A Preliminary Investigation of Writing Beliefs of Secondary School Arab Teachers of English and Arabic in Northern Region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract: No doubt that knowledge of language teachers' beliefs helps reveal how they conceptualize and approach their work. An unlimited number of researchers have probed into teachers' beliefs on teaching English writing skills. Yet, the role of first language teaching and learning beliefs and their influence on second language teaching and learning has not, to the best of the researchers' knowledge, been accorded due consideration in the study of teachers' beliefs, and how such L1 beliefs permeate into the teaching of English as a foreign language. To verify whether first language teaching beliefs creep into the teaching of English writing skills, the beliefs of two groups of Arab teachers of English and Arabic are examined in this study. It probes into the beliefs of Arabic and English language teachers of writing in the pre-university stage in the northern region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. It surveyed the beliefs of 28 Arab female and male teachers of Arabic and English on the nature of writing skills in English and Arabic. Preliminary results of this small scale study show that differences in beliefs are gender related, rather than inter-group differences. They also show more similarities in beliefs than differences. These could be attributed to the fact that the participants received their university education and gained their teaching experience in the same cultural environment, and had little or no knowledge of the standard ways of the writing process in English. Results point to the need for reeducating English language teachers as to the nature and requirements of writing skills in the English language. The study concludes with pedagogical recommendations and suggestions for future research.

Keywords: Teachers' Beliefs, Writing Skills, Local Educational Culture, Writing Practices in Arabic and English.

1. Introduction

Countless studies (e.g., Alnufaie and Grenfell, 2012; Dweik, & Abu Al Hommos, 2007; Friedlander, 1990; Hamidin, Mamat and Ahmad, 2014; Ismail, 2011; Javadi-Safa, Vahdany and Sabet, 2013; Ziahouseini, & Derakhshan, 2006; etc.) have attempted to identify and prescribe successful pedagogical practices, teaching methodologies and correlations between writing skills in the field of teaching English, Arabic and how L1 teaching practices may impact L2 No doubt that such studies have offered valuable insights to the field of teaching languages, and what may be good strategies for teaching the writing skills of those languages. However, focusing on teaching methodologies solely overlooks other dimensions of the learning process, namely the teachers' beliefs from a cross-language perspective; and the role teachers play in facilitating the learning process which influences students' performance. Teachers have a strong impact on "… how students learn, what they learn, how much they learn, and the ways they interact with one another and the world around them" (Stronge, 2007, p. ix).

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In the same vein, William and Burden (1997) note that teachers' beliefs, whether implicit or explicit, about learning, teaching, and learners have a profound effect on everything they do in the classroom "no matter what syllabus or coursebook they use" (p. 65). Although such assumptions have resulted in copious researches on teacher's beliefs (Brown, 2009; Horwitz, 1990; Kern, 1995; Schulz, 1996; Zakzak, 2016), there is, to the researchers' best knowledge, no across language study comparing the beliefs of English and Arabic language teachers in the context of teaching writing skills in the pre-university stage, secondary schools.

The need for such a study emanates from an attempt to juxtapose the two beliefs systems in search of similarities and/or mismatches. During the past four decades, a huge body of research has been conducted on the difficulties and challenges that Arab students encounter in tertiary level writing classes (Ismail, 2011). Some of the many reasons given for the problems that Arab students face are related to teachers' understanding of the nature of writing, since individual teachers have their own beliefs systems. Probing into English and Arabic teachers' beliefs about the teaching of writing skills is expected to shed light on similarities in teachers' approaches to the teaching of writing skills between the two languages, that may enhance the learning of these skills in the other language, and the differences that may make the students feel torn apart as a result of English and Arabic teachers simultaneously teaching the same students and exposing them to contradictory writing practices as a result of teachers' own beliefs.

This study, therefore, aims to investigate the beliefs of English and Arabic writing teachers using both quantitative and qualitative analyses in an attempt to find out whether they approach and perceive the teaching of writing skills in both Arabic and English classes in similar or different ways. In order to gain insights into Arabic and English teachers' beliefs about the teaching of writing skills in pre-university education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the questionnaire used for the collection of data

addressed teachers' beliefs on:

- The nature of writing in Arabic and English (writing as a process versus writing as a product, editing, contrastive rhetoric tips, relation between writing and other skills, brainstorming of writing topic before embarking on the writing activity, need for professional development, etc.),

- The learning and teaching of writing skills in Arabic and English (organization, mechanics, linking devices, appropriate vocabulary, language functions, etc.), and

- Teachers' teaching practices in teaching Arabic and English writing skills (peer editing, writing instructions and rubric, providing students with feedback, error correction, individual, pair and group writing activities, writing as a social activity, etc.).

2. Research Questions

This study investigates the beliefs of English and Arab language teachers in Saudi secondary schools regarding their conceptions of the nature of writing skills and classroom practices. It aims to find answers to the following questions:

1- What are the beliefs of English and Arabic language teachers on the nature of teaching writing skills?

2- To what extent do teachers of Arabic writing beliefs match the beliefs of English writing teachers?

3- How do the differences/similarities impact the teaching of English writing skills?

