.

When examining the results among different subsamples, significant differences with a small effect size were identified, indicating that second-year BA students reported that their instructors utilize WF practices of *developing evaluative judgment*, *supportive WF*, and *effective WF modes* more frequently than perceived by second-year MA students. These three practices include self- and peer-assessment, teacher-student dialogue, and peer and oral feedback that are supported by detailed, specific, and encouraging comments for future writing improvement. The reasons for this significant difference between the two groups may stem from the different objectives of the curriculum and the teaching approaches emphasized. According to published course descriptions [40], second-year BA students are required to write compositions (e.g., argumentative, expository, and analytical texts) with an emphasis on content, purpose, and the audience with instructors' guidance and support. This may be the reason why Bouziane and Ziad [97], who conducted their study among Moroccan EFL undergraduate students, recommended that teachers need to combine peer-assessment with self-assessment and play an active role in monitoring the students' feedback and providing guidance on how to create a balanced assessment that incorporates both local and global aspects of writing. This may explain why in undergraduate courses the three previous WF practices are more emphasized than among second-year MA students, who are required to complete different writing tasks (e.g., reports, reviews, and research projects) independently.

### 6.3. Differences between Moroccan EFL students' perceived preferences and reported instructor practices of the product and process approaches of WF

The present study found a lack of harmony between Moroccan EFL students' WF preferences and their reports on instructor practices, which was demonstrated by the significant differences among all nine subscales, indicating two types of discrepancies. In the case of eight subscales (*WCF*, *WF modes on the written text*, *content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing and standards of textuality*, *developing evaluative judgment*, *effective WF modes*, *supportive WF*, and *judgmental WF in the writing process*), students involved in this study agreed that the WF strategies covered by these subscales have great importance in EFL writing classes, but they perceived that their instructors applied them less frequently in their WF provision. These discrepancies may result from different challenges instructors have when teaching writing, including the huge number of students in Moroccan EFL writing classrooms [39,79], which may cause difficulties for Moroccan instructors to incorporate the WF strategies covered by these subscales to meet their students' preferences. As another type of misalignment, the current study found that most of the students had lower preferences concerning the value of implementing *judgmental WF*, indicating they disagreed that this WF strategy was important in EFL writing classes, which was, however, sometimes applied by their instructors, according to students' reports. Therefore, these results indicate that instructors may face obstacles in their WF practices and that they need to find effective ways to respond to students' writing by incorporating the various approaches and practices of WF explored in the present study.

## 7. Limitations and recommendations for further research

This study has several limitations. First, two of the subscales, *WF modes on the written text* and *supportive WF in the writing process* in the perception dimension, had low reliability, which requires improvement by formulating more appropriate items in future investigations. Second, this study did not analyze how students' feedback perceptions and practices varied by other background variables (e.g., text or task type, frequency of getting and giving feedback, etc.) in addition to the academic study of the involved participants. It can be important to understand what types of writing assignments are targeted in the classroom and how much WF is given and received. Thus, future research needs to pay attention to these background factors. Students' characteristics, which might have an impact on their perception, were not examined in this study. Previous studies have shown that students' motivational characteristics have an impact on their perception of the learning environment (e.g., [98,99]). This appears to be especially true for teacher feedback; students with different motivational characteristics perceive feedback differently. For example, students with a growth mindset perceive the same feedback as valuable, whereas students with a fixed mindset perceive it as a sign of incompetence [100]. Therefore, a research question regarding student characteristics could be addressed in further research. Third, the study focused on the students' reports about their instructors' practices rather than on their own practices when receiving and providing WF. Future research could explore how students provide peer feedback to each other and how this complements instructor feedback and contributes to their writing improvement. Fourth, qualitative research methods were not used in this study, which might have provided more in-depth information regarding the explanation of the identified differences between the included subscales and subsamples. Therefore, observation, interviews, and content analysis of feedback could be utilized to explain the WF preferences of students as well as the teacher practices that they have reported. Fifth, no data were collected from instructors. As a result, the study misses the opportunity to contrast their perspectives with those of students. Future research could explore and compare instructors' and students' perceptions and practices. Finally, when interpreting and discussing the results of the first two research questions, our findings were compared with those of other studies mainly based on research design and content; however, the differences between the contexts caused difficulties in generalizing the findings, and this is also the main limitation of the discussion of the third research question. Despite these limitations, the study contributes to the research in this field by providing a self-designed, validated questionnaire that was used to investigate EFL students' perceived preferences and reported instructor practices of product- and process-directed WF. The

