

Perceptions of Middle School Arabic Language Teachers Towards the Development of Argumentative Writing Skills

Abeer S. AlSalem

Department of Curriculum and Instruction, Faculty of Education, Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Abstract—This study examined Arabic language teachers' conception of argumentative writing and their perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills among middle school students. It also sought to identify the factors that affect or hinder teachers' implementation of teaching argumentative writing skills in middle schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The study employed a mixed-method approach with a sequential explanatory design. The study collected data from 260 middle school Arabic language teachers using a structured questionnaire with five sections covering: their conceptions of argumentative writing, their conceptions of argumentative writing skills, their perceptions of the importance of developing these skills in middle school students, their perceptions of the requirements for developing these skills, and their perceptions of the obstacles to developing these skills. Additionally, a semi-structured interview was conducted with nine female teachers to provide qualitative insights and further contextualize the quantitative survey findings. The findings revealed that middle school Arabic language teachers held a moderate level of perceptions towards the development of argumentative writing skills among their students. Based on these findings, the study recommended that the Arabic language curricula in Saudi middle schools should place a greater emphasis on cultivating argumentative writing skills, given their importance in refining students' personalities and enhancing their ability to express opinions and persuade others.

Index Terms—Teachers Perceptions, Arabic language teachers, Saudi middle schools, argumentative writing

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a fundamental skill that serves as a means of effectively expressing ideas, conveying thoughts and emotions, and communicating knowledge (Dastjerdi & Samian, 2011). It is an essential aspect of academic achievement, as students must not only master the linguistic elements of writing, such as grammar and terminology, but also become familiar with the conventions of academic writing accepted in educational contexts (Teng & Zhang, 2016).

The ability to write effectively is crucial for a wide range of purposes, from creating engaging and influential stories to formulating convincing arguments and points of view. Writing forms the basis for critical thinking and deep analysis, making it a vital component in developing comprehensive language skills and understanding diverse topics (Foster, 2002; Perin, 2013). However, writing is not a naturally acquired skill; it must be learned through formal instruction and constant practice. Even learners writing in their first language (L1) often exhibit various levels of linguistic, stylistic, and discursive flaws (Myles, 2002). The writing process involves more than just the creation of text; it requires focused attention, the ability to redirect one's ideas, and self-monitoring throughout the various stages (Harris et al., 2003). Furthermore, the skills necessary for effective writing, such as high order thinking and extensive practice, are challenging to develop (Jacobson & Reid, 2010). Therefore, writing is an art and a skill that requires dedicated training and development to achieve creativity and effective influence in the world.

In Saudi Arabia, the importance of developing effective writing skills has become increasingly apparent, particularly with the announcement of the Saudi Vision 2030 initiative, which aims to diversify the Saudi economy and promote the inclusion of women in both public and professional spheres (Saleh & Malibari, 2021). Regardless of one's profession or field of specialization, the ability to communicate effectively through writing is critical, as it enables individuals to clearly express their ideas, concepts, and feelings, while also contributing to enhanced cooperation, persuasive speech, and problem-solving (Mason et al., 2013).

Argumentative writing, in particular, is a fixture of modern life and a crucial skill for academic, professional, and personal success. This type of writing involves examining an issue, developing an argument with sufficient evidence, recognizing and countering opposing ideas, and making a claim leading to action (Anderson, 2010; Song & Ferretti, 2013). Proficiency in argumentative writing can also enable students to advocate for more challenging and complex learning experiences, thereby enhancing their academic self-concept (Anderson, 2010). Moreover, in an era characterized by digital communication, the ability to craft compelling arguments has become increasingly important, as it affects the quality and impact of online interactions, social media presence, and the structure of personal identity (Wolfe, Britt &

Butler, 2009). Therefore, investing in improving argumentative writing skills is important to enable individuals to excel in academic, professional, and personal fields alike (Ismail, 2010; Schulze, 2013).

