

# The Impact of Introductory Arabic Language Course on Spelling and Writing Skills of University Students

Sami F. Aljazi, Hasan A. Al-hasanat & Rima A. Abu Omar

Curriculum and Instruction Department, Al-Hussein Bin Talal University, Ma'an, Jordan

E-mail: samialjazi@ymail.com

Received: May 12, 2017    Accepted: August 2, 2017    Published: August 2, 2017

doi:10.5296/jse.v7i3.11209    URL: <https://doi.org/10.5296/jse.v7i3.11209>

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of introductory Arabic language course on spelling and writing skills of university students, and to examine students' spelling and writing skills based on their gender, major, and Grade Point Average (GPA). The study sample consisted of 100 students who were randomly selected. Single group, pre-test and post-test research design was used. The used instrument was performance test that included 45 multiple choice questions. The results showed that students' spelling and writing performance had significantly improved as a result of taking Arabic Language Course (101). However, there were no significant differences in students' spelling and writing performance based on their gender, major, and GPA. The recommendations of the study were to introduce spelling and writing topics in related language courses and to conduct more research studies in relation to university students' language skills.

**Keywords:** Introductory Arabic Language Course, spelling and writing skills, evaluation.

## 1. Introduction

Teaching Arabic language should address all its components: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Arabic language should be viewed as one unit rather than group of distinct and incoherent branches. Looking at the Arabic language as distinctive branches would contribute to its fragmentation and loss. Therefore, teaching Arabic language requires focusing on its unity. Students should learn Arabic language as one unit. Al-Baja (2003) argued that students had low-level reading and writing skills due the way of teaching Arabic language in schools and universities.

The spelling of Arabic words is important for learning Arabic language. Spelling and writing Arabic words and phrases represent a fundamental pillar of Arabic language. There are several rules that govern the writing of Arabic words. The Arabic alphabet has 28 letters. Some letters should be joined with adjacent letters while other letters should not. The shape of Arabic letter varies based on its location in the words. Some Arabic letters have a common basic form, but they differ in either by the number, location, or the lack of the dots. Based on their positions in the word, some letters are omitted or added. Spelling in Arabic language focus on rules of letters 't', rules of the Hamza, Tanwin, punctuation marks, vowels, rules of extended letters, Sun letters, and Moon letters (Al-Dulaimi & al-Awaili, 2003).

Spelling should be a part of Arabic language curriculum. Teaching spelling is important for improving students' writing skills. People use writing to express themselves. Writing is a significant way for communication among people with temporal and spatial distance (Abd-Allim, 1975). Syntax and morphology skills allow students to write grammatically correct. However, spelling skills allow students to write correctly in terms of the shape of the letters and the constructions of the words. The level of students' spelling skills reflects their level of leaning of Arabic language in general. The wrong spelling of written words might lead to the distortion of its meaning and make readers face difficulties in understanding their meanings in the right way (Al-Safasfeh, 2004).

Therefore, correct spelling is an important skill in higher education. It is necessary for university students in order to convey ideas, to express themselves, and to follow and to understand the ideas of others. However, spelling errors were common among learners in all levels of education; specifically, spelling errors were found among some university students (Abd-Alhamed, 1989).

Learning Arabic language is significant for the individual and society. Therefore, Jordanian universities have a set of required and elective Arabic language courses. One of these required Arabic language courses called Arabic Language (101). The course represents an introductory course that discusses several Arabic language's related topics that include spelling rules. Examples of these rules include rules of letters 't', rules of the Hamza, Tanwin, punctuation marks, vowels, rules of extended letters, additions and omissions of letters, Sun letters and Moon letters. In addition to spelling rules, the course discusses other language rules such as declinable and indeclinable words, nominal sentence and its elements: subject and predicate; and the verbal sentence and its elements: verb, subject, and object. Furthermore, the course discusses the classification of Arabic language dictionaries.

The course' textbook is divided into chapters. Each chapter includes set of lessons. The instructor gets through the lessons during one academic semester. Each lesson started with the instructor introduce to the main subject of the lesson through presenting the language rules and the related explanations and examples. Then, the instructor and students discuss and analyze the examined subjects. At the end of each chapter, there are several language exercises that cover the lessons' subjects in that chapter. The instructor cooperates with the students to get through these exercises. In order to evaluate students' performance in Arabic Language (101) course, the students complete three computerized tests: first term test (20%), second term test (20%), and final test (50%). In addition there is 10% allocated for academic reports and additional contributions made by the student related to the topics of the course during the academic semester.

