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Model-Text Feedback in Large L2 Classes: Student Perceptions from a Bahraini Mixed-Methods Study

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Abstract

This mixed-methods study aimed to investigate the optimal timing for model-text-based written corrective feedback by examining Bahraini university second language learners' perceptions in large-class settings. The primary research question focused on whether students find model texts more practical and effective when received before or after writing. Addressing this is significant for developing scalable feedback solutions in massified higher education contexts, such as those in the Gulf region, where traditional WCF is often logistically impractical. Sixty students were divided into an experimental group, which received model texts after writing, and a control group, which received them before. Data from a perception questionnaire and reflective notes were analyzed. Results indicated that the experimental group perceived post-task models as significantly more useful, relevant, noticeable, and practical than the control group, with large effect sizes. Qualitative analysis revealed that receiving models after writing enhanced metacognitive awareness, allowing students to identify specific gaps in their own writing and fostering a sense of ownership. The study concludes that post-task model-text written corrective feedback is a highly effective and practical feedback strategy in large-class contexts. Therefore, it is recommended that second language writing instructors and curriculum designers strategically implement model texts as a post-writing feedback tool to foster learner autonomy and address the feedback gap in large classes.

Keywords: Bahrain, feedback timing, L2 writing, large classes, learner perceptions, model texts, written corrective feedback

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Introduction

The provision of effective Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is a central yet formidable challenge in Second Language (L2) writing pedagogy, crucial for developing linguistic accuracy, rhetorical competence, and overall writing proficiency (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ellis, 2009; Ferris, 2010). It serves not only to correct errors but also to socialize learners into the discursive practices of academic and professional communities. However, the labour-intensive nature of traditional WCF methods renders them an unsustainable burden in contexts with high student-teacher ratios, often leading to a critical feedback gap that impedes L2 writing development (Kang, 2020; Zhang & Hyland, 2022).

This challenge is acutely evident in the higher education landscape of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states. In Bahrain, rapid massification has led to a substantial surge in student enrolment without a commensurate increase in teaching faculty, resulting in large class sizes where providing individualized feedback is logistically impractical (Alhassan, 2021; Khan, 2021). Consequently, a discernible gap exists between educational output and market needs, as graduates often lack the sophisticated written communication skills demanded by the workforce (Al-Madani & Al-Saadi, 2019; Gulf Talent, 2020). This underscores an urgent imperative to explore alternative, scalable feedback methodologies. One promising alternative is model-text-based WCF, which provides learners with an expert-written exemplar. Grounded in Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, this approach facilitates learning through comparison and scaffolding. However, while research has begun to explore its efficacy on writing outcomes, a critical dimension remains underexplored: the learner's perspective. Specifically, there is a notable scarcity of research on L2 learners' perceptions of this method's practicality and effectiveness in constrained, large-class environments, particularly in the GCC context, where cultural educational traditions may influence its reception (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2021).

This study therefore aims to investigate Bahraini higher education L2 learners' perceptions of the practicality and effectiveness of model-text-based WCF in large-class persuasive writing contexts. Understanding these perceptions is fundamental, as learner beliefs and attitudes are powerful mediating variables that influence the ultimate impact of any instructional strategy. The findings are intended to offer robust, evidence-based guidance for curriculum design and pedagogical practice in under-resourced, large-class environments within the Gulf region and analogous international settings.

The research objectives are to:

1. Compare learner perceptions of model-text-based WCF delivered before writing (as a pre-task guide) versus after writing (as post-task feedback).
2. Identify the specific aspects of model texts (e.g., usefulness, relevance, noticeability, practicality) that are perceived most favorably.
3. Explore the qualitative reasons behind learners' perceptions to understand the cognitive and affective mechanisms at work.

The study is guided by the following research question: What are Bahraini higher education L2 learners' perceptions of the practicality and effectiveness of model-text-based WCF in large-class persuasive writing contexts?

By employing a comprehensive mixed-methods approach, this research aims to provide a holistic account of the acceptability and perceived utility of model-based feedback. The findings are intended to offer robust, evidence-based guidance for curriculum design and pedagogical

practice in under-resourced, large-class environments within the Gulf region and analogous international settings. This study concludes that the timing of model-text delivery is a critical pedagogical factor, with post-task models being perceived by learners not as a mere compromise, but as a superior and empowering feedback strategy in large-class contexts.

Literature Review

The Practical Dilemma of WCF in Large-Class Contexts

Extensive literature affirms the significant value of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) for L2 writing development (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Ferris, 2010). Feedback helps learners test hypotheses about the target language, notice errors, and restructure their interlanguage systems. However, providing effective, consistent feedback remains a daunting challenge for instructors globally. Traditional WCF methods—such as direct correction, error codes, or detailed comments—are immensely time-consuming and cognitively demanding. For an instructor managing 100-200 students, providing detailed feedback on a single assignment can require dozens of hours of labour outside of teaching duties (Ferris, 2020; Cavanaugh & Song, 2024). This unsustainable burden often forces instructors into a triage approach, providing rushed, generic, or limited feedback that reduces its pedagogical value for individual learners.

In the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, this challenge is exacerbated by regional factors. First, the rapid massification of higher education has led to dramatically increased enrolment without a proportional increase in faculty or resources (Al-Sobhi, 2020; Barakat & Al-Khatib, 2022), resulting in larger class sizes and higher teaching loads. Second, many students enter university with notably varying and often insufficient levels of English language proficiency despite having studied English for years in public school systems (Barnawi & Al-Hawsawi, 2017; Al-Khazi, 2021). They frequently exhibit particular and persistent weaknesses in writing—a skill requiring intensive, individualized support (Al-Wadi, 2020; El-Soufi & Hu, 2023). Consequently, instructors are caught between the high demand for quality writing instruction and the impossibility of meeting it through conventional means. Recent empirical work continues to validate these challenges, particularly in under-resourced contexts. A study by Cavanaugh and Song (2024) quantitatively linked large marking loads directly to instructor burnout, demonstrating that the burden of traditional WCF is not just logistical but has significant professional and personal costs, forcing a re-evaluation of sustainable feedback practices. Reports and studies published recently continue to underscore the persistence of this issue. For instance, research by Al-Harbi (2023) and a regional education audit (Gulf Educational Policy Center, 2024) confirm that large class sizes and the associated feedback deficit remain a primary concern for writing instructors across the GCC, reinforcing the continued urgency for scalable solutions.