3. Significance of the Study

Results are expected to shed more light on whether Arabic and English language teachers' beliefs and conceptions of writing converge or diverge. Furthermore, comparing the points of agreement and/or disagreement between English and Arabic teachers' beliefs of teaching writing can provide practical insights into the field of teaching writing skills in the Saudi context. Moreover, investigating teachers' beliefs with regards to the teaching of writing can be used to improve the quality of teaching

(Moradia & Galareh, 2014). Brosh (1996) and Kuzborska (2011) state that knowing the beliefs of teachers helps develop appropriate language teacher preparation programs. This current study is conducted with the belief that writing is an activity embedded in a culture (Kaplan, 1966). Therefore, it is hoped that this research will contribute to a better understanding of writing teachers' rationale for using certain techniques for teaching English writing, especially in the Saudi context to explore why particular practices are employed by the writing teachers of Arabic and English in the classrooms. Additionally, it is crucial that EFL teachers and Arabic teachers are made aware of similarities and/or differences in the way writing is taught in the two distinct languages, English and Arabic. In conclusion, this study in line with Connor, Nagelhout and Rozycki's (2008) concept of intercultural rhetoric which considers the contexts in which writing is practiced.

4. Review of the Literature

Researchers (i.e., Kobayashi and Rinnert, 2008) believe that appropriate beliefs about writing in Arabic may result in good writing skills in English (Dweik and Abu Al Hommos, 207). According to Cummins (1984), there is an "underlying cognitive/ academic proficiency," which is interdependent across languages and results in the transfer of writing skills. In this regard, the study conducted by Dweik and Abu Al Hommos (2007) on Jordanian students to probe into the interdependence between writing skills in Arabic and English reports signs of positive transfer of writing skills upon examining the students' written compositions in the two languages. In another study in the Saudi context, Alsamadani (2010) examined tertiary students' argumentative essays in Arabic and English, and noted a strong correlation between the students' writing competence in Arabic and English. A similar study carried out by Zamel (1984, p. 198) points out that "L2 composing processes indicate that the L1 process-orientated writing instruction might also be effective for teaching L2 writing." Yet, contradictory results are also reported by Raimes (1987). He, based

on the results of a practical study, questions the transferability of L1 composition paradigm to L2 writing pedagogy. Along the same lines, Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, and Kuehn (1990) show weak correlations between L1 and L2. They (ibid) examined the writings of Chinese and Japanese ESL students and reported insignificant links between the students' writing skills in L1 and English. In short, the findings of the majority of these studies show more interrelatedness between L1 and L2.

All the above studies, both explicitly and implicitly, imply that L1 and L2 teachers of writing should consider more the common deep underlying writing skills in a way that they can be tapped into when learning a foreign language by drawing students' attention to what they have already acquired in their first language, and how to transfer these to second language writing context (Javadi-Safa, Vahdany and Sabet, 2013).

Based on the view that English and Arabic are two distant languages in terms of their writing systems, structure and directionality, this current study reckons that if Arabic and English language teachers' beliefs on writing in Arabic and English are interrelated, this could result in students taught by English language teachers holding same beliefs as teachers of Arabic to form mistaken perceptions of the nature of writing skills in English. Furthermore, the researchers tend to believe that if there is a strong interrelatedness between the practices of Arabic and English language teachers of writing, this should signal the need for reeducating English language teachers of writing in the appropriate techniques of teaching English language writing skills. In the following section, the literature on teachers' beliefs, and the role teachers' beliefs play in classroom practices is surveyed.

The concept of beliefs has become central to the teaching field (Brosh, 1996; Ismail, 2011)). English as a second language (ESL) writing teachers' learning experiences as writers of L1 or L2 are considered to have potential impact on their beliefs about the teaching of writing and the teaching practices employed in classrooms (Yigitoglu, 2011). Barcelos (2003) considers

beliefs as the knowledge that teachers possess about what constitutes effective teaching of writing based on their own experiences and social interactions. Belief, as described by Borg (2001) is, "a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual, and is therefore imbued with emotive commitment; further, it serves as a guide to thought and behavior" (p. 186). Another more practical definition of beliefs is the following:

Teachers' beliefs can generally be defined as firm opinions that are shaped by teachers' experience (personal and professional) and general knowledge, and that in turn becomes internalized to the extent of becoming subconscious knowledge, but that is actively influencing individuals' choices and practices (Bellalem, 2015, p. 94).

According to this definition, beliefs play a key role in guiding teachers' behaviors in learning environments. However, as argued by Yigitoglu (2011) and Phipps (2009), the extent to which teachers' beliefs and learning experiences correspond to their teaching of English writing varies depending on their learning of writing in L1 or L2. Research conducted in the past three decades has focused on exploring the beliefs of teachers in the teaching of grammar (e.g, Landolsi, 2011; Phipps, 2009), but only a few have focused on writing teachers' beliefs and their learning experiences in the Saudi context. This corroborates Connor's (1996, p. 116) concern that there should be studies "to investigate what good writing is in a given culture and how it is taught". Related to this is Zakzak's (2016) study in which she looked into the beliefs of tertiary writing instructors' and their students' on what makes an effective writing instructor. She concluded that instructors' personal characteristics, such as friendliness, light spirit, etc., are what students like most about writing instructors.

