



## ENHANCING L2 LEARNERS' WRITING: IMPACT OF PRODUCT AND PROCESS APPROACHES

Youssef El Ouidani<sup>1</sup>

Redouane Madaoui<sup>2i</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibno Zohr University,

Marocco

[orcid.org/0009-0006-4438-444X](https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4438-444X)

<sup>2</sup>Ibno Zohr University,

Marocco

[orcid.org/0009-0006-1052-3608](https://orcid.org/0009-0006-1052-3608)

### Abstract:

This study investigated the effects of two approaches to teaching writing (product and process) on the development of writing skills of Moroccan EFL high-school students. Two intact classes of 86 third-year high-school students participated in the present study. A pre-test was administered to all participants to measure their writing competence in expository essay writing. Each group was then subjected to a specific treatment. The experimental group was instructed to use a process-based syllabus, while the control group followed the original product-based syllabus. In the process-oriented syllabus, students were guided through various stages of the writing process via activities like brainstorming, collaborative problem-solving, free writing, multiple drafting, structured peer feedback, and teacher-student conferences. Conversely, the product-oriented syllabus focused on teaching writing through model analysis, writing exercises, and structured feedback sessions with teachers. Following the instructional period, participants underwent a post-test to assess the impact of each approach on their writing proficiency. Statistical analyses, including Paired Samples T-test and Independent Samples T-test, demonstrated that both approaches led to improvements in students' writing performance, with the process-based approach being more effective. Participant feedback on the questionnaire also supported these findings. The study concludes by outlining implications for the teaching of writing in second language (L2) contexts.

**Keywords:** EFL; process approach; product approach; teaching writing

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<sup>i</sup> Correspondence: email [youssef.elouidani@edu.uiz.ac.ma](mailto:youssef.elouidani@edu.uiz.ac.ma)

## 1. Introduction

Writing is an essential skill in today's globalized world, particularly for individuals who need to communicate in a language other than their mother tongue. In the context of English as a foreign language, writing proficiency is a fundamental component of language competence, and it is increasingly becoming a critical aspect of language assessment (Graham, Gillespie, & McKeown, 2013). Writing skills are essential for academic, professional, and personal communication, and they play a vital role in students' academic success (Atkinson, 2011; Hammann, 2005; Harmer, 2004). Despite the importance of writing skills, teaching writing in EFL has been a persistent challenge for language educators worldwide. This challenge stems from the complex nature of writing, which requires learners to integrate various linguistic and cognitive processes, including vocabulary, grammar, syntax, discourse organization, and critical thinking. As per Leki (2001), challenges encountered by EFL instructors in teaching writing encompass insufficient training and experience, managing large class sizes, and a discrepancy between the objectives of the writing curriculum and students' learning requirements.

Likewise, Moroccan EFL teachers at the high school level encounter similar challenges because of the secondary status of writing instruction, which is believed to be attributed to the pedagogical methods and teaching practices employed during the early school years (Abouabdelkader & Bouziane, 2016). Consequently, Moroccan high school students' writing experiences are frequently described as discouraging (Benzizoune, 2022). Writing is often viewed unfavorably by students, causing them to associate it with anxiety, stress, and failure (Kadmiry, 2021). Additionally, Abouabdelkader (1999) contends that most high school teachers in Morocco lack sufficient training on effective writing instruction in general and on the writing process in particular. As a result, high school teachers typically do not prioritize writing instruction, and in most cases, they follow the traditional model-based product approach to teaching writing despite evidence from the literature in favor of the process approach in enhancing students' writing ability (eg. Arici & Kaldirim, 2015; Graham & Sandmel, 2011; Ibnian, 2011; Mehr, 2017; Samsudin, 2016).

On this account and in addition to the scarcity of empirical research in EFL high-school contexts (Abouabdelkader & Bouziane, 2016) that can validate the potential effects of the two most commonly adopted approaches to writing instruction, the present study was set to investigate the effect of each of the process and product approaches in teaching writing on the essay writing skills of Moroccan EFL high school students. It also aimed to determine which of the two instructional approaches (process or product) would be more effective in enhancing the essay writing of Moroccan EFL high school students.