Common coping strategies are problematic. Peer feedback can be unreliable due to varying proficiency levels and limited meta-language (Teng, 2019; Zheng & Yu, 2022). Whole-class, generic feedback on common errors lacks the crucial individualization necessary to address specific learner needs and may be ignored by students who do not perceive it as relevant (Lee, 2021). This significant gap creates a critical need for innovative, pedagogically sound, and logistically feasible feedback strategies that can be deployed at scale.

Model-Text-Based WCF: Theory and Application

Model-text-based WCF represents a paradigm shift from error correction to exemplar-based learning. A model text is a carefully crafted, high-quality sample response that demonstrates

the target features of a specific writing task, including organizational structure, rhetorical moves, genre conventions, and language use (Coyle & de Larios, 2014; Johnson, 2021). Its theoretical underpinnings are robust, drawing from two key areas of SLA research.

First, Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis provides a cognitive rationale. It argues that conscious attention to linguistic form ("noticing") is necessary for input to become intake for learning. When learners compare their output to a model, they engage in "noticing the gap" (Swain, 1985), making specific linguistic and rhetorical features salient. This prompts them to identify discrepancies and internalize the correct forms exhibited in the model (Hanaoka & Izumi, 2012). This active comparison leads to deeper cognitive processing than the passive receipt of corrections.

Second, from a sociocultural theory perspective (Vygotsky, 1978), the model text serves as scaffolding within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). It provides a concrete illustration of successful performance, allowing learners to access appropriate strategies, language, and patterns used in the model and eventually employ them independently, thus supporting the transition from other-regulation to self-regulation (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006).

Crucially, the pedagogical timing of the model text delivery is theorized to significantly influence these cognitive and social processes. From a cognitive perspective, a model is likely to be more salient when provided after a learner has attempted the task. Having just grappled with the writing process, the learner possesses a concrete mental representation of their own output and its associated problems, thereby creating an optimal state of "readiness to notice" the gap (Schmidt, 1990). From a sociocultural standpoint, a post-task model functions as more targeted and responsive scaffolding. It is offered at the precise "teachable moment" within the learner's ZPD—when they are most aware of their need for support—thereby potentially leading to more effective appropriation of the model's features than when it is presented as a pre-task blueprint.

Empirical studies on the use of model texts have yielded consistently promising and encouraging results. Regionally, for instance, research has demonstrated their effectiveness in improving the writing performance of Arab EFL learners (Al-Jarrah & Al-Ahmad, 2019). More broadly, studies have shown that they can be particularly effective in promoting the uptake and use of sophisticated lexical phrases and collocations (Hanaoka, 2007), improving overall writing quality and fluency (Kang, 2020; Zheng, 2023), and address both overt (e.g., grammar) and covert (e.g., coherence) writing problems (Hanaoka & Izumi, 2012). Importantly, a model text differs from reformulation; it provides a parallel, alternative text rather than a corrected version of the student's own work. This allows learners to see different ways of expressing ideas without devaluing their original effort, presenting options rather than a single "correct" version.

The efficacy of model texts has been further solidified and nuanced by recent high-impact research. A robust meta-analysis by Lu and Liu (2022), published in Studies in Second Language Acquisition, confirmed that model texts have a significant, positive overall effect on L2 writing, particularly in enhancing syntactic complexity and fluency. Their findings underscore the method's value while noting that its impact on grammatical accuracy can be more variable, highlighting the need to understand mediating factors. Crucially, recent studies have moved beyond simply proving effectiveness to investigating critical implementation variables. Most notably, Zheng (2023), in a study published in Reading and Writing, provided direct evidence that the timing of the model is a key determinant of its success, with post-task models leading to greater gains in argumentative essay quality than pre-task models. This finding provides a clear empirical foundation for the present study's experimental design. Further refining our understanding, Li and Yuan (2024) investigated the role of proficiency, finding that model-text comparison was particularly

beneficial for developing the syntactic complexity of intermediate-level learners, suggesting its strategic value can be optimized for specific learner profiles.

Despite its promising advantages, the use of model texts is not without potential criticisms. Some scholars and practitioners express concern that an overreliance on exemplars could potentially stifle learner creativity and voice, leading to homogenized output or a culture of memorization and superficial replication rather than genuine writing development (Johnson, 2021). There is a risk that learners might view the model as a prescriptive template to be copied, rather than a guide for underlying principles. Furthermore, the effectiveness of model texts may be limited if students lack the metacognitive skills to conduct a meaningful comparison. This study acknowledges these valid concerns and posits that they are not inherent flaws of the method itself, but are often issues of implementation. The central hypothesis here is that the timing of the model's delivery is a critical factor that can mitigate these risks. Providing the model after a learner's initial attempt may preserve creative effort and personal voice during the drafting stage, while framing the model as a tool for targeted revision and gap-noticing, thereby reducing the tendency toward passive copying and promoting a more active, analytical engagement.

However, the empirical landscape is not entirely unanimous. While many studies report positive outcomes, others note that the effects of model texts can be variable and contingent on specific factors. Some research indicates that improvements may be more pronounced in areas like lexical complexity and fluency, with more muted or inconsistent effects on grammatical accuracy (Lu & Liu, 2022; Tieu & Baker, 2022). Furthermore, the majority of these studies have prioritized measuring quantifiable changes in writing output, often overlooking the learner's internal perspective. This focus on product over process leaves a gap in understanding why and under what conditions model texts are most effective. By investigating learner perceptions, this study seeks to illuminate the cognitive and affective mechanisms behind model-text efficacy, helping to explain these conflicting results and identify the contextual factors that maximize their impact.

The Critical Role of Learner Perceptions

The success of any pedagogical intervention is profoundly influenced by how it is perceived and engaged with by learners. Research into learner perceptions of feedback has consistently demonstrated that students value feedback that is clear, specific, actionable, timely, and delivered in a supportive manner (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Ferris, 2010; Winstone & Boud, 2022). This is corroborated in the GCC context; for example, studies in Saudi Arabia have found that learners hold clear perceptions and preferences regarding the feedback they receive (Ahmed & Pathan, 2020). However, perceptions vary based on cultural background, proficiency, prior experiences, and feedback timing.

Crucially, timing is a significant factor. Feedback provided after a task may be more salient because learners can immediately relate it to their recent performance and struggles within a concrete, personal context (Shintani & Ellis, 2020). A post-task model can thus serve as an immediate "answer key" for self-assessment. In contrast, a model provided before writing may be perceived as a prescriptive template or ideal to aspire to. Learners may not fully engage with its features because they have not yet encountered the specific challenges the task presents (Coyle & de Larios, 2014). This potential difference in perception based on timing is a central focus of the current study.

