

Arab ESL Secondary School Students' Attitude Toward English Spelling and Writing

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Abstract

Learners' attitude is considered a key motivational component and an important nonlinguistic factor that influences second-language learning. The primary aim of the current study is to explore Arab secondary school students' attitudes toward English spelling and writing. To collect the data, a 52-item attitude questionnaire was administered to 70 Arab students studying English as a second language (ESL) in the Saudi School in Malaysia. The questionnaire comprises two scales: (a) attitudes toward English spelling and (b) attitudes toward writing in English that includes four writing purposes: (a) School Use, (b) Social Use, (c) Official Use, and (d) Creativity. The findings of the study revealed that the Arab ESL secondary school students have a high positive attitude toward English spelling and writing. The findings also indicated that the students' attitude toward the Social Use of English is the highest, whereas their Creativity in writing is the least mean among the four purposes. In addition, the study revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between the students' attitude toward spelling and writing. The findings suggest that English literature, that is, stories and literary activities, should be integrated in the curriculum to develop the students' creativity in ESL writing. The study also recommends that other studies may investigate Arab students' spelling error analysis as well as address other important aspects of writing such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing.

Keywords

attitude, Arab students, ESL context, English spelling, writing

Introduction

Attitude is considered a complicated notion to describe. Therefore, different definitions have been put forward by various researchers to explain it. Allport (1954), for instance, describes attitude as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response toward all objects and situations with which it is related” (p. 45). Ajzan (1988) suggests that attitude is “a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event” (p. 4). According to Al Mamun, Rahman, Mahbuber, and Hossain (2012), attitude is “a hypothetical psychological construct which defines or promotes certain behaviours and explains their direction and persistence” (p. 201). Accordingly, attitude is an evaluative reaction inferred on the basis of the individual's positive or negative feelings, beliefs or opinions about any particular topic (Gardner, 1985).

In language learning, Brown (2007) describes attitude as a set of beliefs that a learner holds toward the target language whether it is important, interesting, boring, and so forth. Well-known psychology and language scholars such as

Gardner and Lambert (1972), Dörnyei (1994, 2005, 2010), Bartram (2010), and Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) assert that attitude is a crucial motivational ingredient, which actively contributes to learning another language. The most extensive research into the role of attitude and motivation in second-language acquisition has been carried out by Gardner and Lambert (1972) who published several articles to investigate the influence of attitudes and motivation on second-language achievement. Their findings revealed that a learner with a positive attitude and high level of motivation will be successful in developing language proficiency and vice versa. In this way, learner's repeated success leads to the development of favorable attitude to the L2, whereas his failures and frustrations cultivate unfavorable attitudes toward it. Thus, unless the learner has the positive attitude toward what he is doing,

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his performance will probably not represent his best (Kundu & Tutoo, 2011).

Baker (1988) proposes some major characteristics of attitudes. He claims that attitudes are cognitive, affective, and dimensional rather than bipolar, that is, they vary in degree of favorability and unfavorability. He also declares that attitudes predispose a person to act in a certain way, but the relationship between attitude and actions is not a strong one. Attitudes also tend to persist but they can be modified by experience. Baker concludes that attitudes are learnt not inherited or genetically endowed. According to Ellis (1994), language learners show different attitudes toward (a) the target language; (b) target language speakers; (c) target language culture; (d) the social value of learning the L2; (e) particular uses of the target language, such as a skill; and (f) themselves as members of their own culture.

In spite of the extensive research done on Arab English as a foreign language (EFL) students' general attitude toward English language in the Arab World, there is hardly a comprehensive study undertaken to examine the attitudes of the Arab English as a second language (ESL) students toward English spelling and writing. In fact, English spelling is regarded by many language teachers and practitioners as a daunting and perplexing written activity that should be given special attention (Ahmad, 2013; Al-Bereiki & Al-Mekhlafi, 2016).