### 1.1 The Product Approach

Before the 1970s, the main emphasis of research on writing instruction revolved around the final outcome of writing. Essentially, the process of learning to write was seen as a task primarily concerned with form and predominantly conducted within the confines of the classroom. In the era of audio-lingualism, writing was considered a supplementary

skill used to grasp sentence structures and grammar within language classrooms. The product approach entails guiding students to write according to a prescribed pattern, with the primary focus placed on the written outcome itself rather than the writing process or students' approach to writing. Badger and White (2000) assert that writing is primarily seen as a means of acquiring knowledge about language structure, and the advancement of writing skills primarily occurs through mimicking input provided by teachers in the form of model texts. The core of the product approach lies in demonstrating correct language usage, with students concentrating on studying model texts and replicating them. Consequently, various exercises are employed to prompt students to produce similar texts (Jordan, 1997).

According to Pincas (1982), learning occurs most effectively when students imitate and follow the techniques previously determined by the teacher in response to the stimuli provided. The product-based approach aims to assist students in learning specific text features and practicing relevant skills. As a result, students may eventually be able to write independently without assistance from the teacher. Hence, the teacher's role in responding to student writing is confined to instructing students to replicate a model text and evaluating the appropriateness and grammatical accuracy of their language features. Teachers typically evaluate and assign grades to student writing, and may provide feedback in the form of simple comments such as "Good". However, such comments are often viewed as meaningless by students and have little impact on the quality of the final product.

The product approach perceives writing as a "*linear model with three distinct stages, each contributing to the development of the written product*" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 367). These stages follow a sequential pattern:

- **The pre-writing stage:** Teachers choose model texts and analyze them with students, assisting them in identifying genre features, paragraph structure, connectors, and language usage, such as verb tenses. Subsequently, students engage in controlled practice exercises to reinforce these highlighted features.
- **The writing stage:** Students compose their own pieces, focusing on organizing their ideas effectively.
- **The rewriting stage:** Students independently utilize the skills, structures, and vocabulary they have learned to refine their work. Through this process, they demonstrate their proficiency as fluent and competent language users.

The product approach remains prevalent in writing classrooms globally, with its proponents arguing that it enhances students' writing abilities by facilitating learning through imitation. Arndt (1987) contends that the models utilized in this approach not only serve for imitation but also enable exploration and analysis. Myles (2002) asserts that without exposure to native-like written models, students are more likely to persist in writing errors. Therefore, the utilization of model texts is deemed essential for the development of students' writing skills. However, the product approach has faced criticism, leading educators and researchers to reassess the nature of writing and its instructional methods. Critics argue that the approach overly prioritizes the final product over the writing processes themselves (Hinkel, 2002). Furthermore, it is criticized for its

teacher-centered nature, reinstating the teacher as the sole source of information. Additionally, it is faulted for constraining students' creativity, causing writing activities to be perceived as burdensome rather than avenues for expression (Tribble, 1996, p.18). Consequently, a movement advocating for the reassessment of writing instruction approaches and practices has emerged, leading to a paradigm shift that revolutionized the teaching of writing and gave rise to the process approach.

## 1.2 The Process Approach

Unlike the product-based approach, the process approach to writing instruction, according to Tribble (1996), emphasizes the creativity of the writer and promotes the development of good writing practices. This approach emerged as a response to product-oriented pedagogies (Susser, 1994). Instead of only analyzing and correcting the final product, the process approach aids students by breaking down the writing process into meaningful stages and activities, such as prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing (Laksmi, 2006; White & Arndt, 1991). Moreover, the process approach takes into account the three elements of written discourse: audience, purpose, and context. Consequently, the learner's interaction or purpose takes precedence in the process model, making the learner the initiator rather than merely responding or imitating other people's intentions and expressions. Therefore, the process approach asserts that the teaching of writing should be more concerned with what the learner wants to say.

The process writing approach emphasizes guiding learners through various stages of writing:

- **Pre-writing:** Students prepare to write by generating ideas, determining the topic and audience, and activating their prior knowledge through brainstorming, mind mapping, and similar activities.
- **Drafting:** Students write down their ideas without focusing on mechanics but rather on content and elaboration. Fulwiler and Gaber (2003) suggest that instructors and students should not expect the first drafts to be error-free. Instead, teachers should focus on global issues such as topic, organization, and content, deferring surface problems like spelling and punctuation to later stages.
- **Revising:** Students review their writing for organization, main points, support, and connections between ideas. This stage encourages critical thinking and reflection to better convey ideas to an audience. Brown (2001) recommends providing specific directions for revision through self-correction, peer-correction, and instructor-initiated comments. Berkenkotter (2001) highlights revising as central to the writing process, facilitating the emergence and clarification of ideas.
- **Editing:** Students correct their drafts for spelling, grammar, capitalization, and punctuation errors. Tompkins (1994) defines editing as the stage where the piece of writing is finalized. Students carefully proofread their own or peers' writings using checklists to correct mechanics and grammatical errors.
- **Publishing:** After revising and editing their work, students can share it by publishing it in classroom newspapers, bulletin boards, school magazines, online

platforms, or reading aloud to the class. This step allows students to consider their audience and gain confidence as writers.