Despite its importance, there is a distinct lack of research exploring how L2 writers in Arab Gulf contexts perceive model texts as a feedback tool. Cultural learning styles that emphasize

knowledge transmission from expert to novice (teacher-centred learning) could influence how students receive a tool designed to promote autonomous comparison and self-discovery (Ahmed & Pawluk, 2023). This is especially pertinent in cultural contexts like the GCC, where educational traditions may emphasize knowledge transmission, potentially influencing how students receive a tool designed to promote autonomous comparison and self-assessment. Research by Barnawi and Al-Hawsawi (2017) on the Bahraini context specifically notes the prevalence of teacher-centered classrooms, suggesting that students might initially be unfamiliar with the autonomous learning processes that model-text comparison requires. Furthermore, a study by Al-Shurafi (2021) found that Yemeni EFL learners exhibited a strong preference for direct, explicit feedback from the teacher, indicating that the reception of indirect feedback methods like model texts cannot be assumed and must be empirically investigated. Adding to this, research from a similar Gulf context in Oman by Al-Zubaidi and Al-Maamari (2022) underscores the complex interplay between feedback methods and learner engagement, highlighting that students' uptake of feedback is deeply influenced by their perceptions of its value and relevance. Understanding these perceptions is an essential prerequisite for successfully implementing this strategy in Bahraini classrooms, ensuring it is not only effective in theory but also accepted, valued, and used effectively by its intended beneficiaries.

Understanding these perceptions is an essential prerequisite for successfully implementing this strategy in Bahraini classrooms, ensuring it is not only effective in theory but also accepted, valued, and used effectively by its intended beneficiaries. Understanding these perceptions is an essential prerequisite for successfully implementing this strategy in Bahraini classrooms, ensuring it is not only effective in theory but also accepted, valued, and used effectively by its intended beneficiaries. This call is echoed in contemporary feedback literature, which increasingly frames perception as a cornerstone of feedback literacy and engagement. As Zhang and Hyland (2022) argue in Assessment and Evaluation in Higher Education, for feedback to be effective, students must perceive it as usable and relevant; otherwise, it is likely to be ignored. Similarly, Winstone and Boud (2022) emphasize that the sustainability of any feedback process depends on students' willingness and ability to act upon it, which is fundamentally shaped by their perceptions.

In summary, while the logistical imperative for scalable WCF in large GCC classes is well-documented, and the theoretical and empirical foundations for model-text-based WCF as a promising solution are increasingly robust, a critical gap persists. Existing research has predominantly focused on the products of learning—measuring improvements in accuracy, complexity, and fluency (e.g., Kang, 2020; Lu & Liu, 2022; Zheng, 2023). However, the process of learning, specifically how learners themselves perceive and engage with this tool, remains underexplored. This is a significant omission, as learner perceptions are a powerful mediating variable that ultimately determines the uptake and success of any pedagogical intervention (Zhang & Hyland, 2022). This gap is particularly acute in the GCC context, where cultural and educational norms may shape how students respond to a method designed to foster autonomous comparison over direct knowledge transmission. Therefore, this study seeks to address this gap by asking: What are Bahraini higher education L2 learners' perceptions of the practicality and effectiveness of model-text-based WCF in large-class persuasive writing contexts? By centering the learner's voice, this research aims to ensure that model-text-based WCF is not only theoretically sound and empirically effective but also perceived as relevant, usable, and empowering by its intended beneficiaries.

Method

Research Design

This study employed a concurrent embedded mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). In this design, both quantitative and qualitative data are collected in a single phase, with the quantitative data as the primary strand and the qualitative data playing a supportive, explanatory role**.** For this study, the primary strand was quantitative, consisting of a perception questionnaire designed to measure attitudes on a Likert scale, providing breadth and generalizability. The secondary, **qualitative** strand was embedded within the intervention and consisted of written reflective notes from participants. The purpose of the qualitative data was to provide depth, nuance, contextual richness, and specifically to explain the quantitative findings, helping to illuminate the underlying reasons, motivations, and thought processes behind the participants' numerical ratings and overall perceptions (Ivankova & Creswell, 2009). This approach allows for methodological triangulation, enhancing the validity, reliability, and comprehensiveness of the findings by ensuring that the limitations of one method are compensated by the strengths of the other.

Context and Participants

The study was conducted at a large public university in the Kingdom of Bahrain, a context representative of the massification trends common in GCC higher education. Participants were 60 first-year undergraduate students (34 male, 26 female) enrolled in a compulsory "English Communication Skills B" course, a foundational module taken by students across various faculties. Their ages ranged from 18 to 20 years (Mean = 18.4). All participants were multilingual native speakers of Arabic, with English being their primary foreign language of instruction. Their general English proficiency level was uniformly set at CEFR B2 (Upper-Intermediate), as determined by the institution's mandatory Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT) administered upon university entry. This homogeneity in proficiency helped control for variability that could confound the results related to perceptions.

Using intact classes to maintain ecological validity and minimize disruption to the existing curriculum and timetabling, participants were non-randomly assigned into two groups. While random assignment is ideal, using intact groups is a common and practical approach in educational research that preserves the natural classroom setting:

- *Control Group (CG, n=30):* This group received a model text *before* writing their first persuasive essay (pre-task condition). This represents a more traditional, instructional use of models as exemplars or templates to guide writing, a common practice in many writing classrooms.
- *Experimental Group (EG, n=30):* This group received the identical model text *after* writing their first essay and were then explicitly guided to compare their own draft to the model (post-task condition). This represents the innovative, interventional use of models as reflective feedback tools for analysis and revision.

Institutional ethical approval was obtained prior to the commencement of the study from the university's Research Ethics Committee. Informed consent was secured from all participants after the nature of the study, procedures, potential risks, and benefits were explained in detail. They were advised of their right to withdraw at any time without penalty and were assured of the complete anonymity and confidentiality of their data throughout the research process and in any subsequent publications.

Intervention and Data Collection Instruments

The Intervention Procedure

The study unfolded over three structured sessions within a regular two-week teaching module, ensuring minimal disruption to the scheduled curriculum. The core of the intervention was the differential timing of the model text presentation. The persuasive writing tasks required students to write a 300-350 word, five-paragraph essay arguing a position on a given contemporary topic relevant to their experiences (Task A: "People should read for pleasure"; Task B: "Social media has destroyed communication among friends and family"). The model text was a professionally written, high-quality exemplar (rated as CEFR C1 level) responding to Task A's prompt, demonstrating strong organization, coherence, sophisticated argumentation, and accurate language use. It was carefully designed to be aspirational yet achievable.