Research Methodology

Participants

The participants were 28 female and male Arabic and English language teachers in the secondary schools of the Arrar region in the north of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. They all speak Arabic as their first language, with a teaching experience ranging from less than 5 years to more than 10 years. More details on the respondents are given in the results section.

Questionnaire

This study utilized a questionnaire for data collection (see appendix). The questionnaire was designed to elicit the beliefs of English and Arabic language secondary schools teachers about writing. It comprised three main sections. The first elicited demographic information on the respondents, the second consisted of 23 statements, on a five-point Liker scale, targeting teachers' perceptions of writing practice, and the third addressed teachers' viewpoints of the components of the writing skill on a 3-point scale. The questionnaire items covered all teachers' beliefs gleaned from the literature on writing skills. The results are examined in light of variables such as teachers' gender, language taught, age, years of teaching experience, etc.

Procedures

Prior to administering the questionnaire, a request was submitted to the Saudi Ministry of Education to obtain approval for carrying out the research on English and Arabic teachers of writing in Saudi Secondary Schools in Arrar, in the north of the Kingdom, where the research was conducted. Second, a copy of the questionnaire was revised by a statistician for internal and external consistency before it was presented to a very small sample of the teachers for piloting. The final revised version was handed in person, by the first researcher, to the teachers in their school locations. They were given one week to complete the questionnaire and return it to the first researcher.

Data Analysis

To examine any similarities/differences between the beliefs of English and Arabic teachers, the data obtained from the questionnaire are analyzed at two levels. The first level is descriptive where teachers' responses are summarized according to the

language they teach and their gender. Also, at the first level, teachers' responses are presented using the means. At the second level, the views of English language and Arabic language teachers are examined for possible statistically significant differences using Mann-Whitney test. Moreover, results are examined for any differences that could be attributed to gender using the same test. A significance level of 0.05 is adopted. That is, the difference is said to be statistically significant if the p-value is less than the significance level (i.e., 0.05). Items measuring teachers' beliefs about writing are on a 5-point Likert scale (strongly agree=5, agree=4, neutral=3, disagree=2, strongly disagree=1); therefore, the mean for each item is interpreted as follows:

- to 1.80à strongly disagree
- 1.81 to 2.60à disagree
- 2.61 to 3.40à neutral
- 3.41 to 4.20à agree
- 4.21 to 5.00à strongly agree

On the other hand, teachers' beliefs on students' writing are measured on a 3-point scale (extremely difficult=3, difficult to some extent, not difficult)); therefore, the mean for each item is interpreted follows:

- 1.00 to 1.66à not difficult
- 1.67 to 2.33à difficult to some extent
- 2.34 to 3.00à extremely difficult

Results

Table 1below presents the responses to the first section on the questionnaire. All respondents have bachelor degrees in their relevant fields with the exception of one English language teacher who possesses a master degree in the English language. They all speak Arabic as their first language (L1) and their teaching experience ranges from less than five years to more than ten years, with a 57.1% of Arabic teachers having more than 10 years of teaching experience. The participants have been teaching English and Arabic writing skills for reasonable periods ranging from 4 to 10 years. Their number of teaching hours per week is in the range of more than 4 hours.

Table1. Demographic Information of Respondents

| | | Language you teach | | | | | |
| | | Arabic | | English | | Total | |
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	
Gender	Male	7	50.0%	7	50.0%	14	50.0%
	Female	7	50.0%	7	50.0%	14	50.0%
	Total	14	100.0%	14	100.0%	28	100.0%
Qualification	BA	14	100.0%	13	92.9%	27	96.4%
	MA	0	0.0%	1	7.1%	1	3.6%
	PhD	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Total	14	100.0%	14	100.0%	28	100.0%
First language	Arabic	14	100.0%	14	100.0%	28	100.0%
	English	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	Total	14	100.0%	14	100.0%	28	100.0%

Years of teaching experience	Less than 5 year	3	21.4%	5	35.7%	8	28.6%
	Less than 10year	3	21.4%	7	50.0%	10	35.7%
	more than 10 years	8	57.1%	2	14.3%	10	35.7%
	Total	14	100.0%	14	100.0%	28	100.0%
Years of teaching Arabic/ English writing skills	Less than 5 year	4	30.8%	6	42.9%	10	37.0%
	5- Less than 10year	3	23.1%	6	42.9%	9	33.3%
	more than 10 years	6	46.2%	2	14.3%	8	29.6%
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	100.0%
Teaching hours per week	1 – 2	0	0.0%	1	7.1%	1	3.7%
	3 – 4	2	15.4%	2	14.3%	4	14.8%
	More than 4	11	84.6%	11	78.6%	22	81.5%
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	100.0%

As for questions 10-18 on section I, tables 2 and 3 below offer a summary of the responses and their percentages.