#### 1.4 Related Research Studies

Numerous studies have investigated the implementation of the process approach to writing instruction across diverse educational settings worldwide, consistently demonstrating its efficacy in enhancing students' writing proficiency in both first language (L1) and second language (L2) contexts. Zamel (1982) underscores that "*it was the process approach that contributed to writing proficiently in English*" (p. 203). Using a case-study approach, Zamel (1983) delved into the writing processes of ESL (English as a Second Language) learners. Through observations of six ESL subjects, she revealed that these learners followed a non-linear approach to writing. Furthermore, she observed that proficient writers prioritized ideas and communication, whereas less proficient writers were preoccupied with language mechanics and spelling. This highlights the importance of encouraging students to focus not only on linguistic aspects but also on discourse features during the writing process.

Zamel (1983) also suggests that addressing issues of content and meaning must take priority over language concerns in writing instruction. Unlike other approaches that have been criticized for ineffective teacher response to student writing, the process approach emphasizes collaborative techniques such as peer feedback and teacher-student conferences, which empower learners to express their ideas and are more student-centered. These activities also provide opportunities for teachers and students to interact, negotiate, and communicate ideas effectively. Additionally, multi-draft instructions are important for student composition and revision as they offer learners more chances to examine their own writing critically and improve it. This approach is not only effective in enhancing writing but also saves teachers' time and energy (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; White & Arndt, 1991). Additionally, according to Hedge (1988), students' reformulation of their writing offers an opportunity for them to engage in discussions and analyses regarding the content and organization of their texts. This process facilitates the development of student autonomy and fosters their acceptance of responsibility for editing, correcting, and proofreading their own work (Jordan, 1997).

Furthermore, Ho (2006) investigated the effectiveness of a two-month process writing program on the writing skills and attitudes of around 200 primary school students. The program was evaluated using pre- and post-tests, interviews, questionnaires, and observations of the strategies used by the students. The results showed a positive impact of the program on the students' writing performance and attitudes towards writing, with positive outcomes observed in both the upper and lower primary school levels, although variations were noted across different classrooms. Likewise, Goldstein and Carr (1996) conducted an analysis of the 1992 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) writing assessment, which involved 7,000 4th graders, 11,000 8th graders, and 11,500 12th-grade students throughout the United States. Their findings indicated a strong correlation between process-oriented activities and writing proficiency (p. 45). Similarly, Mahon and Yau (1992) implemented a process-

oriented writing program with two classes comprising thirty-five students each in a primary school setting. They observed that by the conclusion of the program, students' writing skills had notably improved through the adoption of the process approach to writing (p. 93). In the Moroccan context, Kadmiry (2021) investigated the effectiveness of process and product approaches on the writing performance of Moroccan EFL high-school graduate students. The study comprised two groups, A and B, who underwent a writing pre-test before the intervention. Group A received product-oriented instruction in academic argumentative writing for three months, while Group B was instructed in academic argumentative writing based on Hayes' (2012) process writing model. Following the treatment, all participants completed a writing posttest. Data analysis revealed that Group B exhibited significant improvement in their compositions compared to Group A, suggesting that the process-oriented approach is more effective in enhancing EFL writing skills. This finding underscores the potential benefits of the process approach for EFL students. Moreover, in secondary education, a recent study conducted by Keen (2022) further supports the superiority of the process approach in facilitating the development of students' writing skills over the product approach.

However, despite its merits, the process approach has faced criticism. One common critique is its time-consuming nature, as reported by numerous writing teachers (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Hanson & Liu, 2005; Rollinson, 2005; Wakabayashi, 2008). Tangpermpoon (2008) highlights that implementing the process approach "*requires learners to spend a considerable amount of time completing a single piece of writing in the classroom*" (p. 103). Additionally, some educators argue that the approach is complex, both for themselves and their students. They contend that it demands substantial guidance, feedback provision, and the organization of cooperative writing activities at each stage. Moreover, critics suggest that the process approach may be ineffective with low-level learners (Abouabdelkader & Bouziane, 2016). In addition, some critics have argued that the process approach may not be suitable for all types of writing, particularly for those that require specific structures and formats, such as academic writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Rollinson, 2005). In such cases, the product-based approach may be more appropriate. Caudery (1997) argues that the process approach "*might help skilled writers produce good products, but on the contrary, can low proficient writers make the best use of the approach to produce a good text?*" (p. 21)