In the Arabic speaking context, the distinct style and structure of Arabic writing is deeply rooted in the influence of the Holy Quran. According to Besston (1970; as cited in Alnofel, 2003), the very method of Arabic writing derives directly from the Quranic text. This connection is further corroborated by Ostler's (1987) observation that the written Arabic language as a whole has been greatly shaped by the unique style of the Quranic Arabic. This Quranic influence extends even to the realm of argumentative writing in Arabic. The way arguments are constructed and presented in the Arabic written tradition differs significantly from the Western approach (Koch, 1983). While Western argumentative writing relies on a logical structure that goes beyond the mere words used, Arabic argumentation tends to focus on conveying the core notion or idea using a more concise, compact expression. The emphasis is on the essence of the argument rather than an elaborate, step-by-step logical progression.

Despite the increasing exposure of Arab countries to Western civilization and the widespread teaching of the English language in schools over the past century, the teaching and application of effective writing strategies in the Arabic language has lagged behind that of the English language (Alshammari, 2016). This gap is further supported by related studies, such as Alnofil's (2003) investigation into the differences and similarities between the writing strategies employed by Saudi learners when composing in their native language (L1) of Arabic versus their second language (L2) of English. The findings revealed that participants had received significantly more training and practice in utilizing pre-writing and post-writing strategies when writing in English compared to when writing in Arabic. These results align with earlier studies that also documented the tendency of Saudi students to apply more sophisticated writing strategies in their L2 English rather than their L1 Arabic (Muhammad, 2001).

Furthermore, Al-Ali's (1998; as cited in Alnofil, 2003) observation suggests that Arabic writing instruction at the high school level tends to be limited to the basics of orthography, grammar, and organization, without adequately addressing the quality and sophistication of the writing process. The present study aims to address this gap by investigating the specific challenges and opportunities in enhancing the teaching and learning of argumentative writing strategies within the Arabic language context. By shedding light on this underexplored area, the study has the potential to contribute valuable insights for improving Arabic writing instruction and supporting the development of more effective written communication skills among Arabic language learners.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *The Importance and Characteristics of Argumentative Writing*

Learning how to write is equivalent to learning how to think, since writing is a reflective activity in which students apply their prior knowledge to communicate a relevant message to their readers (Graham et al., 2019) and it serves as a visual representation tool for abstract ideas (Saed & Al-Omari, 2014; Zhang, 2018) and information stored in the individual's mind, which facilitates the process of thinking and learning. It has been noted that writing depends on the learner's knowledge and ability to express it effectively through written words, which reflects their use of stored knowledge to convey meaning to readers (Zhang, 2018). Writing also includes a variety of skills such as vocabulary selection, use of grammar, thought process, planning and editing, and review.

Writing is classified into four main types. Firstly, explanatory writing which focuses on presenting information in a logical and objective manner without expressing personal opinions. Secondly, descriptive writing which uses vivid language to enable readers to imagine the experience of a person, an object, or the presentation of a scene using their five senses. Thirdly, argumentative, demonstrative, persuasive, or assertive writing aims to influence the reader's point of view and persuade him to take the writer's point of view. Fourthly, narrative writing which includes narration, whether based on real events or purely fictional, to attract the reader's attention and entertain him (Caulfield, 2020).

This study mainly deals with argumentative writing which includes analyzing a specific topic, constructing a well-supported argument, inferring opposing viewpoints, and identifying claims. When reviewing the literature, it becomes clear that the terms argumentative, "evidential", "confirmatory", and "persuasive" are often used interchangeably as they share some similarities. For example, the author's goal in argumentative texts is to show, persuade, defend a point of view, and draw the reader into the author's thinking (Güneş, 2013). She also describes argumentative writing as the creation of texts that experience, perceive, and express opinions, make predictions, and justify reasons to make them acceptable to others. Likewise, evidential texts relate to examples and opinions from repeated diverse sources to persuade, clarify, and keep the reader in focus (Beyreli & Konuk, 2018).

Argumentative writing is considered a powerful means for inspiring and guiding students on their journey towards constructing meaning (Baghbadorani & Roohani, 2014). Mastering argumentative writing holds great importance for students, especially those students who aspire to pursue higher education (Aziz & Ahmad, 2017). Recent research indicates the positive impact of the strategies for writing development, especially developing argumentative writing skills among language learners (Razavi et al., 2019). In addition, genre-based instruction enhances argumentative writing abilities, focusing on its ability to enrich students' general writing skills (Huang & Liu, 2020).