Table 2: Writing functions English and Arabic Language Teachers Focus on

		Language you teach					
		Arabic		**English**		**Total**	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	
10. a. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students? Descriptive	Yes	5	38.5%	5	35.7%	10	
	No	8	61.5%	9	64.3%	17	
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	
10. b. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students? Narrative	Yes	5	38.5%	2	14.3%	7	
	No	8	61.5%	12	85.7%	20	
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	
10. c. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students? Process	Yes	3	23.1%	7	50.0%	10	
	No	10	76.9%	7	50.0%	17	
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	
10. d. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students? Argumentative	Yes	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	
	No	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	
10. e. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students? Technical	Yes	0	0.0%	2	14.3%	2	
	No	13	100.0%	12	85.7%	25	
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27	

10. f. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students? Other	Yes	1	7.7%	1	7.1%	2
	No	12	92.3%	13	92.9%	25
	Total	13	100.0%	14	100.0%	27

From items 10.c. and 10.d. in table 2, percentages show that writing as a process and argumentative writing have no place in the teachers' life, points that are elaborated on in the discussion section. The former is further supported by the responses to item 17 in table 3 below.

Table 3: Writing Activities and Skills Teachers of English and Arabic Focus on

		Language you teach					
		Arabic		English		Total	
		Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	Count	Column N %	
11. What writing activities do you use in your classes	Cooperative learning	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
	Group/team work	8	57.1%	10	71.4%	18	64.3%
12. What writing skills do you focus on	Students' ideas	0	0.0%	1	7.1%	1	3.6%
	Grammar	1	7.1%	2	14.3%	3	10.7%
	Grammar, spelling errors and students' ideas	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
	Grammar and spelling errors	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
	Good handwriting and spelling errors	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
	Punctuation marks	0	0.0%	2	14.3%	2	7.1%
	Punctuation marks and spelling errors	1	7.1%	0	0.0%	1	3.6%
13. Do you encourage students to submit several drafts of writing assignments	Yes	9	64.3%	10	71.4%	19	67.9%
	No	5	35.7%	4	28.6%	9	32.1%
14. Do you think you need more training in teaching writing skills	Yes	11	78.6%	10	71.4%	21	75.0%
	No	3	21.4%	4	28.6%	7	25.0%
15. If yes, what do you need		3	21.4%	4	28.6%	7	25.0%
	I need more training in teaching writing skills	11	78.6%	10	71.4%	21	75.0%
16. If no, why		11	78.6%	10	71.4%	21	75.0%
	I am a competent writing teacher	3	21.4%	4	28.6%	7	25.0%
17. Do you give students feedback on drafts or one final product	Drafts	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
	One final product	7	53.8%	4	28.6%	11	40.7%
	Both	6	46.2%	10	71.4%	16	59.3%

18. Do you give students feedback on drafts or one final product	Yes	14	100.0%	11	78.6%	25	89.3%
	No	0	0.0%	3	21.4%	3	10.7%

Although the percentages of item 17 above show some focus on writing as a process, yet; the concept of writing does not form a solid belief for the respondents. Another noticeable concern in the above table is the response to item 13, for which 32.1% of the respondents do not encourage students to submit several drafts of their writing assignments.

Examining the responses to the statements on section II of the questionnaire for any possible differences/similarities between Arabic language teachers' and English language teachers' views on writing practice, statistically significant differences are only noticed in 3 items (see table 4 below for more details). One of these differences is in the responses to item 2, "Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence", with means equal to 2.64 for Arabic language teachers (on average at neutral level) and 3.79 (on average at agree level) for English language teachers. The p-value for this items (=0.022) indicates that English language teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than Arabic language teachers.

Table 4: Teachers views according to the language they teach

	Language you teach		P-value
	Arabic	English	
1. Teaching writing is essential for students to master the language they are studying	4.50	4.57	0.578
2. Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence	2.64	3.79	0.022
3. Studying grammar helps students improve their writing skills	4.50	4.77	0.251
4. Studying writing in a young age is more useful than old age	4.86	4.43	0.043
5. Writing should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, listening or speaking)	3.50	3.79	0.260
6. Writing is a talent that shouldn't be taught	2.21	1.43	0.062
7. Students should pre-plan the writing that will be covered in their coming lessons	3.50	3.00	0.149
8. Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the topic of writing	3.79	3.93	0.422
9. Using steps and rules in writing is time consuming for students and teachers	2.50	3.14	0.099
10. Writing is boring and useless to study as students face difficulty utilizing it in their real life communication	1.64	1.71	0.846
11. Students should only be corrected in writing when their errors hinder getting the message from the context	2.93	2.64	0.722
12. I do not correct students' errors since they feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected	2.36	2.43	0.905

13. Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately	4.00	4.57	0.006
14. Peer correction in small groups is more preferable than teacher-student correction	3.64	3.00	0.177
15. Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' writing errors	2.14	2.93	0.163
16. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline is a waste of time	2.50	2.57	0.641
17. In my classes, students do pair and group work	3.86	3.93	0.939
18. I allow students to work individually	3.93	3.64	0.116
19. I explain the purpose of each assignment.	4.36	4.14	0.394
20. I ask students to do peer reviews	3.92	3.93	0.720
21. I help students edit their writing	4.00	4.07	0.716
22. Show students how to correct their mistakes	3.71	4.00	0.650
23. Provide clear writing instructions and guidelines	4.21	4.23	0.823

The second notable difference is related to statement 4, "Studying writing at a young age is more useful than old age", with means equal to 4.86 (on average at the strongly agree level) for Arabic language teachers and 4.43 (on average at the strongly agree level) for English language teachers. However, the p-value (=0.043) shows that Arabic language teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than English language teachers.