Similarly, some teachers have reported that the process approach may not be suitable for teaching writing in large classes where individual attention and feedback are difficult to provide (Flowerdew, 2005). Further, some critics argue that the process approach places too much emphasis on the writer's individual creativity and expression, which may lead to neglecting the importance of correct grammar and usage (Hedge, 1988; Williams, 2005). However, the proponents of the process approach argue that language use is still an important aspect of the approach and that the focus on content and meaning does not mean that language errors are ignored. Others argue that the process approach may not be suitable for all learners, particularly those with different learning styles or those who prefer a more structured approach to writing (Rollinson, 2005). All things considered, the process approach continues to stand out as one of the most promising

methods for teaching writing, particularly in ESL/EFL contexts, despite facing significant criticism. Therefore, teachers need to consider the individual needs and preferences of their students together with their lesson objectives when deciding on what approach to adopt. Two research questions were addressed in this study:

- 1) What is the effect, if any, of each of the product approach and process approach on expository writing of Moroccan EFL high school students?
- 2) Does one of the two instructional approaches enhance Moroccan EFL high school students' expository writing better than the other?

## **2. Method**

The study aims to achieve two objectives: firstly, it investigates whether essay writing skills of high school EFL students can be enhanced through exposure to either the product or process approach. Secondly, it seeks to determine which approach would be more effective in enhancing the essay-writing skills of these students. Based on previous empirical studies, it was anticipated that each of the two approaches would have a positive impact on the essay writing quality of Moroccan EFL high school students. Furthermore, it was hypothesized that the students who were taught using the process approach would perform better in expository writing than those who were taught using the product approach.

### **2.1 Research Design**

To meet the aforementioned objectives, a pretest-posttest control group quasi-experimental design was adopted. Two intact high school groups enrolled in the second-year baccalaureate took part in the study. One served as the treatment group (receiving writing instruction following the process approach) and the other as the control group (receiving the product approach instruction). This design allowed the researcher to observe the effects of the treatment each of the experimental and the control group received. Each participant took a pre-test to measure their actual competence in essay writing before the treatment. Then, each of the experimental and control groups received the corresponding instructional treatment that lasted for nine sessions. At the end of the treatment, each of the two groups took a post-test to measure the effect each group received. The dependent variable is thus the participants' expository essay writing as measured by scores on the posttest. The independent variable is the experimental treatment received (product/ process).

### **2.2 Participants**

The sample included 86 Moroccan high school students, all of whom were second-year Baccalaureate students majoring in Arts. The control group had 44 participants (26 females and 18 males), while the treatment group had 42 participants (22 females and 20 males). The age range of the participants was between 17 to 20, and their first language is either Moroccan Arabic or Berber, with French and English being their second

languages. As such, the two groups were heterogeneous in terms of gender, age, and native language.

### **2.3 Materials**

To investigate the effect of each of the two approaches to teaching writing, three main instruments were used to collect data: a pre-test, a post-test, and a feedback questionnaire.

#### **2.3.1 The Pre-test and Post-test**

The pre-test was designed to establish a baseline of the students' scores to assess their proficiency level in writing before the treatment. The test contains one writing prompt similar to the ones suggested in the textbook used for second Baccalaureate streams. The respondents were allotted two hours to write an expository essay about the topic. No guidance or help was given to the students during the test. Similarly, the post-test was conducted following the treatment in the same way as the pre-test to know if the students had made any progress in their writing.

#### **2.3.2 Test Validity and Reliability**

To ensure the validity of the pre-test and post-test, the researcher had three teachers and two teacher trainers evaluate the tests for face and content validity. The teachers confirmed that the tests were appropriate and representative of the second Baccalaureate level. Two high school teachers with at least twelve years of experience in EFL teaching were selected as raters to score the participants' writings, using an essay evaluation rubric designed to ensure the reliability and validity of the scores. The raters assessed six samples of student essays from the pilot study and discussed the assigned scores to establish unified scoring criteria. The Cronbach's Alpha inter-rater reliability for both the pre-test and post-test was greater than .7, indicating very good agreement between raters and high inter-rater reliability.