This type of writing draws its strength from real-life contexts, as it seeks to influence readers through careful choice of words, logical conclusion, and directing it logically and consistently. Argumentative writing enriches critical thinking abilities by enabling individuals to evaluate evidence, construct logical arguments, and anticipate opposing viewpoints

(He, 2022). It is an elaborate form of written communication that requires writers to provide convincing reasons to support their point of view (Aziz et al., 2023).

Argumentative writing also plays a crucial role in enhancing self-confidence among students. Research studies have shown a continuing positive impact of argumentative writing skills on students' self-confidence to enable them to defend their beliefs and articulate their interests, which cultivates a sense of self-advocacy and self-efficacy that extends beyond the walls of the classroom (Zumbrunn et al., 2017). Through effectively communicating their opinions and persuading others, students develop a sense of confidence in themselves and in their ability to express themselves and influence others, and this increased self-confidence translates into other areas of their academic journey, as they become more prepared to actively participate in class discussions, share their opinions, and participate in constructive public discussions (Graham et al., 2019). Moreover, when students engage in the process of formulating arguments, organizing their thoughts, and presenting their ideas persuasively, they gain a sense of empowerment and thus, argumentative writing is considered a valuable tool for enhancing confidence (Elgazzar, 2021).

B. Review of Related Studies

Given the importance of argumentative writing, many studies and research have addressed this topic, such as the study of Uccelli et al. (2013) that examined 51 argumentative essays by students at different school grades in high school. The analysis showed that in addition to text length and complexity, the use of punctuation and expressions significantly predicted writing quality. These findings contribute to the development of evaluation tools to promote effective parenting.

Based on previous studies, it was observed that there was a weakness in argumentative writing skills. As a result, enhancing this vital skill among students is the main goal of many studies, such as the study of Abdullah et al. (2022) which addressed the weakness in critical writing and critical thinking skills among second-year middle school students. The results proved the effectiveness of the confiscated argument strategy in developing those skills. Additionally, the study of Ibrahim et al. (2023) was an attempt to determine the effectiveness of the critical reading and writing curriculum in developing argumentative writing skills among student teachers at the faculty of Education. The results confirmed the effectiveness of the critical reading and writing curriculum in developing argumentative writing skills among student teachers. The study of Zahran (2015) aimed to discover the effectiveness of a program based on inquiry-based learning in developing argumentative writing skills among secondary school students. The results showed that the inquiry-based program helped develop argumentative writing skills.

In Philippakos and MacArthur's (2016) study, the effect of feedback on the quality of students' argumentative writing was reviewed. Fourth and fifth-grade students ($n=145$) were trained in assessment using specific criteria. They were divided into three groups: reviewer, reader-directed, and time-controlled. The results showed that the group of reviewers, compared to the last two groups, incorporated more items addressing opposing viewpoints and produced higher quality final essays on final exams and interim assignments.

Wijekumar et al.'s (2022) study aimed to enhance argumentative writing skills among students in the upper grades of primary school by focusing on three main areas: teaching effective reading strategies, providing education on planning and writing argumentative essays, and using We Write web-based tools to learn and master. During a random experiment that included fifth-grade classes, it was proven that this approach was effective in improving the quality of writing and planning processes, with a noticeable effect size. The study of Abdul Qader (2022) revealed a low level of Arabic language teachers' proficiency in the secondary stage in the Asir region in Saudi Arabia with methods of developing argumentative writing skills.

In their study, Aziz et al. (2023) recommended incorporating Toulmin's model to enhance argumentative essay writing skills among secondary school students in Malaysia. The study analyzed essays of 150 students and found that their proficiency levels and various other factors influenced their use of persuasion elements. By incorporating Toulmin's model into classroom practices, students have been able to improve their strategies when writing argumentative essays and critical thinking skills. The study revealed the existence of a strong, positive correlation between argumentative writing and linguistic sense, and the existence of a moderate correlation between argumentative writing and self-regulation among female third-year secondary school students in Taif, Saudi Arabia.