The current study aimed to investigate the impact of this introductory Arabic language course on spelling and writing skills of university students, in order to provide university administrators with information regarding the effectiveness of the course in teaching spelling and writing. In addition, the findings of the current study are anticipated to provide recommendations regarding the ways in which the course can be improved.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

Writing has a great importance in human life. It is the greatest human invention of all time. Through writing, individuals document their intellectual productions and pass their heritage to others. Individuals used writing to express their thoughts, way of thinking, opinions, attitudes, feelings, emotions and passions to others. Written communication allows individuals to record and transmit the facts and incidents in their lives (Al-Bagh, 2003). Therefore, teaching students spelling and writing skills is an essential element in the educational process. Educational institutions have the responsibilities to teach students spelling, writing and calligraphy in order to make them able to clearly and accurately express themselves. Educated individuals should be able to write free of spelling errors. Educators have complained about students' notable difficulties in spelling and writing some words. Therefore, there is a need to pay a greater attention to training sessions, programs and courses that focus on students' spelling and writing skills (Mubaidin, 2003).

The aim of teaching spelling and writing is to equip students with the knowledge and skills to write correctly and effectively. In addition, teaching spelling and writing would enhance students' spelling accuracy in their writing; strengthen their observation of the spelling errors; improve their attitudes toward clean and well organized writing; improve their hand writing proficiency; enhance their use of a punctuation, enhance their literacy skills; develop their knowledge, experience and culture; make them contribute in preservation of human heritage; and make them contribute in the transmission of human knowledge from generation to generation through writing (Hadib, 2003).

The basic function of teaching spelling is to provide students with visual images of the letters and words based on the pronunciation of these letters and words. Minor spelling error in the written Arabic words or the sentences might change the right meaning of these words or sentences. Students' inability to write correctly is a major obstacle to their learning. Spelling

errors would result in ambiguity of the meanings of the written Arabic words or sentences (Dulaimi & Alwaili, 2003). Therefore, it is imperative for educational institutions to teach and train their students to write correctly in order to make them able to communicate effectively and efficiently in their daily life and future career.

Dictation is a teaching technique that aims to teach spelling. Dictation is an action to transcribe a text that a person says or reads out at the time it is being said or directly after it is being said. Dictation teaches students to write words and letters correctly based on the Arabic spelling rules. Dictation would improve students' handwriting proficiency. It teaches students the precise letters formation, shapes, spacing, sequencing, addition, and omission. In addition, dictation teaches students the use of the diacritics, dots, punctuation marks. Furthermore, dictation would help students to pay close attention to their learning. Dictation improves students' writing in a clean and well organized way. Improving writing skills would develop students' aesthetic taste, enhance their literacy skills, and expand and diversify their experiences (Ashour & Hawamda, 2007). Dictation techniques vary based on their objectives and functions; there are four types of dictation techniques:

1. Copying dictation: In copying dictation, the teacher trains students on a certain number of words through presenting these words to the students on the boards, cards, or books. Then, the teacher reads the text aloud in front of the students while they are able to see these words. After that the teacher discusses with the students the meaning and the way of writing these words, focusing on the hard to spell words. While the students are able to see words, the teacher dictates these words to the students. This type of dictation is appropriate for the first, second, and third grades. Therefore, the teacher should consider the suitability of the spelling text to the students' cognitive growth and level of maturity. In addition, the spelling words should be related to the students' life and environment. Furthermore, the selected spelling words should be suitable to the time of the class (Younis, Al-Naqa, & Madkour, 1981).
2. Seen dictation: In seen dictation, the teacher presents the text to students. Then, the teacher reads the text aloud in front of the students. After that the teacher discusses with the students the meaning and the way of writing of the hard to spell words and writes these words on the board. Then, the teacher asks the students to look at the text one more time and after that the teacher hides the text. Then, the teacher dictates the text to the students. The students should be able to see the text long enough before the dictation process start, in order to make them able develop mental images of the shape of the letters and words. After the completion of the dictation, the teacher reads the text one more time in front of the students in quiet and clear way in order to make the students review the dictated text and to write what they miss from this text. This type of dictation is appropriate for the fourth and fifth grades (Fadlallah, 2014).
3. Unseen dictation: In unseen dictation, the students do not see the dictated text. The teacher reads the text aloud in front of the students and discusses the meaning and the ways writing of the hard to spell words. In addition, the teacher reminds the students by the spelling rules needed to write the text. Then the teacher reads the text aloud in front of the students one more time and discusses the writing of the hard to spell words one more time.