1. *Session 1 (Week 1):*
    - *Control Group (CG):* (a) Received and analytically read the model text for the upcoming task (Task A). The instructor highlighted its key features (thesis statement, topic sentences, supporting details, transitions, conclusion). (b) Wrote reflective notes based on a structured prompt about what they learned from the model. (c) Subsequently completed Writing Task A (Pretest) on the same topic.
    - *Experimental Group (EG):* (a) Completed Writing Task A (Pretest) on the topic without any prior exposure to a model text. (b) Wrote reflective notes on the difficulties and challenges they faced during the writing process.
2. *Session 2 (Week 2):*
    - *Control Group (CG):* No study-related activity was conducted for this group during this session to maintain equivalent time-on-task across groups.
    - *Experimental Group (EG):* (a) Received their original, unmarked draft of Task A back. (b) Received the model text as the sole form of feedback and engaged in a 20-minute guided comparison activity using a worksheet that prompted them to find differences in introduction, vocabulary, linking words, and conclusion. (c) Wrote reflective notes on the specific differences they noticed and their implications.
3. *Session 3 (Week 2):*
    - *Both Groups:* (a) Completed Writing Task B (Post-test), a new persuasive essay on a different but parallel topic ("Social media has destroyed communication...") to assess any potential for transfer of learning. (b) Immediately afterwards, completed the online Perception Questionnaire via Google Forms, reflecting on their experience with the model text they received.

Data Collection Instruments

1. *Perception Questionnaire:* This was the primary quantitative instrument. It was a self-report 5-point Likert scale survey (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree) administered online for ease of data collection and analysis. The questionnaire was meticulously designed based on key constructs derived from previous seminal studies on feedback perceptions (e.g., Ferris, 2003; Lee, 2021; Winstone & Boud, 2022) and was validated through a process of expert review by two applied linguistics professors and pilot testing

with a separate group of 15 students (not part of the study). It contained 20 items systematically grouped into four key themes, with five items per theme:

- *Perceived Usefulness (5 items):* e.g., "The model text helped me understand how to improve my writing," "I learned new writing strategies from the model."
- *Perceived Relevance (5 items):* e.g., "The features in the model text were directly applicable to my own writing," "The model addressed problems I actually had."
- *Noticeability of Features (5 items):* e.g., "I was able to easily notice differences in vocabulary between my writing and the model," "The differences in organization were clear to me."
- *Practicality in Large Classes (5 items):* e.g., "This method is a practical way to get feedback in a large class where the teacher is busy," "This kind of feedback could be useful for other students."
  The wording was slightly adapted for each group to reflect their experience (e.g., "The model provided *before* writing..." for CG; "The model provided *after* writing..." for EG). Cronbach's alpha for the overall questionnaire was .89, indicating excellent internal consistency and reliability.

2. *Reflective Notes:* This was the primary qualitative instrument. Participants wrote their responses in English or Arabic to structured prompts on a provided sheet to ensure comfort and encourage depth of understanding and expression. The prompts were designed to elicit perceptions specific to the timing of the model:
   - *Control Group Prompts (Session 1, Post-Model, Pre-Writing):* "What did you learn from looking at the model text? Please list 3-5 specific things you didn't know or weren't sure about before that are now clearer. How do you think this model will help you in your own writing?"
   - *Experimental Group Prompts (Session 2, Post-Writing, Post-Model Comparison):* "Please compare your own essay (Task A) to the model text. What specific differences did you notice? Please list errors you found in your writing or things you really liked and found effective in the model. What did you learn from this comparison?"

Data Analysis

A sequential analytical approach was employed, where the quantitative and qualitative datasets were treated and analysed separately before being integrated for a comprehensive interpretation.

- *Quantitative Analysis:* Questionnaire data were exported and analysed using SPSS Statistics (Version 29). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies) were calculated for each of the four perception themes and for the overall perception score for both groups. The primary inferential test used was an Independent Samples t-test to compare the mean perception scores of the control and experimental groups, testing the hypothesis that the timing of the model delivery would lead to significantly different perceptions. The assumptions of normality (Shapiro-Wilk test) and homogeneity of variances (Levene's test) were checked and met. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was also conducted as a supplementary check to ensure that any observed differences were not attributable to other extraneous factors. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen’s *d* to determine the practical significance and magnitude of the findings,

with values of 0.2, 0.5, and 0.8 conventionally indicating small, medium, and large effects, respectively.

- *Qualitative Analysis:* Reflective notes were transcribed verbatim to ensure accuracy. Notes written in Arabic were translated into English by a bilingual research assistant fluent in both languages and familiar with the academic context, and all translations were subsequently cross-checked by the author for accuracy, nuance, and meaning by a second bilingual researcher. The translated data were analysed using a thematic analysis approach following the rigorous six-phase framework outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarizing with the data through repeated reading, (2) generating initial codes across the entire dataset, (3) searching for broader themes by collating codes, (4) reviewing and refining potential themes, (5) defining and naming themes with clear essences, and (6) producing the final report with vivid extract examples. An inductive (data-driven) approach was prioritised to code the data, allowing themes and patterns to emerge organically from the participants' own responses and language rather than being imposed by pre-existing theories or frameworks. NVivo 12 software was used to assist in managing, storing, and systematically coding the qualitative data, enhancing the organization and auditability of the analysis.

Results

Quantitative Results

The independent samples t-test revealed statistically significant differences between the Control Group (CG) and Experimental Group (EG) on all four perception constructs, with the EG consistently reporting more positive and favourable perceptions. The results, summarized in Table 1, show a clear and strong effect of the intervention timing.

Table 1. *Independent samples t-test results for perception scores of control and experimental group*

Theme	Group	N	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	Cohen's d
Usefulness	CG	30	3.70	0.59	-4.12	.001	1.07
	EG	30	4.35	0.49			
Relevance	CG	30	3.45	0.69	-5.88	.001	1.52
	EG	30	4.48	0.51			
Noticeability	CG	30	3.75	0.64	-3.01	.004	0.78
	EG	30	4.25	0.55			
Practicality	CG	30	3.55	0.71	-3.95	.001	1.02
	EG	30	4.30	0.57			
Overall	CG	30	3.61	0.62	-5.01	.001	1.29
	EG	30	4.32	0.48			

Note: CG = Control Group; EG = Experimental Group; All p-values are significant at $p < .01$. SD = Standard Deviation.