Moreover, the major difference between Arabic and English orthographic system is also a fundamental issue among Arab EFL learners. This difference seems to pose a number of problems for an Arab learner of English, for he is expected know the Roman alphabet and use them effectively in spelling words in English. To begin with, unlike the English script, which is written from left to right with upper and lower cases, Arabic is written from right to left and has no upper and lower cases distinction. In addition, whereas Arabic is a phonetic-based language, that is, words are written as they are pronounced, English is not. In this light, such a lack of correspondence between sounds and letters in English may confuse an Arab learner of English and may spell English words incorrectly. Accordingly, many Arab EFL learners would find English spelling a difficult skill but must be mastered. Bearing this in mind, this study, thus, focused on Arab ESL secondary school students' attitude toward English spelling and writing in an ESL context, where English is used widely as a second language.

The main aim of the study is to examine the attitudes of the Arab secondary school students toward English spelling and writing, with a focus on the following three objectives:

1. To explore the Arab ESL students' attitudes toward English spelling.
2. To explore the Arab ESL students' attitudes toward English writing.
3. To investigate the relationship between the students' attitude toward spelling and writing in English.

Literature Review

This section introduces the concepts of spelling and writing in English, and briefly outlines the challenges that Arab students of English encounter when learning how to spell and write in English. The section concludes with some previous studies.

Spelling in English

Hodges (1984) defines spelling as "a process of converting oral language to visual form by placing graphic symbols on some writing surface" (p. 1). Nahari and Alfadda (2016) describe spelling as "the ability to produce words, orally or in a written format, by positioning letters in a precise order" (p. 3). Spelling is considered one of the essential literacy skills and writing components that enables readers understand the written message clearly. Writing a message, for example, a text, note, letter, and proposal, with incorrect spelling can lead to misunderstanding and unsuccessful communication between the writer and the readership. Thus, learning to spell words accurately is of great importance to language learners. In fact, spelling indicates the writer's mastery of language, and good spelling creates a favorable impression about his academic position. Peters (2013) emphasizes that spelling contributes very effectively to a young learner's self-concept because it gives him status and knowledge that enable him to communicate adequately in writing.

In addition to its importance in writing, spelling plays a pivotal role in reading skill as it contributes to reading fluency and reading comprehension. Researchers such as Moats (2006), Ritchey (2008), and Mesmeh (2012) indicate that there is a correlation between spelling and reading skills. Johnson (2013) asserts that a major factor in reading fluency and reading comprehension lies in students' ability to spell words correctly. The reason for such a strong relationship is that the mastery of reading and spelling depends on the students' awareness of phonology as well as their knowledge of letter-to-sound correspondences (Mesmeh, 2012). Accordingly, students who are good readers are usually good spellers and vice versa (Johnson, 2013).

Staden (2010) states that learning to spell involves a number of language abilities including phonological and visual skills, awareness of morphology and semantics, and knowledge of spelling rules. Accordingly, the student's ability to identify and use the sounds structures as well as his understanding of internal word structure, that is, suffixes and prefixes, help him spell out English words correctly. In addition, a student should acquire some semantic knowledge especially of those words that look or sound quite similar, namely, homophones and homographs. Besides, correct spelling requires a student to possess good visual memory to compare the shape of the new word with a similar word learnt previously (Mpiti, 2012). This indicates that a student's spelling ability is not a result of a mere memorization effort, but is a

skill that develops gradually and improves over time (Gentry, 2000).

Despite its importance, English spelling instruction is given scant attention in the EFL context especially at secondary stage (Ahmad, 2013; Al-Bereiki & Al-Mekhlafi, 2016). This could be one of the primary causes that makes many Arab learners consider English spelling a challenging and difficult written task to perform. In fact, a pile of research conducted in the Arab World indicated that Arab students commit grievous spelling errors when they write in English. Studies on spelling error analysis like Lahad (2007); Al-Jarf (2010); El-Dakhs and Mitchell (2011); Alhaisoni, Al-Zuoud, and Gaudel (2015); and Albalawi (2016) revealed that there are a number of factors that contribute to the Arab students' poor spelling. These factors include the differences between Arabic and English writing systems, L1 negative transfer, lack of instruction, and insufficient knowledge of spelling rules.