Then the teacher dictates the text to the students. This type of dictation is appropriate for the sixth, seventh and eighth grades (Al-Dulaimi & al-Awaili, 2003).

4. Dictation test: The aim of dictation test is to evaluate students' competencies in spelling and writing. In addition, dictation test aims to assess students' knowledge of the spelling rules that they have studied. In this type of dictation, the students' do not see the text and the teacher does not read and discuss the meaning of the text before dictation. The teacher directly dictates the text to the students after brief introduction. The teacher should communicate to the students that the aim of dictation test is to recognize the potential difficulties in spelling that they might face and to provide them with the proper training to overcome such difficulties rather than looking only for the errors in their spelling. This type of dictation is appropriate for students in all educational levels. However, it is common in secondary education (Al-Baja, 2000).

There is more than one technique that the Arabic language teacher can use to evaluate students' dictated text. Each type of evaluation strategy has its own benefits and aims. Teacher should select the right evaluation strategy that fits their students' characteristics. The teacher should use different types of evaluation strategy to assess students' dictated text based on the educational level and stage of the students. The most common technique to assess students' dictated text is to collect spelling books from the students. Then the teacher corrects the spelling errors away from the students. The teacher corrects the error by placing the right spelling directly above each spelling error in the dictated text. When the teacher returns the spelling books back to the students, the teacher asks them to re-write the misspelled words for five to ten times (Al-Dulaimi & al-Awaili, 2003). This spelling evaluation strategy is time and effort consuming for teachers. In addition, in this spell checking strategy there is a time gap between the dictation process and the correction process.

In another type of spelling correction strategy, the teacher corrects student' written text in front of each one after dictation. This assessment strategy is useful since each student has the opportunity to know the spelling errors that they have made directly after the dictation process. This spelling evaluation strategy is time and effort consuming for the teacher particularly in large classes. In addition, in this spelling evaluation strategy, the rest of students in the class might make noise and disturbance in the classroom (Fadlallah, 2014).

Another type of spelling correction strategy relies on the students themselves. The teacher writes the spelling text in front of the students on the board after completing dictation. Then the teacher asks each student to correct his/her own spelling of the dictated text. This strategy is useful since it gives the teacher time to monitor and follow the students, and it develops students' self-reliance and accuracy in writing. In addition, in this type of spelling correction strategy, the students develop honesty, truthfulness, and responsibility. However, some students may not admit the existence of spelling errors in their writing. Therefore, the teacher should teach the students that admitting mistake is courage and virtue of strong character. In addition, the teacher should keep track of their students in the correction process (Fadlallah, 2012).

In another type of spelling correction strategy that relies on the students themselves; each student exchanges his/her spelling book with the student sitting next to or behind him/her. Each student corrects the spelling of the other student. This method of spelling correction is convenient for the teacher and useful to the students since each student learns from the spelling errors of his/her colleague and corrects these errors. However, the teacher should supervise the correction process in order to prevent prejudice and nepotism. Prejudice happens when one student marks other student's right spelling of some words as errors when these students have a relationship of competition and hostility. On the other side, nepotism happens when one student marks other student's spelling errors of some words as right spelling when these students have a relationship of friendship and affinity. The teacher must pay attention to the seriousness of these behaviors. The teachers should teach their students to tell the truth whatever the consequences and the situations (Jaber, 1991).