Recent related studies (e.g., Abdul Qader, 2022; Al-Zahrani, 2023) called for further studies to examine the perceptions of Saudi teachers about developing students' argumentative writing skills and its impact on the progress of students' argumentative writing skills at all educational levels. Therefore, the current study aimed to examine Arabic language teachers' conception of argumentative writing and their perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills among middle school students. It also sought to identify the factors that affect or hinder teachers' implementation of teaching argumentative writing skills in middle schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The study attempted to answer the following research questions:

1. How do middle school Arabic language teachers conceptualize argumentative writing?
2. What are middle school Arabic language teachers' perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills in their students?
3. What factors affect or hinder Arabic language teachers' implementation of teaching argumentative writing skills in middle schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia?

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Design

The study employed a sequential explanatory mixed methods research design. This approach involves collecting and analyzing quantitative data in the first phase, followed by the collection and analysis of qualitative data to help explain the initial quantitative results (Creswell, 2009). The motivation for using this mixed methods design was to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of Arabic language teachers' perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills among middle school students in Saudi Arabia. The quantitative phase would reveal the overall patterns and trends, while the qualitative phase would provide deeper insights to better explain the quantitative findings.

B. Participants

The study population was limited to examining the perceptions of Arabic language teachers towards developing argumentative writing skills in government middle schools in the Riyadh region of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia due to the regulations of the Saudi Ministry of Education. Arabic language teachers (n=816) who teach in the city of Riyadh, representing the entire original community, were invited to complete the questionnaire which was designed via a Google Form link. It was sent to the teachers through the school groups where they work. In the end, 260 teachers completed the questionnaire and provided responses via the link. The demographic distribution of the sample participating in the study is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1
DISTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY SAMPLE REGARDING THE DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES

N	Variable	Category	Number	Percentage
1	Qualification	BA	202	77.69%
		MA/PHD	58	22.30%
		Total	260	100%
2	Teaching experience	Less than 5 years	72	27.7%
		From 5 to 10 years	108	41.53%
		More than 10 years	80	30.76%
		Total	260	100%
3	Training courses	Less than 5 courses	68	26.15%
		From 5 to 10 courses	110	42.3%
		More than 10 courses	82	31.53%
		Total	260	100%

C. Research Instruments

(a). The Study Questionnaire

The quantitative data was collected through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections. The first section gathered participants' demographic information, such as school location, educational qualification, and teaching experience. The second section was designed to examine Arabic language teachers' conceptions of argumentative writing and their perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills in middle schools in Saudi Arabia. To measure these conceptions and perceptions, the questionnaire consisted of five sections: the first section focused on the concept of argumentative writing and included 3 items, the second section examined argumentative writing skills and had 5 items, the third section addressed the importance of developing argumentative writing skills and contained 9 items, the fourth section looked at the requirements for developing these skills and had 5 items, and the final section explored the obstacles to developing argumentative writing skills, which included 6 items. Participants responded to each item using a 3-point Likert scale: high (3 points), moderate (2 points), and low (1 point). To evaluate the degree of teachers' conceptions and perceptions, the following criterion was used:

- 1 – 1.67: Low degree of perceptions
- 1.68 – 2.35: Moderate degree of perceptions
- 2.36 – 3: High degree of perceptions

To ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, a pilot study was conducted. Participants provided feedback to improve the language and content. Additionally, three professors evaluated the questionnaire in terms of wording, vocabulary relevance, and data processing accuracy. The reliability analysis using Cronbach's alpha was 0.89, indicating strong internal consistency. The final questionnaire was deemed valid, reliable, and suitable for the study sample.

(b). Semi-Structured Interviews

Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine Arabic language teachers who had responded to the questionnaire. These participants were selected in February 2024 based on four criteria: 1) consent to voluntary participation by completing the consent form, 2) completion of the study questionnaire, 3) experience in teaching Arabic language at the middle school level, and 4) representation of a diverse group in terms of their responses to the questionnaire, educational backgrounds, and school locations. The interviews were conducted by the researcher and two assistant researchers.