#### **2.3.3 The Feedback Questionnaire**

A feedback questionnaire was designed to supplement and help interpret the quantitative data obtained from the pre-tests and post-tests. Two versions of the questionnaire were administered, depending on the treatment the participants received. The first section of the questionnaire gathered background information on the participants. The second section assessed the participants' overall impressions of the treatment and control condition using a five-point scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The questions asked the participants about their attitudes toward writing before and after the treatment. The participants were also asked to rate the adequacy of the time allotted to the pre-test and post-test, as well as the difficulty of the writing prompts. The third section of the questionnaire contained open-ended questions that explored their evaluation of the effectiveness and their impressions of the treatment received. The teacher-researcher administered the questionnaires and explained the



questions to the participants in both groups separately to avoid any potential extraneous variables affecting the results.

### **2.3.4 The Textbooks**

Both groups used Ticket 2 English as the main textbook. The control group used it for its sample essays as models and writing-related language skill activities. However, the experimental group used White and Arndt's (1991) Process Writing book as additional material. This book provided the teacher-researcher with various activities to help students navigate the different stages of the writing process. Both groups covered the same themes but differed in their writing instruction approach.

## **2.4 Procedures**

This research was carried out over a period of nine weeks during the first semester. The teacher-researcher, who was responsible for teaching both groups, conducted nine two-hour sessions. In the first session, the teacher-researcher introduced the writing program's goals and the structure of essay writing to the students, who had no prior knowledge of it. Additionally, before administering the pre-test, all the students were informed that they would participate in a research study, and the objectives and procedures were made clear to them.

### **2.4.1 The Experimental Group**

The researcher initiated the experiment by introducing the students to the process approach to writing and elucidating the various stages it encompasses. Throughout the sessions, the students concentrated on engaging in diverse activities advocated by this approach. In the generating stage, students worked in pairs or groups and used various techniques, such as brainstorming, listing, and using visuals like pictures and videos to generate ideas. In the drafting stage, the students were required to write their ideas on paper without worrying about mechanics but with an emphasis on content and elaboration. In the revising stage, they reviewed their writing by focusing on organization, main points, support for ideas, modifying, paraphrasing, or adding new ideas, and connecting between ideas. Students were given specific directions and trained on how to revise their essays or provide feedback to their peers using checklists. Teacher feedback was also provided during this stage in the form of one-on-one conferences. In the editing stage, students proofread their own or their peers' writings to correct grammatical errors and mechanics. They used editing checklists to guide them through this process. The students were also encouraged to write multiple drafts. In the publishing stage, students were asked to read their writings aloud. The researcher also emphasized creating a collaborative environment in the writing classroom where students worked in groups, and revised their writings together.

### **2.4.2 The Control Group**

Adopting the product approach, the lessons in this group were divided into three stages: Pre-writing, Writing, and Re-writing. The teacher-researcher provided clear input to help

the students acquire the targeted writing strategies before gradually withdrawing to allow the students to work individually. During the prewriting stage, the teacher-researcher used model texts from the students' textbook *Ticket 2 English*, studied them with the students, and helped them to highlight the characteristics of an expository essay, such as paragraphing, connectors, and language use. The students were given controlled practice exercises to highlight these features. In the writing stage, students focused on organizing their ideas by creating an outline and using it to guide their essay writing. In the re-writing stage, the teacher provided students with checklists to proofread their essays, monitored their work, and gave feedback in the form of teacher-student conferencing. The teacher also noted common writing errors and addressed them later through remedial work activities. Finally, the students used the skills, structures, and vocabulary they learned to produce their end-products, which were submitted to the teacher.

At the end of the treatment (the session before the last), the participants in each group had two hours to take the post-test under the same conditions as the pre-test. No support or assistance was offered to them. However, data from one student was eliminated due to their absence on the day of the post-test. In the final session of the writing program, the participants in both groups took about 20 minutes to complete the feedback questionnaire.

## **2.5 Statistical Analysis**

The scores obtained from the pretest and posttest were subjected to descriptive and inferential statistics. To address the first research question regarding the positive effects of each of the process and product approaches on students' writing, a Paired Samples T-test was conducted using SPSS 25. This would determine whether there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the pre-test and post-test. An Independent Samples T-test was also conducted to address the second research question, which aimed to determine which instructional approach (process or product) had a more significant effect on the development of students' writing. The feedback questionnaires provided qualitative data that were tallied and reported as percentages.

## **3. Results**

### **3.1 The Effect of the Product vs the Process Approach**

The first research question the present study attempted to address was whether the instructional approaches used in teaching essay writing (product or process) led to a significant change in the participants' gained scores in essay writing.