The differences in mean perception scores between the CG and EG across all constructs are visualized in Figure 1. As illustrated in the figure, the visual analysis clearly underscores the quantitative findings from the t-tests. The experimental group (EG) consistently reported higher mean perception scores across all four constructs compared to the control group (CG). The most pronounced visual disparity is observed in the 'Relevance' construct, where the EG's mean score approaches the maximum of the scale, indicating that students who received the model text after writing found it highly pertinent to their own work. This is followed by substantial gaps in 'Usefulness' and 'Practicality,' visually reinforcing the idea that the post-task model was not only seen as more beneficial but also as a more feasible feedback solution. The smallest, though still notable, difference is in 'Noticeability,' suggesting that while both groups could identify features in the model, the process held more meaning for the EG, a nuance that will be explored in the qualitative analysis.

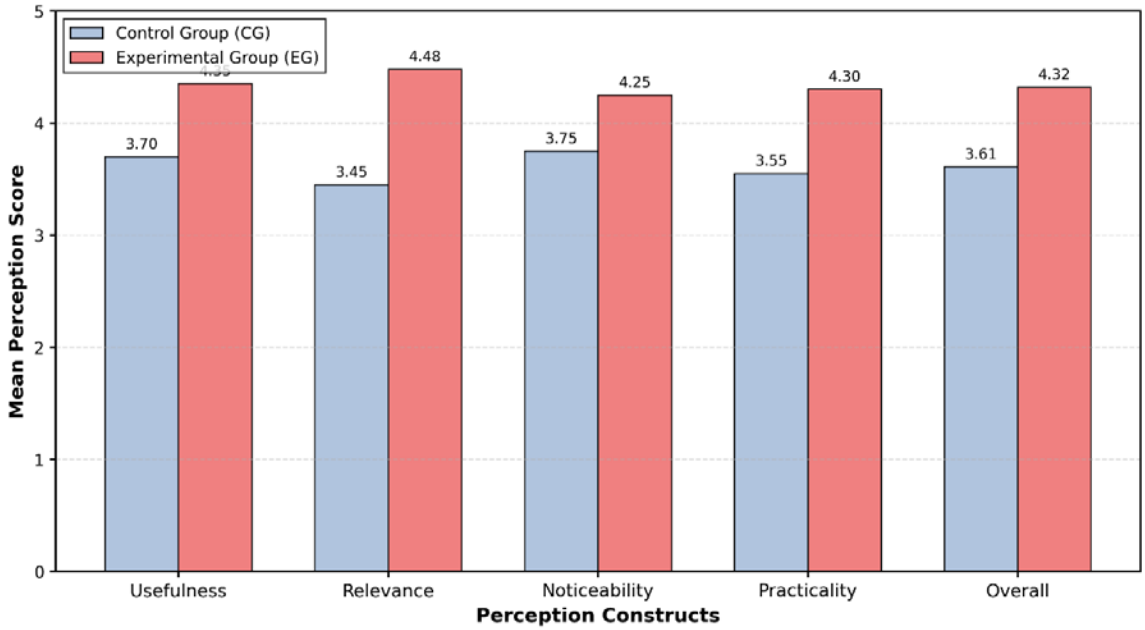


Figure 1. Mean perception scores on a 5-point Likert Scale for control and experimental groups

The practical significance of these differences, indicated by Cohen's d, is presented in Figure 2 below, which presents the effect sizes for the perception gaps between the groups. The values, all exceeding 0.78, indicate medium-to-large practical effects. Most striking is the very large effect size for 'Perceived Relevance' (d = 1.52). This quantifies the profound impact that feedback timing has on how personally applicable and directly useful students find the model text. The large effect sizes for 'Usefulness' (d = 1.07) and 'Practicality' (d = 1.02) further demonstrate that the post-task model is not just statistically better, but substantially more impactful from a pedagogical standpoint. The 'Noticeability' effect size (d = 0.78), while the smallest, still represents a medium-to-large effect, confirming that the intervention meaningfully enhanced the students' ability to discern and focus on key writing features.

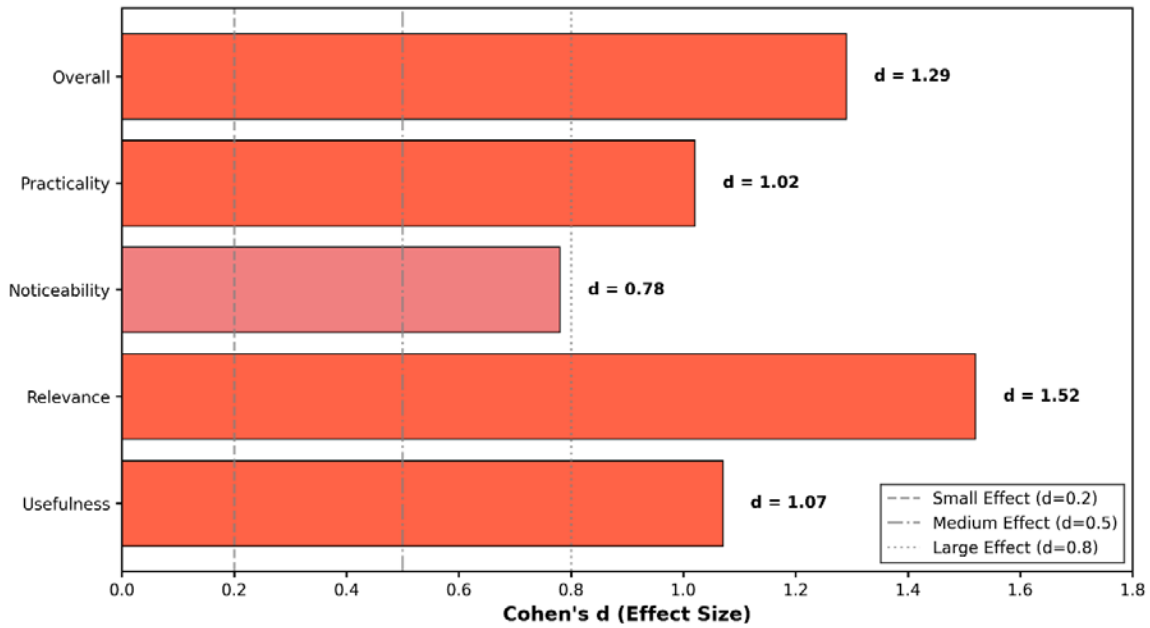


Figure 2. Effect sizes (Cohen's d) for differences in perception scores between experimental and control group

The data show a clear and pronounced effect. The largest difference was observed in Perceived Relevance (Mean CG=3.45 vs EG=4.48; Cohen's *d* = 1.52), which represents a very large effect size. This indicates that students who received the model *after* writing found its content, features, and lessons far more directly applicable and pertinent to their own work and their specific writing challenges. The differences in Perceived Usefulness (*d* = 1.07) and Practicality (*d* = 1.02) also represent large effects, suggesting that the post-task model was seen as a more beneficial and feasible feedback tool. The smallest, though still substantial and statistically significant, difference was in Noticeability (*d* = 0.78, a medium-to-large effect). This suggests that while both groups were generally able to identify features in the model, the EG found this process more meaningful, engaging, and directly linked to their own writing needs. The ANOVA confirmed that these differences were not attributable to other factors such as gender or initial proficiency.