### **3. Literature Review**

Several research studies have been conducted to examine the students spelling and writing performance and common spelling errors. In addition, previous research studies have examined the impact of language programs and courses on students' spelling performance and the available spelling measures. Daffern, Mackeniz, and Hemmings, (2017) examined students' spelling performance through investigating the students' spelling achievement in different national tests. Data were collected using two different spelling instruments in Australia, these instruments were: National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) Language Conventions Test and the Components of Spelling Test (CoST). The NAPLAN Language Conventions Test assesses students' spelling performance through proofreading and editing. CoST assesses students' spelling performance through the production of words from dictation. Results showed significant relationships between students' scores in the spelling domain of the NAPLAN Language Conventions Test and their scores in the phonological, orthographic and morphological subscales of the CoST. Furthermore, the results showed that there were no significant differences in students' spelling achievements in the two tests based on their gender. They found that the dictation based test (CoST) was a valid, reliable and useful instrument to assess students' spelling performance for use in educational institutions environments or research studies.

Azimi and Mousavipour, (2014) examined the impact of educational multimedia on students' spelling performance based on dictation. In addition, the study examined the role of educational multimedia in improving students' spelling performance for those who suffered from dysgraphia. The study sample consisted of 39 second grade students with spelling difficulties. Twenty participants were assigned to the experimental group while nineteen students were assigned to the control group. The results of the study indicated that there were significant differences between students spelling achievements. The students in the experimental group scored higher in the spelling test than the students in the control group. Therefore, the study recommended that the use of educational multimedia to teach spelling is more effective than the traditional way for teaching spelling; this is particularly true for students who suffered from dysgraphia.

Al-Shibail's (2010) study aimed at measuring the effectiveness of the integrated method in improving seventh grade students spelling performance. The study sample consisted of 87 male and female students. Forty six participants were assigned to the experimental group and the remaining participants were assigned to the control group. The results of the study indicated that there were significant differences ( $\alpha = .05$ ) between students spelling achievements. The students in the experimental group scored higher in the spelling test than the students in the control group. In addition, the results showed that the female students significantly scored higher than the male students in the spelling test.

Muhailan, (2010) examined the difference in the Arabic language spelling skills among University of Jordan based on some variables that include their majors, type of acceptance program, academic year, nationality, and gender. The study was conducted in order to disclose students' weakness in spelling and to provide appropriate suggestions to resolve such spelling issues. The used instrument was spelling performance test that consisted from 23 items that assess students' different spelling skills. The validity and reliability of the used instrument were verified. The study sample consisted of 882 male and female students from 43 sections of communication skills in Arabic course. Students' responses to the test were corrected using computer. Descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) were used to describe participants' spelling test scores. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine variations in participants' test scores based on their major, type of acceptance program, academic year, nationality, and gender. The results showed that there were no significant differences ( $\alpha = .05$ ) between the participants' mean test scores based on their academic year. However, there were significant differences ( $\alpha = .05$ ) between the participants' mean test scores based on their major, type of acceptance program, nationality, and gender. Based on the findings, the study recommended using the university general required courses to address students spelling skills and using computer to develop computer-based tests that diagnose students spelling performance. Based on the results of these tests, appropriate programs, courses, and training sessions should be designed to address university students' spelling performance.

Suleiman, Talafha and Al-Hussein (2006) conducted a study that aimed to examine students' spelling performance at teachers college at Tabuk. The used instrument was diagnostic spelling test that consisted of 50 items that assess students' spelling skills in four areas: rules of the Hamza, rules of letters 't', additions and omissions of letters, connections of letters. The study sample consisted of 147 students from different majors that include the sixth and seventh levels of Arabic and Quran language, Science and Mathematics. The results showed that the students' average on the spelling test was 62.25% which is lower than the educational requirement. The study provided some recommendations for enhancing and improving the educational process at the college in general and improving student spelling performance in particular.

Al- Yemeni (2004) examined the effect of a proposed program for spelling teaching on common spelling errors treatment for the students of the eighth grade of the basic education in the Yemen Republic. The researcher used experimental research design. The study sample consisted of 160 male and female students. The results indicated that the experimental group

significantly outperformed ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) the control groups on spelling post-test. In addition, the female students had significantly higher ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) spelling performance than male students.

Al- Khatib (2004) conducted a study that aimed to identify Jordanian university students' common spelling errors. The study sample consisted of 327 male and female students from three public and private universities. These universities were selected randomly. The used instrument was 114 words that were dictated to the students. These words involved 22 basic spelling cases. The results indicated that the mean of students spelling errors in the three universities was 7.5 and the standard deviation was 2.8. The common spelling errors were related to the writing of letter stress, punctuation marks, rules of the Hamza, additions and omissions of specific letters, and the effect of verbal factor. The frequency of these spelling errors exceeded 50%. In addition, the results showed that there were no significant differences between the participants' spelling performances based on their majors. However, there were significant differences between participants' spelling performances based on the university they attended. The researcher provided some recommendations for reducing spelling errors among university students.