In comparison with English language, Arabic spelling is considered phonetic because there is a connection between its phonemes and graphemes. On the contrary, English spelling has been described as nonphonetic and irregular due its lack of correspondence between its phonemes and graphemes (Albalawi, 2016). Such inconsistency and irregularity create difficulty and confusion for Arab students when they learn how to spell out English words, especially those containing vowels. An example of this is the phoneme /i:/ that can be represented with different graphemes <e, ea, ee, ei, ie> as in *be*, *each*, *see*, *receive*, and *piece*, consecutively. In addition, words such as *psychology*, *light*, *climb*, and *know* are also regarded perplexing and difficult to master because they contain silent letters, a phenomenon that rarely exists in Arabic (Al Jayousi, 2011).

Writing in English

Writing is considered one of the indispensable means of communication through which people can express their personal thoughts, ideas, and beliefs about a certain situation. According to Nunan (2003) writing skill is "a process of thinking to invent ideas, thinking about how to express into good writing, and arranging the ideas into statement and paragraph clearly" (p. 88). Consequently, learning to write well in a second language has always been described as an exacting task for second-language learners as it follows a nonlinear, generative process including planning, drafting, revising, editing, and so forth (Hyland, 2004). In this way, writing requires good knowledge of skills and strategies that enable L2 writers compose a clear and well-developed paragraph. However, research proposes that second-language writing skills cannot be solely acquired by practice in writing, but it needs to be supported with extensive reading (Hyland, 2004). In addition to what has been mentioned, the students' attitude is regarded as an important nonlinguistic factor that affects L2 writing and leads to either success or failure in any writing task.

Despite the scant studies in the literature on learners' attitude toward writing, researchers such as Graham and Harris (1989), Bruning and Horn (2000), Graham (2007), and Kotula, Tivnan, and Aguilar (2014) found that there is a positive relationship between the writing process and the learners' attitudes toward writing. Thus, students who display positive attitude toward writing are more likely to write more than those who have negative attitude (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1995). Leable (2014) observed that "a child's attitude can play a central role in the writing process and can affect their motivation and ability to write, and it can have an influence on writing ability through its impact on cognitive engagement" (p. 3). Similarly, Hashemian and Heidari (2013) revealed that the students' attitude toward writing in English language is one of the principal factors that may influence second-language writing. Thus, it could be interpreted that one way to improve second-language students' writing skill and their possible positive attitudes toward writing in English is to gradually eliminate their negative thinking.

Related to this, Faruq (2014) reviewed a bulk of attitude studies toward English, which were conducted in the last two consecutive decades, the 1990s and 2000s. He reported that during the 1990s most Saudis had low motivation for learning English language. However, the studies conducted in 2000s showed a clear sign of the Saudis' positive attitude toward English. He explained that the change in Saudis' attitude toward English and English language teaching can be due to the transformation of Saudi Arabia's political and economic conditions. This is consistent with the many recent studies carried out to investigate the Arab EFL students' attitude toward English language such as Al Noursi (2013), Al Asmari (2013), Alkaff (2013), Ahmed (2015), Tanni (2015), Al samadani and Ibnian (2015), and Khan (2016).

Al Noursi (2013) conducted a study to identify the attitudes of the UAE students at Applied Technology High School toward learning the English language. A questionnaire was used to collect data from 196 students. The findings showed that the vast majority of the respondents of the study had positive attitudes toward learning the English Language.

In the same vein, Al Asmari (2013) scrutinized the attitudes of Saudi freshmen studying at Taif University toward various dynamics of English language teaching/learning process. The data were drawn from randomly selected 176 freshmen undergraduates who responded to a 5-point scale attitude questionnaire. The study revealed that the students exhibited positive attitudes toward English language, native speakers, and the culture of English-speaking countries indicating that they bear intrinsic motivational orientations along with strong extrinsic ones. The findings also revealed that the students preferred to have intensive practice of the target language instead of simple memorization.