Qualitative Results

Thematic analysis of the reflective notes provided profound, rich insights into the underlying reasons and lived experiences behind the stark quantitative results. Four main themes emerged, vividly illustrating the starkly different experiences and perceptions of the two groups.

Theme 1: Cognitive Engagement: From General Observation to Targeted Problem-Solving.

The reflective notes from the EG were characterized by specific, precise, and problem-oriented language. Students used the model text actively as a diagnostic tool to identify and solve precise problems they had personally encountered and struggled with during the writing process. Their comparisons were detailed and analytical.

- *"In my conclusion, I just repeated my introduction in different words. It was weak. The model's conclusion was different; it summarized the two main points again and then gave a strong final opinion that made me think. I saw that my way was weak and I know how to fix it now."* (Student EG12)
- *"I used the word 'important' three times in my essay. I knew it was wrong but I had no other word. The model used 'crucial', 'significant', and 'valuable'. I noticed I need a bigger vocabulary for arguing and I wrote these words down to use next time."* (Student EG07)
- *"I had a problem with the flow between my first and second reason. It was jumpy. The model used 'Firstly' and 'Furthermore'. I only used 'and'. Now I see how to connect ideas properly."* (Student EG22)

In stark contrast, the CG notes were more general, vague, and observational. They often listed features they saw in the model without connecting them to a personal writing challenge or a specific plan for application. The learning appeared more passive.

- *"The model has good grammar and no mistakes."* (Student CG04)
- *"I learned some new words from the model like 'compelling' and 'perspective'."* (Student CG18)
- *"The essay has five paragraphs and an introduction."* (Student CG11)

Theme 2: Metacognitive Development and Ownership of Learning.

EG participants frequently expressed a sense of discovery, agency, and self-driven improvement. The act of comparing their own product to an expert model fostered metacognitive awareness—the ability to think critically about their own thinking and writing processes, to self-assess, and to plan for future improvement.

- *"It was like discovering mistakes by myself. I didn't need the teacher to circle them for me. I found them myself and because I found them, I know how to fix them now for next time. It feels like my own learning."* (Student EG29)
- *"Comparing myself showed me my own level clearly. I can see exactly what I don't know and what I need to work on. This is much better than just getting a grade from the teacher because I understand why."* (Student EG17)

CG responses largely lacked this dimension of critical self-evaluation and ownership. Their learning was framed more passively, as receiving information and rules from an external authority rather than actively constructing understanding through engagement.

- *"The model showed me the correct way to write this essay."* (Student CG14)
- *"I will try to remember and write like the model next time."* (Student CG25)

Theme 3: Perceived Utility: Feedback vs. Template.

This theme directly explains the very large quantitative difference in "Perceived Relevance." The EG universally described the model as feedback—a responsive, informative, and actionable resource that provided answers to their specific queries.

- *"This is the best feedback I got. It is clear and shows the answer. I can understand exactly what I should have done in my essay. It's like a key for my writing."* (Student EG05)

The CG, however, often described the model as a template or ideal example to be mimicked or memorized, which some found intimidating, prescriptive, or disconnected from their own abilities.

- *"It is a good example, but it is too perfect. The sentences are very long and the words are difficult. I cannot write like this, it is for a native speaker."* (Student CG19)
- *"It is useful to see a sample answer before writing to know what the teacher wants."* (Student CG08) - This was a common, albeit less enthusiastic, sentiment, viewing the model as a specification of task requirements rather than a feedback tool.

Theme 4: Practicality in the Reality of Large Classes.

Both groups acknowledged the practicality of the method compared to the status quo of minimal feedback, but their framing and enthusiasm differed significantly. The EG framed it positively as an effective and empowering solution.

- *"Our teacher has 180 students in his sections. It is impossible for him to correct everyone's essay every week. This way, everyone can check their own work at the same time and learn. It is a smart solution for a big problem."* (Student EG10)

The CG framed it more cautiously as a necessary compromise or a fallback option in the absence of preferred teacher feedback.

- *"It is better than getting no feedback at all from the teacher, which is what usually happens."* (Student CG21)
- *"It is practical for the teacher because it saves time, but I still prefer personal comments on my paper from the teacher because he knows my mistakes."* (Student CG27)

Discussion

The integrated results of this study present a compelling, consistent, and nuanced narrative: the timing of model-text-based WCF delivery is not a minor logistical detail but a critical pedagogical factor that profoundly influences L2 learners' perceptions of its value, relevance, and practicality. The experimental group, which engaged with the model *after* the cognitively demanding process of completing the writing task, perceived it as a significantly more useful, relevant, and practical form of feedback than the control group, which received the model *before* writing. This finding holds significant implications for theory and practice.

This clear divergence in perception can be powerfully explained through the lens of cognitive readiness and salience, which directly operationalizes the theoretical frameworks discussed in the literature review. For the experimental group, the model text arrived at what Tharp and Gallimore (1988) would term a 'teachable moment,' perfectly aligning with the conditions for learning described by Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis. They had just navigated the complex cognitive processes of writing, making them acutely aware of the problems they had faced. The post-task model, therefore, served as a key to a lock, providing immediate, salient solutions. This process of 'noticing the gap' (Swain, 1985) was not an abstract exercise but a concrete, personally relevant comparison, leading to the highly positive perceptions of the feedback's utility. Furthermore, from a sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) perspective, the post-task model functioned as perfectly timed scaffolding within the learners' ZPD. It was offered not as a pre-determined blueprint, but as responsive support at the precise moment of need—after the learners had defined the boundaries of their own current ability—thereby facilitating a more effective transition from other-regulation to self-regulation**.**