This study was similar to previous research studies in term of research methodology. However, it differs from the previous research studies in terms of the used spelling intervention that was Arabic language (101) course. Arabic language (101) course reviews some spelling topics that the university students studied in the schools before attending the university. The main aim of the current study was to investigate the impact of Arabic language (101) course on spelling and writing skills of university students

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

Mastering spelling and writing skills is significant for the individual and society. Arabic Language (101) is introductory course that was designed to provide university students with the required spelling and writing skills, to enhance university students' writing performance through making their writing free of spelling errors, and to make their creative and functional writing more powerful and influential. Therefore, there was a need to examine the effect of this course on university students' spelling and writing skills.

The purpose of this study was twofold: (1) to investigate the impact of introductory Arabic language course on spelling and writing skills of university students, and (2) to examine students' spelling and writing skills based on their gender, major, and GPA.

The research questions that guided this study were:

1. Is there statistically significant difference ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the mean scores of students in pre-test and post-test in the introductory Arabic language course?
2. Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in spelling and writing skills among students in Arabic language (101) course based in their gender?
3. Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in spelling and writing skills among students in Arabic language (101) course based on their major?



4. Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in spelling and writing skills among students in Arabic language (101) course based on their GPA level?

#### *4.1 Importance of the Study*

The current study is important since it discussed significant aspect of university students' preparation which is their spelling and writing performance. University students should have a high level of spelling and writing skills. The current study was among a few research studies that examined the effect of Arabic language (101) course on university students' language skills, specifically spelling and writing skills. The results of the current study would be used to enhance the educational content of the Arabic language (101) course in general and the content that related to spelling and writing skills in particular. In addition, the used methodology in the current can be used to evaluate other university courses.

#### *4.2 Definition of Terms*

The current study adopts the following operational definitions of the used terms:

- Evaluation: The making of a judgment about students' performance at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University based on their results in spelling and writing test.
- Arabic spelling and writing skills: The ability to write the right sequences and shapes of letters that compose a word according to accepted usage.
- Arabic language (101) course: One of the required courses at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University which represents an introductory course that discusses several Arabic language's related topics that include spelling rules.
- Al-Hussein Bin Talal University: A public university in southern of Jordan.

#### *4.3 Limitations of the Study*

The study was limited on students who were registered at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in the first semester of 2016/2017 academic year. The students were from different majors. The assessed spelling skills were limited to rules of the Hamza, Tanwin, rules of letters 't', rules of extended letters, and additions and omissions of letters.

### **5. Methodology and Research Design**

The current study employed pre-post quasi-experimental study design to examine the impact of introductory Arabic language course on spelling and writing skills of undergraduate students at Al Hussein Bin Talal University (AHU). The same test was administrated twice to all the participants at the beginning and at the end of Arabic language (101) course.

#### *5.1 Study population and sample*

The population for this study was all the students who were registered in the Arabic language (101) course at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University in the first semester for the academic year of 2016/2017. A total number of 450 male and female students who were enrolled in six sections of the Arabic language (101) course was the population of the current study. The students

were from different academic departments. Two sections were randomly selected to participate in the current study. Fifty students were randomly selected from the each section. Simple sampling was used to select the two sections out of the total sections and to select the 50 students from each section. A sample of 100 female and male students was selected to participate in the study.

### 5.2 Instrument

The used instrument in the current study was a test that was used as pre-test and post-test. The test consisted from 45 multiple choice questions. The test aimed to examine students spelling and writing skills. The test focuses on rules of letters 't', rules of the Hamza, Tanwin, vowels, rules of extended letters, additions and omissions of letters, and other rules.

### 5.3 Validity and Reliability of the Instrument

To ensure validity of the test instrument, the test was reviewed by a panel of experts. The panel of experts consisted of five faculty members who had been teaching Arabic language (101) course at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University. The panel members were asked to review the language and the content of the test questions. They were asked to rate the relevance of each question to the aim of the test. Based on the panel members' comments, some questions were deleted and the language of some questions was reviewed.