Similarly, focusing on the attitudes and perceptions of Saudi students studying at King Abdulaziz University, Alkaff

(2013) collected data using an attitude questionnaire from 47 female students. The findings of the study showed that most students had positive attitudes toward learning English and that they tried to improve their English and to use the language even though there were a lot of demands on their time and few opportunities to practice their English.

In another study, Ahmed (2015) investigated female rural students' attitudes toward learning English. Data were gathered from a sample of 90 female rural students of two high schools located in two Moroccan villages. The study aimed to identify whether they held a positive or negative attitude toward learning English and to specify the variables that shaped their attitudes. The students were randomly selected to fill in a 5-point Likert-type scale questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that the students demonstrated strong preference to study English rather than other foreign languages at high school. They displayed high motivation and frequent classroom participation in the English class. In addition, the students had a strong desire to improve their English communicative competence, and positive social value of a person who speaks English.

In a study that focused on another EFL context, Tanni (2015) probed Palestinian university students' attitudes toward English language in Al-Quds Open University. A 30-item attitudinal questionnaire was administered to 70 male and 110 female students. The results of the study revealed that most of the students in Al-Quds Open University had positive attitudes toward English regardless of their specialization or academic level. Moreover, the attitude of females toward English is more positive than the attitude of males.

On a slightly different stance, Al samadani and Ibnian (2015) explored the attitudes of Umm Al-Qura University students toward learning English language and examined the relationship between the students' attitudes and their grade point average (GPA). An attitude questionnaire was administered to 112 English major students. The findings of the study revealed that the students had overall positive attitudes toward learning English language. The findings also indicated that students with high GPAs had the highest positive attitudes toward learning English, followed by those with medium GPAs, and finally, those with low ones.

Khan (2016) investigated the attitudes of Saudi students at Jeddah Community College toward learning English and explored the relationship between the students' attitude and their achievement in English. The findings of the study revealed that the students generally do not possess positive attitude toward learning English. The study also revealed that the poor background of English, the fear of making grammatical mistakes, and lack of confidence and peer support lead to less performance. The study indicated that there is a positive correlation between the students' attitude toward learning English and their language proficiency. The study concluded that the positive attitude toward learning target language matters a lot.

Method

Participants of the Study

This study involved 70 Arab secondary school students studying at the Saudi School in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, an ESL context. The school has more than 400 students coming from different Arab countries such as Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, and Syria. Students from the secondary level were selected based on the importance of their GPA, which is considered an essential entry requirement for any university. As far as language ability is concerned, a short English language test was administered to measure the students' proficiency. The test revealed that the students had an intermediate level of English that assists them in communicating clearly with others.

Data Collection

A 52-item attitude questionnaire (as shown in the appendix) was designed to collect data for the current study. The questionnaire comprises two scales: (a) attitudes toward English spelling that contains 18 items and (b) attitudes toward writing in English with 34 items distributed among four subscales, that is, purposes, with 10 items for (a) School Use and eight items for each of the other subscales, (b) Social Use, (c) Official Use, and (d) Creativity. The descriptive statistical procedures were used to analyze the data.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

The validity of the questionnaire was verified by a panel of English language experts who thoroughly discussed and reviewed its instructions as well as all the items to ensure their relevance, clarity, and coherence. Pearson correlation coefficients of the subscales of the questionnaire and the total scores were also computed, which revealed a range of coefficients between .299 and .864. In addition, the reliability of the questionnaire was assessed by the level of its reliable coefficient through the use of Cronbach's alpha, which was .958. This indicates the high reliability of the questionnaire. To facilitate the comprehension of the items, the original version of the questionnaire was translated into Arabic, the students' mother tongue, by two adept translators. The translated version of the questionnaire was also piloted before the actual administration to determine the reliability of the instrument.