The descriptive statistics, as indicated in Table 1 below, revealed that there were considerable differences in the mean scores of the participants in the pre-test and post-test of the control group.

**Table 1:** Pre-test and Post-test mean scores of the participants in the control group

Control group		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre-test scores	11,81	43	3,280	,500
	Post-test scores	13,12	43	2,829	,431

As presented in Table 1, the descriptive statistics reveal that the participants in the control group had a mean score of  $M=11.81$  in the Pre-test, whereas their mean score increased to  $M=13.12$  in the Post-test. This indicates an increase of  $01.33$  in their scores from the Pre-test to the Post-test.

Concerning the experimental group, as Table 2 below shows, the descriptive statistics indicate that the mean scores of the Pre-test for the participants were  $M= 11, 64$  while their mean scores in the Post-test was  $M= 14,96$ , resulting in an increase of  $03,32$  from the Pre-test to the Post-test. That is to say, a considerable difference was observed in the mean scores of the participants in the pre-test and post-test of the experimental group.

**Table 2:** Pre-test and Post-test mean scores of the participants in the experimental group

Experimental group		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pretest scores	11,64	42	3,346	,516
	Posttest scores	14,96	42	2,540	,392

The observed differences in the mean scores between the pretest and posttest in both groups were found to be statistically significant. First, the results of the Paired Samples T-test of the control group as shown in Table 3. indicate that the t-value was  $9.403$  with  $42$  degrees of freedom, and the two-tailed value was  $.000$ , which is much smaller than the alpha value of  $.05$ . This leads us to conclude that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the participants in the control group in the Pre-test and Post-test.

**Table 3:** Results of the Paired Samples T-test comparing the Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students in the control group

Pair 1	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest scores - Posttest scores	-1,314	,916	,140	-1,596	-1,032	9,403	42	,000

Second, the Paired Samples T-test results of the experimental group presented in Table 4 also demonstrate a significant difference between the mean scores of the students in the Pre-test and Post-test. The t-statistics, with  $41$  degrees of freedom, were  $17.343$ , and the corresponding two-tailed value was  $.000$ . This value was considerably smaller than the predetermined alpha value of  $.05$ , indicating a significant difference.

**Table 4:** Results of the Paired Samples T-test comparing the Pre-test and Post-test scores of the students in the experimental group

Pair 2	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
Pretest scores - Posttest scores	-3,321	1,241	,192	-3,708	-2,935	-17,34	41	,000

### 3.2 The Differential Effect: The Product vs Process Approach

The second research question the present study attempts to address is whether one of the instructional approaches used (product or process) enhances Moroccan EFL high school students' essay-writing skills more than the other.

Descriptive statistics for the writing Pre-Test reported in Table 5 below indicate that the performance of the students in the control group (M= 11, 81) was similar to that of the students in the experimental group (M= 11, 64) before they were taught through alternative approaches.

**Table 5:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Pre-test

Groups	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Control	11,81	43	3,280
Treatment	11,64	42	3,346
Total	11,73	85	3,294

However, the descriptive statistics shown in Table 6 below indicate that those who were taught expository essay writing using the process approach (Experimental group) obtained higher scores (M=3.3214) than those who were taught using the product approach (Control group) (M=1.3140).

**Table 6:** Mean and Standard Deviation on the Post-test

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Control group	43	1,3140	,91628	,13973
Experimental group	42	3,3214	1,24117	,19152

Although the descriptive statistics show a difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the participants in both the control and experimental groups, these findings alone cannot determine whether or not the differences are significant. Therefore, further analysis using the Independent Samples T-test was applied to the data.

Based on the information presented in Table 7 below, it is evident that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the experimental group and control group on the Post-Test, with the experimental group outperforming the control group. The calculated t-statistic for equal variances is -8.468, and the corresponding level of significance ("Sig.") is .04. Therefore, it can be concluded that the difference between the scores of the two groups is statistically significant at the .04 level.