A potential alternative explanation for the more positive perceptions in the experimental group could be the simple fact that they engaged with the task twice—first by writing and then by comparing—whereas the control group's engagement was more singular, focused on analyzing the

model before writing. While this is an inherent characteristic of the post-task design, it is not merely a confounding variable but rather the very mechanism that makes the method effective. The act of writing first creates a cognitive and experiential "slot" for the feedback to fill. The subsequent comparison is not a separate engagement but a targeted, problem-solving activity directly scaffolded by the initial struggle. This 'double engagement' is therefore a fundamental feature of the post-task method, as it is what generates the personal investment that transforms the model text from a static exemplar into a dynamic feedback tool. This finding directly addresses the potential criticism, noted in the literature review, that model texts could promote passive memorization or stifle creativity (Johnson, 2021). By ensuring the students' initial drafting phase was free from the model, their creative and personal voice was preserved. The subsequent comparison was then framed not as a prescription to copy, but as a resource for diagnosis and improvement. This implementation strategy mitigates the risk of homogenized output and instead fosters the active, analytical engagement that critics argue is essential for genuine writing development. The control group's single engagement, while focused, lacked this crucial preparatory struggle that makes noticing and uptake more personally meaningful.

For the control group, the model text, while well-intentioned as a scaffold, functioned predominantly as a pre-task exemplar. Without the prior experience of struggling with the task's specific demands, students lacked the necessary contextual framework and personal investment to fully appreciate the targeted solutions the model offered. The features highlighted in the model (e.g., "strong thesis statement," "varied discourse markers") were perceived as general, decontextualized characteristics of a good essay—a checklist to remember—rather than as answers to specific, felt problems. Consequently, their noticing was inevitably more superficial, and their perception of the model's relevance was significantly lower. It was often seen as a template to be emulated, which can sometimes induce anxiety, a sense of prescriptiveness, or feelings of inadequacy (as noted by CG19), rather than as a tool for self-discovery and autonomous improvement.

The strong agreement on practicality, particularly from the experimental group, holds major importance for educational policy in the GCC and directly responds to the regional challenges outlined in the literature review. In the constrained reality of large-class teaching in Bahrain—where Alhassan (2021) and Khan (2021) documented the pressures of massification—the study suggests model-text-based WCF is not a 'second-best' alternative. Instead, from the learners' perspective, it is perceived as a superior, empowering strategy. This finding is particularly significant given the regional research, such as that by Ahmed and Pathan (2020) and Al-Shurafi (2021), which highlighted student dissatisfaction with insufficient feedback and a stated preference for direct teacher correction. The fact that students in this study perceived the post-task model so positively indicates its potential to overcome initial cultural preferences for traditional methods by providing a form of feedback that is both immediate and perceived as highly relevant. It effectively democratizes feedback, ensuring all students have simultaneous access to a high-quality, detailed reference point for self-assessment and learning, regardless of the instructor's time constraints (Abas & Aziz, 2024; Zheng, 2023). This addresses the core logistical problem head-on and ingeniously transforms it into an opportunity to foster the learner autonomy and self-regulation that are central goals of higher education (Boud & Molloy, 2013).

Conclusion

This study provides clear and compelling evidence that Bahraini L2 learners perceive model-text-based Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) as a highly practical and effective feedback mechanism. However, the findings introduce one crucial, non-negotiable caveat: its perceived value and profound pedagogical impact are maximized only when the model is provided after students have attempted the writing task themselves. This temporal distinction is not a minor logistical detail but the very core of the strategy's success, fundamentally shaping the learner's interaction with the exemplar.

The post-task timing acts as the essential catalyst that transforms the model from a static, pre-determined exemplar into a dynamic, responsive, and powerful feedback tool. By engaging in the arduous process of composition first, students become acutely aware of their own linguistic and rhetorical limitations. When the model is then introduced, it arrives at this critical 'teachable moment,' dramatically enhancing the salience of its features. This process actively fosters targeted noticing and deeper metacognitive engagement, as learners are guided to conduct a forensic comparison between their output and the expert model. Consequently, this method empowers students, moving them from a position of passive reception to active diagnosis, enabling them to take authentic ownership of their learning by identifying and addressing their own specific needs.

Ultimately, within the constrained reality of large-class contexts—where traditional, personalized feedback is often a logistically impossible ideal—this method is validated by the learners themselves. It is not perceived as a mere compromise or a second-best alternative to teacher feedback. Instead, the qualitative data reveals that students view post-task model texts as a relevant, immensely useful, and indeed indispensable pedagogical strategy. Its significant advantage lies in its dual alignment: it is firmly grounded in established cognitive learning theories, such as the Noticing Hypothesis and sociocultural theory, while simultaneously meeting the pressing practical demands of modern massified higher education in the Gulf region and beyond.

Implications

The findings of this study carry significant, actionable implications for various stakeholders in L2 education:

- *For L2 Writing Instructors:* Teachers should move beyond using model texts solely as pre-writing examples. They should strategically (and perhaps primarily) integrate them into their pedagogy as a post-writing feedback tool. This involves designing guided, structured activities (e.g., comparison worksheets, coding exercises) that prompt students to systematically compare their drafts to the model, identify specific differences in organization, argumentation, and language use, and articulate what they learn from this process. This practice promotes autonomy, reduces dependency on the teacher as the sole source of feedback, and makes feedback cycles more sustainable.
- *For Curriculum Designers and Teacher Trainers:* Professional development programs and curriculum materials should explicitly train instructors on the effective use of model-based feedback as a core strategy, not just an add-on. This includes training on how to create banks of annotated model texts for different genres, proficiency levels, and tasks, highlighting specific features for comparison. It also involves developing ready-made lesson plans and activities that focus on comparative analysis and metacognitive reflection. In the GCC region and similar contexts, promoting and scaling this method can be a key

strategy for maintaining high standards of writing instruction and providing meaningful feedback in the face of relentlessly growing student numbers (Barakat & Al-Khatib, 2022).

- *For Institutional Policy and Administration:* University administrators, department heads, and policy makers need to recognize, legitimize, and actively support the adoption of such scalable and evidence-based pedagogical practices. This could involve providing resources, time, and perhaps even minor funding for developing shared model-text libraries and digital repositories across departments. It also means acknowledging in workload models the time required for instructors to create these high-quality materials, even though they save considerable time in the long term by drastically reducing the burden of individual marking (Cavanaugh & Song, 2024).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study, while robust, has several limitations that also point toward fruitful avenues for future research. First, it was conducted with students at a specific proficiency level (CEFR B2); perceptions and effectiveness might differ among beginners (A1-A2) who might struggle more with comprehension of the model, or among more advanced learners (C1) who might engage with it more critically. Second, the focus was exclusively on the persuasive essay genre; future research should investigate perceptions and outcomes across different academic and professional genres (e.g., laboratory reports, research abstracts, business emails, narratives). Third, the study measured perceptions immediately after the intervention; longitudinal studies are needed to see if these positive perceptions are sustained over a full semester or academic year and to directly link perceptions to long-term writing development outcomes.