Results and Discussion

As mentioned previously, the current study attempts to explore the Arab ESL students' attitudes toward English spelling and writing skills as well as to investigate the relationship between the students' attitude toward spelling and writing in English. To achieve these main objectives, a

52-item attitude questionnaire was designed and addressed to 70 Arab secondary school students. This section presents and discusses the result of the study.

Students' Attitudes Toward Spelling

The primary aim of the 18 spelling items is to explore the students' attitude toward spelling. The items include different areas related to English spelling such as the importance of spelling, the student's perceptions and confidence about themselves as spellers, and the challenges that the students encounter while spelling out English words such as silent letters. The items also include other topics like the students' performance on spelling tests, the use of English dictionaries, and spell-check programs. The results of this study showed that the Arab ESL students' overall attitude toward English spelling is positive ($M = 3.11 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.79$). Table 1 shows the three uppermost items in terms of the values of mean and standard deviations.

Table 1 displays the three uppermost means of the students' attitude toward spelling. First, the item "The more I write, the more my spelling improves" has the highest means ($M = 3.60 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.73$) among all the other spelling attitude items. This shows that majority of the students have positive attitude toward English spelling, and they believe that constant practice of writing could improve their spelling performance. Furthermore, the item "Knowing the spelling rules helps me to spell out many words" is the second highest item ($M = 3.57 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.69$). This indicates that the students realize that English spelling rules are worth learning because of their importance in writing. As a matter of fact, knowing the spelling rules such as the inflectional suffixes <-s, -ed, -ing> helps the students avoid spelling errors and guide them to the correct spelling (Alkhuli, 1997, 2004; Carney, 1994; Seaton, 2001). Finally, the item "Spelling is important" is third highest among all the spelling items ($M = 3.56 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.69$). This suggests that most students appreciate the importance of English spelling. Generally speaking, correct spelling is considered an indispensable ingredient of people's daily written communication and accurate spelling is a clear sign of language competence that leaves a mark on the status of language user (Parker, 1991).

Students' Attitude Toward Writing

As stated earlier, the students' attitude toward writing in English was measured by 34 items distributed among four subscales, with 10 items for (a) School Use and eight items for each of the other subscales, (b) Social Use, (c) Official Use, and (d) Creativity. The findings of the study revealed that the Arab ESL students' attitude toward the writing subscales was positive but with contrasting values of mean. On one hand, the students' attitude toward the Social Use of English is the topmost ($M = 2.91 > 1.99$ and $SD = 1.03$) followed by writing for Official purposes ($M = 2.77 > 1.99$ and

Table 1. The Three Uppermost Means of Students' Attitudes Toward Spelling.

Items	M	SD
The more I write, the more my spelling improves.	3.60	0.73
Knowing the spelling rules helps me to spell many words.	3.57	0.69
Spelling is important.	3.56	0.69

$SD = 1.00$). On the other hand, the students' attitude toward School Use was lower than the first two ($M = 2.62 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.89$) followed by Creativity in writing ($M = 2.45 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.90$), which was the lowest mean detected among the four subscales. Table 2 below shows the highest item in each writing subscale.

Table 2 indicates the uppermost means of the students' attitude toward the four subscales of writing skill. First of all, the findings revealed that Social Use of English was the highest ($M = 2.91 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.89$) among all the writing subscales. The item "I enjoy texting my family members and friends" has the uppermost means ($M = 3.24 > 1.99$ and $SD = 1.01$). The students' preference of writing for social purposes reflects that writing is of great importance for them to communicate with others and share what they write with their family members and friends. Accordingly, the students tended to be more involved in the social purposes of writing than official, school, and creativity purposes. This is consistent with Alshayee (2016) who states that writing for social purposes has utmost importance and most Arab ESL students have positive attitudes toward integrating social networking websites such as Facebook, Twitter, and writing blogs into their English writing classroom because they help improve their writing ability.