A pilot study was conducted to check the internal consistency and reliability of the used test. The test was piloted with 33 students who were not a part of this study. In order to ensure the internal consistency reliability of the questionnaire instrument, Pearson's correlations coefficient were calculated for each item in the test and the total score of the test (Table 1).

Table 1. Pearson's Correlations Coefficients for Each Test Item to the Total Score

Number of Question	Correlation Coefficient Value	Significance	Number of Question	Correlation Coefficient Value	Significance
1.	0.005	Significant at 0.05	24.	0.36	Significant at 0.05
2.	0.17	Significant at 0.05	25.	0.37	Significant at 0.05
3.	0.38	Significant at 0.05	26.	0.28	Significant at 0.05
4.	0.36	Significant at 0.05	27.	0.19	Significant at 0.05
5.	0.32	Significant at 0.05	28.	0.22	Significant at 0.05
6.	0.30	Significant at 0.05	29.	0.30	Significant at 0.05
7.	0.28	Significant at 0.05	30.	0.18	Significant at 0.05

8.	0.36	Significant at 0.05	31.	0.16	Significant at 0.05
9.	0.27	Significant at 0.05	32.	0.51	Significant at 0.05
10.	0.16	Significant at 0.05	33.	0.25	Significant at 0.05
11.	0.19	Significant at 0.05	34.	0.24	Significant at 0.05
12.	0.39	Significant at 0.05	35.	0.41	Significant at 0.05
13.	0.19	Significant at 0.05	36.	0.35	Significant at 0.05
14.	0.41	Significant at 0.05	37.	0.26	Significant at 0.05
15.	0.23	Significant at 0.05	38.	0.38	Significant at 0.05
16.	0.24	Significant at 0.05	39.	0.21	Significant at 0.05
17.	0.21	Significant at 0.05	40.	0.35	Significant at 0.05
18.	0.15	Significant at 0.05	41.	0.18	Significant at 0.05
19.	0.11	Significant at 0.05	42.	0.23	Significant at 0.05
20.	0.16	Significant at 0.05	43.	0.32	Significant at 0.05
21.	0.37	Significant at 0.05	44.	0.55	Significant at 0.05
22.	0.35	Significant at 0.05	45.	0.57	Significant at 0.05
23.	0.28	Significant at 0.05			

Table 1 shows that correlation coefficients varied across the test items. However, the results showed that there were statistically significant relationships, at alpha level of .05, between each test item score to the total test score. The result verified the internal consistency of the test.

To ensure reliability of the test instrument, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the participants' test scores in the pilot study. The value of Cronbach's alpha was 0.55. In addition, the test reliability was verified using Spearman-Brown split-half test; the split-half reliability coefficient was 0.59. The high value of the reliability coefficients indicate that test was reliable for the purpose of the study.

Psychometric properties of test were checked. Item difficulty ranged from 0.22 to 0.56, while item discrimination ranged from 0.24 to 0.48. These values are educationally acceptable for the use of the test in the current study. Therefore, no test questions were deleted based on the previous values.

## 6. Results and Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate the impact of Arabic language course (101) on spelling and writing skills of undergraduate students at Al-Hussein Bin Talal University. In addition, the study aimed to examine the factors that would influence students' learning in this course.

*6.1 Research Question 1: Is there statistically significant difference ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) between the means of students' scores in pre-test and post-test in the introductory Arabic language course?*

In order to answer this research question, descriptive statistics (i.e., means and standard deviations) and dependent sample t-test were used (Table 2).

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics and T-Test Results Comparing the Means of the participant' Pre-test and Post-test Scores

Test	N	M	SD	Degree of freedom	t	Sig
Pre-test	100	14.49	4.81	99	36.48	0.00
Post-test	100	38.83	3.95			