**Table 7:** Independent Samples T-test for differences among control and experimental group scores on the Post-test

Difference	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. 2-tailed	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal variances assumed	4,23	,043	-8,49	83	,000	-2,007	,2362	-2,477	-1,537
Equal variances not assumed			-8,46	75,40	,000	-2,007	,2370	-2,479	-1,535

\*p<.05

In summary, the present study aimed to test two hypotheses regarding the effects of product and process approaches to teaching writing on Moroccan EFL high school students' essay writing skills. To test the first hypothesis, two Paired Samples T-tests were conducted, revealing significant improvements in the scores obtained by both the control and experimental groups from Pre-test to Post-test. This suggests that both instructional approaches have a positive effect on students' writing ability. To test the second hypothesis, an Independent Samples T-Test was used, revealing that the experimental group, taught through a process-based approach, outperformed the control group, taught through a product-based approach, in the essay writing Post-test. These results confirmed the second hypothesis, indicating that the process approach is more effective in developing Moroccan EFL high school students' essay writing. The following section discusses and interprets these results concerning prior research conducted in the field. The goal is to draw sound and knowledgeable conclusions.

#### 4. Discussion

The results of this study indicate that the substantial improvement in the performance of the students in the control and experimental groups makes a strong argument in favor of the positive effects both the product and process approaches have on developing Moroccan EFL high school students' writing skills. These findings are consistent with those reported in previous studies (Gabrielatos, 2002; Hasan & Ahkand, 2010; Kim & Kim, 2005). The analysis of the students' responses to the feedback questionnaire revealed that the majority of participants in both groups conveyed positive sentiments regarding the treatment they received.

Additionally, the results suggest that the two pedagogical approaches used (product or process) had a differential effect on developing Moroccan EFL high school students' writing skills. The product approach did not seem to be as effective as the

process approach in developing students' essay writing competence. The current study aligns with previous studies conducted on the utilization of the process approach in teaching writing in various educational settings worldwide (Alsouqi, 2001; Cheung & Chan 1994; Darayseh, 2003; Goldstein & Carr, 1996; Ho, 2006; Ibnian, 2011; Mahon & Yau, 1992; Mehr, 2017; Mojgan et al., 2021). These studies seem to concur on the efficacy of the process approach in enhancing students' writing proficiency in both L1 and L2 contexts.

There are several possible reasons why the experimental group outperformed the control group in this study. First, it is possible that effectively activating students' schemata in the prewriting stage aided them in generating creative ideas and providing them with a solid foundation for the smooth development of their essays. As Zamel (1983) articulated, proficient writers tend to view writing as a process, prioritizing writing tasks before concerns about accuracy-related aspects emerge. Consequently, during the implementation of the process approach, students were encouraged to place particular emphasis on generating ideas rather than focusing on grammar and spelling. This approach facilitated a sense of freedom for students to express themselves and cultivate new ideas. In this regard, 76% of the students in the experimental group reported that the most beneficial stage in the writing process was the prewriting stage as it enabled them to brainstorm ideas about different topics. However, the students in the product approach group were left to devise their own ways of generating ideas for their writings, and were thus busy attending to their language use and accuracy (Hyland, 2003; Raimes, 1985, 1991; Reid, 1984; Susser, 1994).

A second possible explanation for the outperformance of the experimental group could be attributed to the step-by-step procedure of the process approach to writing, which may have helped reduce the complexity and frustration associated with writing, and enabled students to produce better compositions (Coffin, 2003; Goodman & Hewings, 2000; Lillis & Joan, 2003).

A third probable explanation is that the students in the experimental group had benefited from the kind of student-teacher partnership which is also a fundamental element in the process approach. In this approach, the teacher's job is that of a facilitator more than a grade giver, and especially not "The One Who Knows" (Brannon & Knoblauch, 1982). In this study, the effects of this partnership were clearly declared by the process group students in the feedback questionnaire indicating a high level of motivation and a positive attitude towards writing.

Also, having students write multiple drafts based on their peers' feedback in the revising stage may have helped the students in the experimental group to better refine their compositions. This was supported by the students' responses in the feedback questionnaire, highlighting the benefits of the peer-feedback techniques. This is also consistent with Sarhady's (2015), Mehr's (2017) and Kadmiry's (2021) studies, which underscored the positive impact of the feedback from peers or instructors on the quality of students' compositions during their writing process. Indeed, as Hedge (2003) suggests, students' reformulation of their writing affords them the opportunity to engage in discussions and analyses regarding the content and organization of their texts. Furthermore, the multi-draft strategy, a prevalent practice in the process approach,

provides students with additional opportunities to enhance their capacity for critical self-examination of their writing and to learn methods for improvement (Raimes, 1983; White & Arndt, 1991).

Regarding the control group, it is possible that the absence of a model essay during the post-test may have been the reason for the lower effectiveness of the product approach in this group. The analysis of the students' reactions to the treatment in the feedback questionnaire indicated that their involvement and the level of their motivation toward writing were less pronounced compared to the process group.