Another significant difference between the two groups of teachers concerns item 13, "Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately", with means equal to 4.00 (on average at the agree level) for Arabic language teachers and 4.57 (on average at the strongly agree level) for English language teachers. The p-value (=0.006) indicates that English language teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than Arabic language teachers.

In addition to the above, Table 5 below shows other differences between teachers' views that could be attributed to their gender.

Table 5: Teachers views according to their gender

	Gender		P-value
	Male	**Female**	
1. Teaching writing is essential for students to master the language they are studying	4.36	4.71	0.112
2. Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence	3.00	3.43	0.409
3. Studying grammar helps students improve their writing skills	4.38	4.86	0.029
4. Studying writing in a young age is more useful than old age	4.57	4.71	0.612
5. Writing should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, listening or speaking)	3.57	3.71	0.581
6. Writing is a talent that shouldn't be taught	2.07	1.57	0.107

Item			
7. Students should pre-plan the writing that will be covered in their coming lessons	3.43	3.07	0.384
8. Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the topic of writing	4.00	3.71	0.466
9. Using steps and rules in writing is time consuming for students and teachers	3.00	2.64	0.402
10. Writing is boring and useless to study as students face difficulty utilizing it in their real life communication	2.07	1.29	0.134
11. Students should only be corrected in writing when their errors hinder getting the message from the context	2.86	2.71	0.758
12. I do not correct students' errors since they feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected	3.00	1.79	0.012
13. Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately	4.00	4.57	0.012
14. Peer correction in small groups is more preferable than teacher-student correction	3.93	2.71	0.008
15. Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' writing errors	3.14	1.93	0.010
16. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline is a waste of time	2.43	2.64	0.432
17. In my classes, students do pair and group work	3.64	4.14	0.076
18. I allow students to work individually	3.86	3.71	0.442
19. I explain the purpose of each assignment.	4.00	4.50	0.025
20. I ask students to do peer reviews	3.77	4.07	0.173
21. I help students edit their writing	3.86	4.21	0.065
22. Show students how to correct their mistakes	3.57	4.14	0.061
23. Provide clear writing instructions and guidelines	3.86	4.62	0.002

Statistically significant differences are noted for 7 items. These are:

item 3 with means equal to 4.38 for male teachers (on average at the strongly agree level) and 4.86 (on average at strongly agree level) for female teachers with a p-value (=0.029) showing that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers,

item 12 with means equal to 3.00 for male teachers (on average at the neutral level) and 1.79 (on average at the strongly disagree level)

for female teachers with a p-value (=0.012) indicating that male teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than female teachers,

item13 with means equal to 4.00 for male teachers (on average at the agree level) and 4.57 (on average at the strongly agree level) for female teachers with a p-value (=0.012) revealing that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers,

item 14 with means equal to 3.93 for male

teachers (on average at the agree level) and 2.71 (on average at the neutral level) for female teachers with a p-value (=0.008) indicating that male teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than female teachers,

item 15 with means equal to 3.14 for male teachers (on average at the neural level) and 1.93 (on average at the disagree level) for female teachers. With a p-value (=0.010) pointing that male teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than female teachers,

item 19 with means equal to 4.00 for male teachers (on average at the agree level) and 4.50 (on average at the strongly agree level)

for female teachers with a p-value (=0.025) showing that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers, and

item 23 with means equal to 3.86 for male teachers (on average at the agree level) and 4.62 (on average at the strongly agree level) for female teachers with a p-value (=0.002) indexing that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers.

Furthermore, results point to the existence of gender differences amongst Arabic language teachers. In this regard, statistically significant differences are found in items 3, 19, 22 and 23 (see table 6 below for more details).

Table 6: Arabic teachers' views according to their gender

	Gender		P-value
	Male	Female	
1. Teaching writing is essential for students to master the language they are studying	4.29	4.71	0.122
2. Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence	2.57	2.71	0.887
3. Studying grammar helps students improve their writing skills	4.14	4.86	0.035
4. Studying writing in a young age is more useful than old age	4.71	5.00	0.141
5. Writing should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, listening or speaking)	3.43	3.57	0.784
6. Writing is a talent that shouldn't be taught	2.43	2.00	0.315
7. Students should pre-plan the writing that will be covered in their coming lessons	3.43	3.57	0.827
8. Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the topic of writing	3.43	4.14	0.355
9. Using steps and rules in writing is time consuming for students and teachers	3.00	2.00	0.081
10. Writing is boring and useless to study as students face difficulty utilizing it in their real life communication	1.86	1.43	0.502
11. Students should only be corrected in writing when their errors hinder getting the message from the context	2.71	3.14	0.506
12. I do not correct students' errors since they feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected	2.57	2.14	0.677
13. Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately	3.86	4.14	0.173