study findings may encourage other researchers to adopt the questionnaire for use in other contexts or adjust it for different purposes depending on diverse perspectives. Therefore, researchers can conduct various comparisons in future studies, such as the extent to which students' perceptions align with those of instructors and whether the instructor feedback practices reported by students are justified by the instructors' reported practices.

## 8. Conclusion

The findings of the present study reveal that Moroccan EFL students perceived WCF as more important than judgmental WF practices and the different WF modes that could be provided on their written text, and students also found effective WF modes in the writing process and content-based WF related to the macroaspects of writing to be valuable. Regarding their reported instructor practices of product-oriented WF, the students perceived that WCF was more often used by their instructors than various WF modes and judgmental WF practices. Students also reported that their instructors used content-based WF related to macroaspects of writing more than other process-oriented WF practices. The study also revealed various mismatches between the WF practices that students perceive as important to be targeted in EFL writing courses and their application frequency. Thus, these mismatches need to be addressed by encouraging instructors to reconsider their approach to providing WF and meeting students' needs. Small differences were also uncovered between student groups regarding their preferred and reported instructor WF methods. Thus, further research that targets BA and MA students might be promising and offer insights into students' WF diverse perceptions and expectations.

The findings have several pedagogical and practical implications that could be useful for writing teachers. They show that students may not frequently benefit from feedback practices that seek to improve students' writing, such as process-oriented approaches that need to be emphasized. In an exploratory study in Morocco, Haoucha [93] called for the adoption of the process approach in EFL writing instruction to clarify the ambiguity and reluctance that some writing teachers may have towards this approach. In assessment, process approaches should also be targeted by Moroccan teachers [101]. The study's findings revealed that developing evaluative judgment was not highly perceived and reported by the students as a frequent practice of instructors; thus, it must be recommended that more attention be paid to its involvement in the assessment of students' writing processes. Teachers should be aware of learners' varied and preferred approaches to WF. Incorporating a balanced approach that includes feedback on completed drafts as well as activities throughout the writing process can be beneficial for EFL teachers, as it may align with students' preferences and promote effective writing development. Instructors should instruct, guide, and inform students on the various practices of feedback they can expect and their specific objectives. Students may better understand and make use of the feedback they receive during writing revisions if they are explicitly taught about product- and process-based feedback and are fully informed about the teachers' objectives, procedures and techniques at the beginning of the semester [37]. Instructors need to facilitate opportunities for open discussion of students' feedback preferences and methods. Because feedback is a two-way communication [82], supportive classroom climates can be created by inviting students to share their feedback preferences and by having dialogue about what makes effective feedback. Finally, the student designed questionnaire can be recommended for use as a formative feedback tool. By introducing this instrument to students, instructors can gain a better understanding of students' preferred modes of WF and how they align with or differ from what students report about instructors' WF practices. This tool can be a starting point for initiating a teacher-student discussion about the issue of WF and the appreciation of its significant role in both product and process writing. This may also meet Moroccan researchers' call for more research that could propose better ways of developing English students' writing (e.g., [102]).

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## Data availability statement

The data that has been used is confidential.

## CRediT authorship contribution statement

**Abderrahim Mamad:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Tibor Vigh:** Writing – review & editing, Validation, Supervision, Project administration, Methodology, Funding acquisition, Formal analysis, Conceptualization.

## Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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## Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data to this article can be found online at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e31694>.

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