Specific future research avenues could include:

- Investigating the differential impact of combining model texts with brief, focused teacher-led debriefing sessions to reinforce noticed gaps.
- Exploring the role of technology and digital tools (e.g., screen capture software, digital annotation tools, adaptive learning platforms) in delivering model texts and facilitating more interactive comparison and analysis (Smith et al., 2024).
- Conducting a more granular analysis of which specific linguistic or rhetorical features (e.g., vocabulary vs. grammar vs. organization) are most easily noticed, valued, and subsequently acquired by learners through the model-text comparison process.
- Replicating the study in different cultural and institutional contexts to test the generalizability of the findings.

Despite these limitations, this study makes a valuable contribution to the fields of L2 writing pedagogy and applied linguistics by centrally placing the learner's voice and subjective experience at the heart of the evaluation of a practical pedagogical solution. It provides a robust evidence base for the wider adoption and strategic implementation of model-text-based WCF in the exact contexts where it is needed most.

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Appendices

Appendix A

Writing Task A (Pretest)

Duration: One Hour

"People should read for pleasure."

Write an essay (300-350 words) discussing the statement above. Use the following points and support them with specific examples from your own experience.

- *reading expands knowledge*
- *reading provides fun and improves imagination*
- *reading expands vocabulary and enhances fluency*

……
……

Appendix B
Writing Task B (Post-test)
Duration: One Hour

"Social media has destroyed communication among friends and family."

Write an essay (300-350 words) discussing the statement above. Use the following points and support them with specific examples from your own experience.

- *social media negatively affects communication*
- *social media distracts us from people who are with us*
- *social media can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts*

……
……
……
……
……

Appendix C
Control Group Questionnaire

Directions:
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by selecting the appropriate number.
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Section	Question No.	Item	
A. Demographic Data		Full Name	
		ID	
		Age	
		Gener	
		Faculty	
		Mother Tongue Language	
B. Perceived Effectiveness of Model-Based WCF Provided Before Writing	1	The model text provided was helpful in organizing my ideas before writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	2	The model text made it easier for me to start writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	3	Using the model text before writing helped me understand correct language usage specific to persuasive writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	4	I felt more confident writing after seeing the model text. 1 2 3 4 5	
	5	Studying the model text before writing improved my understanding of how to structure a persuasive essay.	
C. Noticing and Awareness	6	The model text helped me notice specific grammatical structures that needs to be used in my persuasive writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	7	I became more aware of the organization and structure of persuasive writing after studying the model text.	

		1 2 3 4 5
	8	The model text helped me identify vocabulary errors which I could avoid in my writing. 1 2 3 4 5
	9	Reviewing the model text helped me identify areas where my writing could be more coherent. 1 2 3 4 5
	10	Using the model text increased my awareness of sentence variety and complexity. 1 2 3 4 5
	11	The model text helped me recognize correct language usage that I was not previously aware of. 1 2 3 4 5
D. **Engagement with Feedback**	12	While writing, I frequently applied the knowledge I gained from the model text. 1 2 3 4 5
	13	The model text motivated me to structure my essay more carefully. 1 2 3 4 5
	14	I found it easy to apply the knowledge gained from the model text into my own writing. 1 2 3 4 5
	15	I prefer using model texts over other types of feedback. 1 2 3 4 5
	16	I enjoy writing more after using a model text. 1 2 3 4 5
E. **Attitudes and Preferences**	17	Using the model text before the writing task made me feel more prepared. 1 2 3 4 5
	18	The model text helped reduce my anxiety about writing in a Second Language. 1 2 3 4 5
	19	I would like to continue using model texts in future writing tasks. 1 2 3 4 5
	20	Overall, I am satisfied with the feedback provided by the model text. 1 2 3 4 5

Link on Google Form https://forms.gle/qBbYubkF6Jj3jh5h9

Appendix D
Experimental Group Questionnaire

Directions:
Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements by selecting the appropriate number.
Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree 2 = Disagree 3 = Neutral 4 = Agree 5 = Strongly Agree

Section	Question No.	Item	
A. Demographic Data		Full Name	
		ID	
		Age	
		Gener	
		Faculty	
		Mother Tongue Language	
B. Perceived Effectiveness of Model-Based WCF Provided After Writing	1	After seeing the model text, I could easily compare it to my own writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	2	The model text helped me understand how to improve my writing after the first draft. 1 2 3 4 5	
	3	The feedback from the model text was more useful than traditional teacher corrections. 1 2 3 4 5	
	4	Using a model text after writing improved my understanding of correct language usage specific to persuasive writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	5	I feel that my writing has improved as a result of comparing it with a model text. 1 2 3 4 5	
C. Noticing and Awareness	6	The model text helped me notice specific grammatical errors in my own writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	7	I became more aware of the organization and structure of a persuasive essay after comparing my own writing with the model text. 1 2 3 4 5	
	8	I was able to avoid making the same mistakes in my revised draft after using the model text. 1 2 3 4 5	
	9	Using the model text increased my awareness of sentence variety and complexity. 1 2 3 4 5	
	10	The model text highlighted correct language usage that I was not previously aware of. 1 2 3 4 5	
D. **Engagement with Feedback**	11	While revising my writing, I frequently applied the knowledge I gained from the model text. 1 2 3 4 5	
	12	The model text motivated me to make more careful revisions. 1 2 3 4 5	
	13	I found it easy to apply the feedback from the model text into my own writing. 1 2 3 4 5	
	14	I felt more confident revising my own writing when comparing it with the model text.	

		1 2 3 4 5
	15	I prefer using model texts over other types of feedback. 1 2 3 4 5
E. **Attitudes and Preferences**	16	I enjoy writing more after using a model text. 1 2 3 4 5
	17	Using a model text after the writing task made me feel more confident about my revisions. 1 2 3 4 5
	18	The model text helped reduce my anxiety about making errors in my writing. 1 2 3 4 5
	19	I would like to continue using model texts for feedback in future writing tasks. 1 2 3 4 5
	20	Overall, I am satisfied with the feedback provided by the model text. 1 2 3 4 5

Link on Google Form https://forms.gle/kFemhzi9ZVQVL7sB7