Table 2 shows that the mean of the post-test scores ( $M = 38.83$ ,  $SD = 3.95$ ) was significantly different than the mean of the pre-test scores ( $M = 14.49$ ,  $SD = 4.81$ ),  $t(99) = 36.48$ ,  $p = .00$ . The results indicates that Arabic language course (101) positively affect students' spelling and writing achievements and skills. The findings are consistent with the results of similar studies (Suleiman, Talafha & Al-Hussein, 2006; Al- Yemeni, 2004; Muhailan, 2010). The results demonstrate the importance of the Arabic language (101) course for university students. In addition, the results indicate that the students show interest in learning and they pay efforts in learning the content of the course. The students can apply what they learn regarding spelling and writing in their daily lives. Students' improvements in spelling and writing skills can be attributed to the instructor's appropriate methods of teaching. To teach spelling and writing skills in Arabic language (101) course, the instructor presents the main rules of spelling. Then the instructor discusses and explains them to the students. After that the instructor provides the students with examples to enhance their learning. This way of teaching makes the students understand the educational content related to spelling and writing in the course and positively affect their performance in the post-test. This result may also be attributed to students' interest in studying this subject and to their interest to achieve high scores in this required course to improve their Grade point average (GPA).

*6.2 Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in spelling and writing skills among students in Arabic language (101) course based in their gender?*

In order to answer the second research question, t-test was conducted to examine the

differences in participants' mean scores in the post-test based on their gender (Table 3).

Table 3. Results of T-Test for Mean Scores for Students in the Post-test by Gender

Items	Groups	N	M	SD	Degree of freedom	t	Sig
Gender	Male	47	38.40	3.66	98	1.01	0.31
	Female	53	39.21	4.19			

Table 3 shows that there was no significant difference in the students' mean scores in the post-test that examined their spelling and writing performance  $t(98) = 1.01, p > .05$  based on their gender. The female and male students had the same experience and the same instruction from the same instructor during the course. The female and male students got through same elementary and secondary educational system and they learn same spelling and writing skills in schools before they enter the university. In addition, the result suggested that Arabic language (101) course was effective and useful for teaching all the students, regardless of their gender, the spelling and writing skills.

Another possible explanation is that female and male students might have competed in a positive and honourable way to achieve the best scores in this course. This competition might lead of close scores for the female and male students in the spelling test without apparent differences between males and females students.

6.3 *Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in spelling and writing skills among students in Arabic language (101) course based on their major (humanity or science)?*

6.4

In order to answer the third research question, t-test was conducted to examine the differences in participants' mean test scores in the post-test based on their major. The students were categorized into two groups: students from scientific colleges such as science college and engineering college; and students from humanity colleges such as educational science college and are college (Table 3).

Table 4. Results of T-Test for Mean Scores for Students in the Post-test by Major

Items	Groups	N	M	SD	Degree of freedom	t	Sig
Major	Scientific	76	38.86	4.11	98	0.11	0.91
	Humanity	24	38.75	3.50			

Table 4 shows that there was no significant difference in the students' mean scores in the post-test that examined their spelling and writing performance  $t(98) = 0.11, p > .05$ , based on their majors. Students in the humanity related colleges and students in the science related colleges had high scores in the post-test. The finding is consistent with the result of Al-Khatib's (2004) study.

Spelling and writing skills are significant for all the university students in all colleges. Arabic

language (101) course is required course for all the students in the university in order to improve their language skills. The results indicated that the used instrument was valid. All the students pass same elementary and secondary educational system and they learn same spelling and writing skills in schools before they enter the university. Students' scores in the Arabic language (101) course are counted toward their GPA. Therefore, the students study hard to achieve high scores in this course.

Another possible explanation is related to the nature of the spelling skills and performance. Spelling topic is not like other humanity related subjects that depends only memorization; it depends on higher forms of thinking, such as applying, analysing and evaluating in addition to remembering and understanding. Therefore, students in science related colleges, whose their education depends on higher forms of thinking scored as high as the students in the humanity related colleges

*6.5 Are there any statistically significant differences ( $\alpha < 0.05$ ) in spelling and writing skills among students in Arabic language (101) course based on their GPA level?*

In order to answer the fourth research question, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to examine variations in students' means in the post-tests scores based on their GPA (Table 3).

Table 5. One-Way ANOVA- Mean Scores for Students in the Post-test for their GPA

Groups	Sum of Squares	Degree of freedom	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between groups	68.03	3	22.68	1.47	0.23
Within Groups	1480.08	96	15.42		
overall	1548.11	99			

Table 5 shows that there were no significant differences in the mean scores for students in the post-test ( $F(3, 96) = 1.47, p > 0.05$ ) based on their GPA levels. In Jordan, all the students start studying spelling and writing from the elementary education. A student's GPA represents his/her performance in all the courses that had been studied at the university not only in Arabic language (101) course. In addition, the study sample consisted of students from different majors and different GPA levels. Therefore, students' GPA had no significant effect on students' spelling and writing skills. The finding is consistent with the results of Muhailan's (2010) study.