In addition, the results revealed that the students' attitude toward the Official Use of English was the second highest ($M = 3.77 > 1.99$ and $SD = 1.00$) in comparison with the other writing subscales. The item "Reading official texts helps them write a good application letter for university" has the top means ($M = 3.24 > 1.99$ and $SD = 1.01$). This exhibits that most students seem to feel that reading is a crucial constituent of writing. In other words, the students' adequate reading of official letters and documents can help them enhance their ability to write a good application letter to enter a particular university. In fact, reading to write is based on the belief that reading supports and shapes second-language learners' writing through acquisition of language input when a student is performing a reading activity (Tsai, 2006). Accordingly, reading is just as essential as writing and the work a learner produces will only become of high standard with reading.

The students' attitude toward School Use was lower than the Social and Official purposes of writing ($M = 2.62 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.89$). Table 2 also demonstrates that most students

Table 2. The Uppermost Means of Student's Attitude Toward Writing.

Subscales	Items	M	SD
Social Use	I enjoy texting my family members and friends.	3.24	1.01
Official Use	Reading official texts helps me write a good application letter for university.	3.14	1.07
School Use	I enjoy taking part in writing activities and competitions.	3.10	1.14
Creativity	When I write, I can support my topic with a lot of ideas.	2.87	0.99

“enjoy taking part in writing activities and competitions” at school ($M = 3.10 > 1.99$ and $SD = 1.14$). Taking part in writing activities, tasks, and contests can develop and improve the students' writing ability and increase correct English usage that assists them in their everyday communication.

Despite the students' high positive attitude toward all the writing subscales, the students' writing for Creativity had the lowest means ($M = 2.45 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.90$). In this respect, the item “When I write I can support my topic with a lot of ideas” had the uppermost mean value of Creativity ($M = 2.87 > 1.99$ and $SD = 0.99$). Many students feel that they can come up with various ideas to express themselves and convey their written work. This was supported by another item “I can make up short stories and poems” that could reflect that most students possess a good degree of creativity and imaginative ability.

Generally speaking, students' attitude toward writing plays a crucial role in the development of their writing ability. Graham et al. (2007) pointed out that there is a reciprocal relationship between learners' writing attitude and their writing achievement. In other words, writing attitude influences writing achievement, and vice versa. Similarly, Hashemian and Heidari (2013), and Kotula et al. (2014) also revealed that there was a positive relationship between learners' attitude and their writing outcomes.

Despite the Arab students' positive attitude toward the four purposes of writing (Table 2), research conducted on EFL/ESL writing has shown that Arab students, in general, encounter challenges when writing a composition in English. This could be attributed to the differences between English and Arabic writing systems, the students' inadequate knowledge of the writing process in the target language (e.g., content and organization) and lack of knowledge of writing mechanics, that is, spelling, punctuation, and capitalization. Thus, for ESL/EFL learners to develop their English writing skills and write a flawless essay, they are required to put in a considerable effort to widen their language knowledge, which would enable them to write well and express themselves clearly and correctly. In addition, learners need to possess a good range of vocabulary, which could be done through reading, for it would provide some input for writing and exposure to good writing practices. Accordingly, consolidate his writing via other language skills such as reading and also listening to English programs on television and radio and speaking. With positive attitude toward writing and

equipped with the necessary writing skills, Arab EFL learners would be able to overcome their writing problems, such as those related to spelling—a basic aspect of writing. In this light, it is therefore warranted to focus on the learners' attitude toward spelling.

The Relationship Between Attitude Toward Spelling and Writing

To examine the relationship between the students' attitudes toward English spelling and writing, the Pearson correlation coefficient was computed.