14. Peer correction in small groups is more preferable than teacher-student correction	4.14	3.14	0.113
15. Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' writing errors	2.57	1.71	0.094
16. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline is a waste of time	2.57	2.43	0.890
17. In my classes, students do pair and group work	3.57	4.14	0.179
18. I allow students to work individually	4.14	3.71	0.173
19. I explain the purpose of each assignment.	4.00	4.71	0.007
20. I ask students to do peer reviews	3.67	4.14	0.173
21. I help students edit their writing	3.71	4.29	0.054
22. Show students how to correct their mistakes	3.14	4.29	0.031
23. Provide clear writing instructions and guidelines	3.71	4.71	0.007

For item 3, the p-value (=0.035) indicates that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers,

As for item 19, the p-value =0.007 shows that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers,

Concerning item 22, the p-value =0.031 reveals that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers, and

For item 23, the p-value =0.007 points out that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers.

Similarly, significant differences are detected amongst male and female English language teachers concerning their views on items 12, 13 and 14 (see table 7 below for more details). These differences are:

The p-value (=0.009) for statement 12 reveals that male teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than female teachers,

Male English language teachers' means (4.14) on average at the agree level and female English language teachers' means (5.00) on average at the strongly agree level) for statement 13 indicate that female teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than male teachers, and

With means equal to 3.71 for male English teachers (on average at the agree level) and 2.29 (on average at the disagree level) for female teachers show that male teachers are significantly more in agreement with statement 14 than female teachers.

Table 7: English teachers' views according to their gender

	Gender		P-value
	Male	**Female**	
1. Teaching writing is essential for students to master the language they are studying	4.43	4.71	0.496
2. Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence	3.43	4.14	0.708
3. Studying grammar helps students improve their writing skills	4.67	4.86	0.435
4. Studying writing in a young age is more useful than old age	4.43	4.43	0.830
5. Writing should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, listening or speaking)	3.71	3.86	0.731
6. Writing is a talent that shouldn't be taught	1.71	1.14	0.199
7. Students should pre-plan the writing that will be covered in their coming lessons	3.43	2.57	0.122
8. Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the topic of writing	4.57	3.29	0.099
9. Using steps and rules in writing is time consuming for students and teachers	3.00	3.29	0.580
10. Writing is boring and useless to study as students face difficulty utilizing it in their real life communication	2.29	1.14	0.174
11. Students should only be corrected in writing when their errors hinder getting the message from the context	3.00	2.29	0.231
12. I do not correct students' errors since they feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected	3.43	1.43	0.009
13. Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately	4.14	5.00	0.008
14. Peer correction in small groups is more preferable than teacher-student correction	3.71	2.29	0.024
15. Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' writing errors	3.71	2.14	0.057
16. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline is a waste of time	2.29	2.86	0.135
17. In my classes, students do pair and group work	3.71	4.14	0.238
18. I allow students to work individually	3.57	3.71	0.872
19. I explain the purpose of each assignment.	4.00	4.29	0.473
20. I ask students to do peer reviews	3.86	4.00	0.533
21. I help students edit their writing	4.00	4.14	0.593
22. Show students how to correct their mistakes	4.00	4.00	1.000
23. Provide clear writing instructions and guidelines	4.00	4.50	0.135

Analyzing the responses to the items on section III, results show no statistically significant difference between Arabic language teachers' and English language teachers' views as demonstrated in table 8.

Table 8: Teachers' views according to the language they teach

	Language you teach		P-value
	Arabic	**English**	
1. Structuring the text	2.07	2.07	1.000
2. Using appropriate vocabulary	1.57	2.00	0.183
3. Using appropriate grammar	2.14	2.14	0.961
4. Using a style appropriate to the writing task	1.77	1.86	0.773
5. Using punctuation correctly	1.92	1.77	0.661
6. Using linking adverbials	1.77	1.71	0.833
7. Using functional language (e.g. cause and effect)	1.83	1.86	0.956
8. Managing their writing time effectively	1.54	1.77	0.500
9. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline	1.62	1.71	0.686

However, it is observed (see table 9 below) that male teachers' views and female teachers' views differ significantly for statement number 4. The p-value for this item (=0.014) demonstrates that male English language teachers are significantly more in agreement with the statement than female English language teachers.

Table 9: Teachers' views according to their gender

	Gender		P-value
	Male	**Female**	
1. Structuring the text	2.29	1.86	0.109
2. Using appropriate vocabulary	1.93	1.64	0.348
3. Using appropriate grammar	2.43	1.86	0.056
4. Using a style appropriate to the writing task	2.14	1.46	0.014
5. Using punctuation correctly	2.00	1.71	0.379
6. Using linking adverbials	1.85	1.64	0.413
7. Using functional language (e.g. cause and effect)	1.92	1.77	0.642
8. Managing their writing time effectively	1.83	1.50	0.297
9. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline	1.85	1.50	0.195

The same difference is noticed amongst male and female Arabic teachers. The p-value (=0.043) for this item shows that male Arabic teachers are significantly less in disagreement with statement than female teachers (see table 10 below).