This result may also be attributed to the fact that students from different disciplines, regardless of their GPA, were taught in this course the same educational materials using the same teaching methods. The students were taught the educational contents in this course in simple ways that made all of them fully understand these spelling contents; therefore their GPA did not affect their scores.

## 7. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the current study, several recommendations can be offered:

- Focusing and paying greater attention to the spelling and writing skills and connect these skills to the courses that the university students study.
- Directing faculty members to take care of university students' spelling and writing skills. This is especially true for the faculty members who teach courses in which the language of instruction is Arabic.
- Conducting similar research studies in different courses to assess students' different language skills.
- Conducting research to examine common spelling errors among university students.

## References

- Abd-Allim, I. (1975). *Spelling and punctuation in writing*, Cairo: Al-Ghareeb library.
- Abdel Hamid, J. (1989). *Dictation, Teaching and Learning, Annals of the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences*, Qatar University, 7-12.
- Al- Yemeni, K. (2004). Effect of a Proposed Program of Dictation Teaching on Common Dictation Errors Treatment for Students of the Eighth Grade in the Yemen Republic. (Unpublished dissertation), Sana'a University.
- Al-Baja, A. (2000). *The Origins of Teaching Arabic Language between Practice and Theory*. Amman: Dar Al Fikr
- Al-Baja, A. (2003). *Teaching Children Literacy and Writing Skills*. Amman: Dar Al Fikr
- Al-Dulaimi, T., & Alwaili, S. (2003). *Scientific and Practical Methods in Teaching Arabic Language*. Amman: Dar Al Shorouk.
- Al-Khatib, M. (2004). Common Spelling Mistakes of University Students in Jordan. *Jordanian Journal of Applied Sciences*, 7(1), 48-61.
- Al-Safasfeh, A. (2004). *Methods of Teaching Arabic Language*. Karak: Dar Yazid Publishing, Jordan.
- Al-Shibail, A. (2010). *The Effect of the Integrated Method on Improving Spelling Skills in Seventh Grade Students in Jordan*, (Unpublished dissertation), Yarmouk University.
- Ashour, R., & Hawamda, M. (2007). *Methods of Teaching Arabic Language between Theory and Practice*. Amman: Dar Al-Masirah, Jordan.
- Azimi, E., & Mousavipour, S. (2014). The Effects of Educational Multimedia in Dictation and Its Role in Improving Dysgraphia in Students with Dictation Difficulty. *Contemporary Educational Technology*, 5(4), 331-340.
- Daffern, T., Mackenzie, N., & Hemmings, B. (2017). Testing Spelling: How does a Dictation Method Measure up to a Proofreading and Editing Format. *Australian Journal of Language and Literacy*, 40(1), 28-39.
- Fadlallah, M. (2012). *Arabic Language Teacher*, Cairo: World of Books.

- Fadlallah, M. (2014). *Reference in Teaching Arabic Language Curriculum in Basic Education*, Cairo: World of Books.
- Hadib, M. (2003). *Comprehensive Encyclopedia of Writing and Spelling*. Amman :Dar Osama For Publishing and Distribution, Jordan.
- Jaber, W. (1991). *Methods of Teaching Arabic Language*. Amman: Dar Al Fikr
- Mubaidin, S. (2003). *Reading and Writing for Children*. Amman: Dar Al Fikr
- Muhailan,M. (2010). The Effect of Specialization, Acceptance Program, Year of Study, Nationality, and Sex on the Arabic Spelling Skill among the University of Jordan Students. *Studies of Educational Sciences*, 37(2). Deanship of Scientific Research, University of Jordan.
- Suleiman,S., Talafha,M., & Al-Husseini,A. (2006). Evaluation of Spelling Performance for Students of the Teachers College at Tabuk, Saudi Arabia, in the Light of Some Variables. *Jerash Research and Studies*, 2(1).
- Younis,F., Al-Naqa,M., & Madkour,A. (1981). *The Basics of Teaching Arabic Language and Religious Education*. Cairo: Dar al-Thaqafa for printing and publishing.