Table 3 demonstrates that the Pearson correlation coefficient between the students' attitude toward spelling and writing in English language was $r = .583$. This indicates that there is a significant positive correlation between the students' attitude toward the two skills. This result reveals that students who have a positive attitude toward English spelling also have a positive attitude toward writing, which is indeed promising. This is consistent with earlier findings (Rankin, Bruning, & Timme, 1994; Rankin, Bruning, Timme, & Katkanant, 1993), which revealed that students' attitude and perception about spelling and writing as well as their beliefs about themselves as spellers related strongly to their actual spelling and writing performance. Graham et al. (2007) pointed out that there is a reciprocal relationship between the students' writing attitude and their achievement. In other words, writing attitude seems to influence writing achievement, and vice versa. Although the findings of this study revealed positive correlation between students' attitude toward spelling and writing, there is no evidence to claim that good spelling contributes to enhanced writing performance. Thus, this needs to be taken into consideration and warrants further investigation, for if there is a significant correlation between spelling and writing achievement, then spelling must not be regarded as something trivial, but must be given greater emphasis in the EFL learning classroom in Saudi Arabia.

Based on the aforementioned findings, the current study has the following implications. As suggested by the findings of the study, writing and spelling in English are essential skills and should be taken into consideration while teaching Arab students to enhance their spelling accuracy and writing ability. In fact, the lack of spelling teaching and the absence of spelling skill from the curriculum, especially

Table 3. Spelling and Writing Attitude Relationship.

Pearson correlation	.583**
Significance (2-tailed)	.000
N	70

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

at secondary level, could have negatively affected the students' ability to spell words correctly as well as their attitude toward spelling. In other words, students may ignore spelling and regard it as an insignificant skill due to its absence from their textbooks. Al Jayousi (2011) revealed that spelling instruction does not often take place in the English teachers' classrooms, and the time devoted to spelling instruction is hardly adequate. In light of this, Arab ESL/EFL students should also be exposed to correct English pronunciation, phonics, and the different rules of English spelling and their exceptions. As far as writing is concerned, teachers should expose students to different writing types (e.g., descriptive, argumentative, etc.) as well as writing purposes in different contexts, such as official and social. Besides, teachers should provide students with greater opportunities to be involved in the process of writing, that is, in activities such as brainstorming, revising, and editing, whereby meaningful peer and collaborative writing can be experienced with the writing instructor becoming the facilitator. In this manner, the students would be more responsible learners and pay attention to their writing, focusing on details such as spelling and other pertinent aspects of writing.

Conclusion

The two principal objectives of the current study are to examine the Arab ESL secondary school students' attitude toward spelling and writing and to identify the relationship between attitude toward spelling and writing among the Arab ESL students. The findings of the study revealed that the students had positive attitude toward English spelling and writing skills, which reflects the students' awareness of the importance of spelling and writing. As far as spelling is concerned, the students believe that spelling is an essential literacy skill to learn, which can be improved by continuous exposure to writing exercises and tasks. The students also believe that learning spelling rules enhances their spelling accuracy. In regard to the students' attitude toward writing, the results showed that the students gave high priority for the social purposes of writing, which suggests the students' preference for everyday written social interactions, such as writing letters to family members and friends or sharing their thoughts and opinions via social media, for example, Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, and so on. In fact, the students' inclination toward social purposes

of writing is not surprising as they live in a context where English is actively spoken as a second language. The findings of the study also revealed that the correlation between the attitudes toward spelling and writing was significantly positive, which is encouraging. In this light, English instructors may find the task of enhancing Arab ESL students' writing less challenging as their attitudes toward both spelling and writing are positive. It is recommended that further research explores students' attitudes toward English spelling and writing and the relationship between them in an EFL context, for example, in Saudi Arabia, where English is merely used as a school subject. It is also important that English literary texts and activities be incorporated in the current curriculum to develop the students' creativity, which, in turn, would help them compose better pieces of writing.

In addition, the study recommends that other studies focus on Arab students' spelling error analysis to investigate their types as well as causes. In fact, error analysis studies would be beneficial, for they can provide researchers with information about the nature of language learning process. Moreover, identifying learners' errors can help teachers and curriculum designers in the preparation of EFL/ESL syllabi, textbooks, and teaching resources. Future research can also address other important aspects of writing such as brainstorming, drafting, revising, and editing.