Table 10: Arabic teachers' views according to their gender

	Gender		P-value
	Male	**Female**	
1. Structuring the text	2.14	2.00	0.677
2. Using appropriate vocabulary	1.57	1.57	0.830
3. Using appropriate grammar	2.43	1.86	0.150
4. Using a style appropriate to the writing task	2.14	1.33	0.043
5. Using punctuation correctly	2.17	1.71	0.364
6. Using linking adverbials	2.00	1.57	0.244
7. Using functional language (e.g. cause and effect)	2.00	1.67	0.495
8. Managing their writing time effectively	1.67	1.43	0.630
9. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline	1.67	1.57	0.681

For the rest of the statements on section III, no statistically significant differences are found amongst male and female English language teachers' views (see table 11).

Table 11: English teachers' views according to their gender

	Gender		P-value
	Male	**Female**	
1. Structuring the text	2.43	1.71	0.071
2. Using appropriate vocabulary	2.29	1.71	0.223
3. Using appropriate grammar	2.43	1.86	0.220
4. Using a style appropriate to the writing task	2.14	1.57	0.150
5. Using punctuation correctly	1.83	1.71	0.756
6. Using linking adverbials	1.71	1.71	1.000
7. Using functional language (e.g. cause and effect)	1.86	1.86	1.000
8. Managing their writing time effectively	2.00	1.57	0.357
9. Brain storming ideas and developing an outline	2.00	1.43	0.165

To conclude this section, although the results show more similarities between the two groups of teachers in terms of their beliefs on writing, these may lead to more problems in the students' understanding of the nature of writing in English. Two of these fundamental differences concern the nature of the writing process, i.e. writing more than one draft, and placing much more focus on teaching grammar compared to writing fluency.

Discussion

According to Johns (1997, p. 125), writing has some "text-external and text-internal features". Some of these are: formality, organization, cohesion and coherence, complexity, explicitness and clarity, precision and accuracy, objectivity, hedging, etc. These are affected by the type of function(s), definition, narrative, descriptive, expository, exemplification, compare and contrast, cause and effect and

argumentative, the language is used for. Yet, in light of the above results, it is surprisingly noted that both groups of teachers allot more time and focus to punctuation, grammar and spelling errors over writing fluency. This supports Khanalizadeh and Allami's (2012) finding that writing teachers focus more on form rather than writing as process, or a medium of social interaction. Although mechanics of writing are important in both languages, these should not be given precedence over communicative competence. Kharma & Hajjaj (1997, p. 180) define communicative competence as the logical organization and flow of ideas and paragraphs in a smooth and logical pattern. That is, each idea and paragraph leads into another. Ignoring such an issue makes Arab students stumble over these specific features, not because of lack of such devices in the Arabic language, but because the curriculum and the teachers do not prepare them for this. Khuwaileh and Al Shoumali (2000, p. 175) in a comparative study of Arab students' writing ability in both Arabic and English, came to the conclusion that Arabic and English texts produced by the participants lacked cohesion and coherence, which made it difficult for readers to understand the texts.

Also noticed that argumentative writing is not part of the teachers' culture.This type of writing is intended to persuade or convince the reader of the writer's point of view. In order to do so, the writer presents two different opinions then tries to support her/his opinion by providing evidences, such as facts, experts' opinions from the literature, or logical reasoning. Moreover, the writer tries to refute the opposing opinion logically and tactfully by providing evidences. Writing an argumentative essay may not be an easy task for some Arab students. For example, some may unintentionally express disagreement to the opposing viewpoint in an aggressive manner because of deficiencies in their linguistic and communicative competence. This could also be due to lack of practice and training in this type of writing. In addition, some may not be able to develop a voice as they "are often restricted to the ideas suggested by the teacher" (Kharma & Hajjaj, 1997, pp. 186-187). Therefore, Arabic speakers may need intensive

training and hands-on writing in this important genre. Therefore, ministries of education in the Arab world need to include this critical skill into students' writing curriculum.

Another interesting point is the Arabic and English teachers' beliefs regarding statements 2 in table 4 - Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence. This false belief needs to be changed since writing skills need to be taught. While it is undeniable that natural exposure to naturally occurring language enhances and develops speaking skills, writing skills require carefully planned teaching and learning. That said, this research shows more similarities than differences between the two groups of teachers in terms of their beliefs on teaching writing skills in Arabic and English. These similarities could be attributed to the fact that the participants received their university education and gained their teaching experience in the same cultural environment. In the case of differences, it is noted that these within group gender differences relate to issues that the teachers have no control over. An example of this is statement 4 on table 4.

This study underscores the impact of the mental and cultural contexts in which the teaching and learning of English writing skills occurs and the processes involved in the teaching of writing. Furthermore, it underlines the importance of considering the stages that precede the writing production. Moreover, this study argues that it is not enough for studies of language teachers' beliefs to identify teachers' beliefs, but should also seek to understand the underlying reasons behind such beliefs (Melketo, 2012: Jamalzadeh & Shahsavar, 2015).