## 5. Pedagogical and Research Implications

Several implications for EFL writing teachers could be drawn from the findings of the present study. First, the results strongly indicate that each of the product and process approaches seems to be an effective method for developing EFL writing competence. Particularly, the process approach seems to improve the participants' essay writing better than the product approach. In the same vein, numerous studies conducted in the field of teaching writing suggest that the judicious application of the process approach is highly effective in fostering the development of students' writing proficiency (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Raimes, 1983; White & Arndt, 1991; Zamel, 1983). As Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) put it, "the potential benefit of the appropriate use of the process writing approach is enormous" (p. 189). This indicates that teachers should instruct their students to adhere to the stages outlined in the process approach and motivate them to approach writing more as a process rather than solely focusing on the end product.

Students should be guided through the stages of the writing process from pre-writing, drafting, revising, to editing before reaching the final draft. During the pre-writing stage, students should be given ample opportunities to explore the writing topic with their peers and teacher in classroom discussions or through brainstorming techniques. In fact, as indicated in the feedback questionnaire, 76% of the participants in the process group stated that the pre-writing stage was the most beneficial for them. Similarly, the student-teacher discussion taking place after writing their first draft seemed to help the students to improve the quality of their composition's content. Further, the findings indicate that group discussions and social interaction promoted in the pre-writing and revising stages tend to stimulate students and enhance their writing abilities. The significance of social interaction is based on the social nature of language, language usage, language acquisition, and learning in general (Halliday & Hassan, 1985). Thus, the social context created by the process approach seems to be more authentic, meaningful, and practical, and therefore promotes enjoyable and effective learning in the writing classroom.

The results of this study also suggest that using different types of feedback on separate drafts can be advantageous, and therefore, teachers should consider utilizing multi-draft writing to encourage revision. Yet, it is crucial for teachers to ensure that students do not perceive rewriting as punishment for not getting it right the first time

(Murray, 1982). This is particularly significant for teachers in the Moroccan context, who should aim to comprehend and assist their students in grasping this concept.

In the end, it should be noted that despite this study's results favoring the process approach, the product approach has its own merits. Hyland (2003) argues that students need to be exposed to authentic written models to prevent persistent writing errors. A more realistic view is that process and product are complementary and supportive to each other (Bouziane, 1996). Perhaps, a combination of the product approach and process approach is very likely to yield even better results (Abouabdelkader & Bouziane, 2016). Brookes and Grundy (1990, as cited in Tangpermpoon, 2008) argue that teaching writing approaches separately may lead to an imbalance in L2 writing performance. Therefore, by incorporating these approaches to writing, future research should investigate the potential positive effects of a combination of the two approaches in promoting EFL Writing at the high school or even university levels. Moreover, future research can target some factors which can influence the effectiveness and efficacy of the product approach and process approaches such as the teachers' and students' attitudes, students' gender, and cultural background.

In conclusion, the findings of this study provide clear directions on how to develop students' writing skills. Teaching grammar rules and imitation of model writings alone is not sufficient. Instead, effective instructional techniques such as those recommended by the process approach should be systematically used. Furthermore, it is essential to continually evaluate the feasibility and effectiveness of these techniques and to develop new pedagogical procedures accordingly.

### **Ethical Statement**

We hereby, Youssef El Ouidani and Redouane Madaoui consciously assure that for the manuscript *Enhancing L2 Learners' Writing: Impact of Product and Process Approaches* the following is fulfilled:

- This material is our own original work.
- The paper has not been previously published elsewhere and is not currently being considered for publication elsewhere.
- The paper reflects our own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The paper properly credits the meaningful contributions of co-authors.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are cited properly.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

We declare that we have no financial or personal conflicts of interest that could be perceived as influencing the content of this article.

### **About the Author(s)**

**Youssef El Ouidani** holds a PhD in Applied Linguistics from Ibn Zohr University, Morocco. Complementing his academic achievements, he earned a distinguished



diploma as an International Leader in Education from Indiana University, USA. He has made significant contributions to the field through active participation in numerous conferences. His research findings have been disseminated through publications in esteemed international journals. He has over fourteen years of experience as an English Language Teaching professional in both secondary and higher education settings. His research interests lie in second language writing, ICT integration, and second language acquisition.

**Redouane Madaoui** is an associate professor at ESEF, Ibn Zohr University, Agadir (Morocco). He holds a PhD in education from the Faculty of Education, Rabat. His current areas of research include EFL reading pedagogy and teaching academic writing.

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