Every research, no matter how successfully planned and carried out, has certain limitations. Thus, it is possible that further research considers and addresses these limitations. Although the current study has revealed valuable findings about Arab ESL learners' attitude toward spelling and writing, it would have been more comprehensive if some other factors could have been taken into consideration. First, gender was not a considered variable in the study because of the gender-segregated policy in schools and universities, except for kindergarten. Thus, future studies could replicate the study by examining gender differences concerning students' attitude toward spelling and writing in both ESL and/or EFL contexts. Moreover, this study focused on Arab students in EFL and ESL secondary schools. Thus, these findings may not be generalized to Arab EFL students at other levels of education. To address this gap, future studies could examine whether students at higher institutions would show similar tendencies to those found in this study, which has implications for EFL learning prior to joining the workplace.

Appendix

Student's Questionnaire

Directions: Please indicate your opinion after each statement by choosing the number that best describes the extent to which you believe the statement applies to you.

1	2	3	4
Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

(A) Attitudes Toward English Spelling.

1. Spelling is important.				
2. I am a good speller.				
3. I am a weak speller because I don't like to write.				
4. I don't like other people to see what I have written because of my spelling errors.				
5. Getting 100% on a spelling test is luck, not ability.				
6. I have always struggled with spelling.				
7. Words that have silent letters are difficult to spell.				
8. Spelling is my favorite subject.				
9. Knowing the spelling rules helps me to spell many words.				
10. The more I write, the more my spelling improves.				
11. I always do well on spelling tests.				
12. There is no need to learn how to spell because there are computer programs which correct my spelling.				
13. To me, English spelling is more difficult than Arabic spelling.				
14. I always use a spell checker on my computer to check my spelling.				
15. When I write, I always can tell if a word does not look right.				
16. When I write, I always choose words I know I can spell.				
17. I always use a dictionary to check the spelling of unfamiliar words.				
18. After writing a sentence, I always check my spelling errors.				

(B) Attitudes Toward Writing in English.

School Use				
1. I like English writing classes.				
2. I write summaries of what I learn in my classes.				
3. I enjoy taking part in writing activities and competitions.				
4. I volunteer writing answers on the board if the teacher asks.				
5. I enjoy doing my written assignments and reports.				
6. I discuss what I write with my classmates.				
7. I feel confident when I sit for a writing exam.				
8. I believe I can get a high score in my writing exams.				
9. I read writings from various authors to improve my writing.				
10. My knowledge of English grammar and vocabulary does not help me to write well.				

(continued)

Appendix (Continued)

Social				
1. I enjoy writing letters to my family members and friends.				
2. I send written cards to invite my friends to social events.				
3. I enjoy texting my family members and friends.				
4. I keep in touch with others by texting and writing notes/letters.				
5. I feel comfortable sharing what I write with my family and friends.				
6. I communicate through e-mail often with my friends.				
7. I enjoy sending thank-you letters to my family members and friends.				
8. I write my personal opinion about things via social networking sites.				
Official				
1. I can write an official letter to (the school principal, teachers, etc.).				
2. I can write a letter or an e-mail to express my opinion about a topic.				
3. I can write a report about what I have heard or read.				
4. I feel confident when I write to my teacher.				
5. I wish I would write a weekly article in a newspaper or magazine.				
6. I do not feel comfortable when I write an official letter, e-mail, or report.				
7. Reading official texts helps me write a good application letter for university.				
8. Because of everyday informal English, I find writing using formal English difficult.				
Creativity				
1. I am a creative writer.				
2. I can make up short stories or a poem.				
3. When I write I can support my topic with a lot of ideas.				
4. Creativity is not necessary for writing an essay.				
5. When I write, I use similes, descriptive phrases, and idioms.				
6. I read stories, poems, and plays to develop my writing ability.				
7. I can express my thoughts and feelings in an imaginative way.				
8. I can attract the readers (my friends and family members) to my writings.				

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