Conclusion and Recommendation

In conclusion, this study shows more similarities than differences in the beliefs of Arab teachers teaching English and Arabic writing skills in both languages. This may justify why Arab students fail to produce appropriate English written texts, and end up writing English texts that read like Arabic texts. An issue that calls for more training courses for Arab teachers of

English in the rhetoric of English writing skills. Based on the results of this small scale study, more similarities between the beliefs of Arab teachers of English and Arabic is predicted to encourage Arab students to transfer Arabic writing style into English. To conclude, it is acknowledged that the current study has some limitations that could be the concern for future research on this topic. This preliminary investigation may be replicated with a bigger number of teachers and supported with class observations of surveyed teachers to obtain direct information on teachers' writing practices. This is in line with Junqueira and Payant's (2015) statement that teachers' beliefs about writing do not necessarily match their practices. Another study may look into writing textbooks to verify if they are in line with English language writing practices. Researchers may also compare the beliefs of teachers who completed their university education in Western universities and those who graduated from universities in the Arab world. Furthermore, role of professional development and intervention programs in changing teachers' beliefs can be investigated (Larenas,, Hernandez,& Navarrete, 2015).

Acknowledgement

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Appendix

Questionnaire

This questionnaire aims to collect information on the beliefs of English and Arabic teachers. The researchers would appreciate your help by answering the following questions. Your honest and sincere responses are highly valued as they will help improve the quality of students' writing skills. The questionnaire is anonymous and you do not need to provide your name. It is designed on a voluntary basis. It will take you around fifteen minutes to fill it in.

Thank you very much for your support.

Section I:

Kindly complete the following information about yourself.

Gender: a) Male   b) Female

Nationality: _____

Qualification: £ BA   £ MA   £ PhD   £ Other: _____

Language you teach

Arabic   b) English

5. What is your first language?

a) Arabic   b) English   c) Other

Years of teaching experience

a) Less than one year   b) 1-2 years   c) more than 3 years

7. For how long have you been Arabic/English writing skills?

a) 1-5 years   b) 5-10 years   c) More than 10 years

8. How many hours per week

a) 1 - 2   b) 3 - 4   c) More than 4

9. Year/level of students you teach: ....

10. What type of writing tasks do you teach your students?

(Tick all that's relevant)

a) Descriptive

b) Narrative

c) Process

d) Argumentative

e) Technical

f) Other

11. What writing activities do you use in your classes?

....

12. What writing skills do you focus on?

………………………………………………………………………………………..

13. Do you encourage students to submit several drafts of writing assignments?

a) Yes   b) No

14. Do you think you need more training in teaching writing skills?

a) Yes   b) No

15. If yes, what do you need?

----

16. If no, why?

………………………………………………………………………………………..

17. Do you give students feedback on drafts or one final product?

a) Drafts   b) One final product

18. Do you think that immediate correction of students' written mistakes can help prevent stabilization of erroneous patterns?

_____

Section II:

Kindly respond to the following items by choosing from 1 to 5.

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

Response Statement	Strongly disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neutral 3	Agree 4	Strongly agree 5
1. Teaching writing is essential for students to master the language they are studying					
2. Natural exposure to language is enough for acquiring writing competence					
3. Studying grammar helps students improve their writing skills					
4. Studying writing in a young age is more useful than old age					

5.	Writing should be taught in isolation (not integrated with other language skills, reading, listening or speaking)				
6.	Writing is a talent that shouldn't be taught				
7.	Students should pre-plan the writing that will be covered in their coming lessons				
8.	Students' preference should be taken into consideration when choosing the topic of writing				
9.	Using steps and rules in writing is time consuming for students and teachers				
10.	Writing is boring and useless to study as students face difficulty utilizing it in their real life communication				
11.	Students should only be corrected in writing when their errors hinder getting the message from the context				
12.	I do not correct students' errors since they feel frustrated when all their written communication errors are corrected				
13.	Corrective feedback can motivate students and satisfy their needs if it is employed appropriately				
14.	Peer correction in small groups is more preferable than teacher-student correction				
15.	Dissimilarity between Arabic and English is a main reason for students' writing errors				
16.	Brain storming ideas and developing an outline is a waste of time				

17.	In my classes, students do pair and group work				
18.	I allow students to work individually				
19.	I explain the purpose of each assignment.				
20.	I ask students to do peer reviews				
21.	I help students edit their writing				
22.	Show students how to correct their mistakes				
23.	Provide clear writing instructions and guidelines				

Section III:

Thinking about your students' writing in English/Arabic, rate the following in terms of difficulty for your students.

		Not Difficult 1	Difficult to Some Extent 2	Extremely Difficult 3	N/A
1.	Structuring the text				
2.	Using appropriate vocabulary				
3.	Using appropriate grammar				
4.	Using a style appropriate to the writing task				
5.	Using punctuation correctly				
6.	Using linking adverbials				
7.	Using functional language (e.g. cause and effect)				
8.	Managing their writing time effectively				
9.	Brain storming ideas and developing an outline				

Thank you for your time and cooperation!