The purpose of the interviews was to extract the participants' opinions on the study focus and determine the factors affect or hinder Arabic language teachers' implementation of teaching argumentative writing skills in middle schools. The interview questions were developed based on the questionnaire results and considering the study questions, which helped to obtain a comprehensive view of the participants' perceptions and ideas. The primary language used in the interviews was Arabic to make the interviewees comfortable and help them better understand the questions.

The average duration of each interview was 20 minutes, and the interviews were audio-taped to accurately record the data, with the consent of the participants. To ensure the validity and reliability of the interview questions, three academics reviewed the interview transcripts to verify the understanding of the interviewed teachers and provided the researcher with meaningful suggestions. Additionally, the researcher trained the assistants to be competent in interviewing study participants and recording semi-structured interview data independently and separately, enabling them to discuss interview topics and resolve any discrepancies in recording. After recording and transcribing the interview data, the researcher sent the interview topics to the interviewees to verify the originality and validity of their interviews and obtain final permissions to analyze the qualitative data. These procedures helped the researcher achieve 100% reliability, which is a high degree of agreement on data recording between interviewers.

D. Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study was conducted in two stages: quantitative analysis of the questionnaire data and qualitative analysis of the semi-structured interview data. The questionnaire data was analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software, version 26. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations, were calculated to describe the participants' responses to the questionnaire items. Additionally, inferential statistics, such as t-tests and one-way ANOVA, were employed to examine any significant differences in the perceptions of Arabic language teachers based on their demographic characteristics, such as teaching experience, educational level, and school location.

The semi-structured interview data was analyzed using thematic analysis. The researcher and the two assistant researchers transcribed the audio recordings of the interviews verbatim. The transcripts were then reviewed multiple times to identify recurring patterns and themes related to the study's objectives. The researchers independently coded the data, and then met to discuss and refine the emerging themes. This process continued until consensus was reached on the final set of themes. The identified themes were further analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the Arabic language teachers' perceptions regarding the concept of argumentative writing, their argumentative writing skills, the importance of developing these skills, the requirements for their development, and the obstacles they face. Relevant quotes from the interview transcripts were used to support the identified themes and provide a rich description of the participants' perspectives.

IV. RESULTS

The results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaire and semi-structured interviews helped to answer the three research questions. To address the first research question about Arabic language teachers' conceptions of argumentative writing, participants' responses to the first section of the questionnaire were analyzed, as presented in Table 2.

TABLE 2
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING CONCEPT

N	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	It is a written social linguistic activity practiced by individuals to fulfill some of their social demands	1.73	0.79	Moderate
2	A written process through which the writer provides reasons to justify an issue, by organizing information and ideas about this issue, with the aim of convincing the others.	1.62	0.75	Low
3	A genre of writing that adopts a debatable issue and presents it between the supporting and opposing opinions. With the aim of convincing the reader to take one side, while taking the opinions of the other side into consideration.	1.57	0.73	Low
The overall mean for the first axis		1.64	1.32	Low

As shown in Table 2, the average response of the Arabic language teachers at the middle school level regarding the concept of argumentative writing was low, with an arithmetic mean of 1.64. Specifically, one paragraph received a moderate rating with a mean of 1.73, while two items received low ratings with means of 1.57 and 1.62, respectively. This suggests that the Arabic language teachers have a limited perception of the concept of argumentative writing and a lack of awareness of its educational meaning, which they should aim to develop among their students. This is further evidenced by the statement of one teacher during the interviews, who reported that argumentative writing means the student's ability to provide justifications to the reader about the point of view the student adopts in the text, rather than having a clear and comprehensive definition of this style of writing.

To address the second research question regarding Arabic language teachers' perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills, the participants' responses to the second section of the questionnaire were analyzed. This section focused on four main elements: skills, importance, requirements, and obstacles related to argumentative writing. The results are presented in Tables 3,4,5, and 6.

TABLE 3
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING SKILLS

N	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Argumentative writing skills include: the skill of identifying claims and evidence supporting an argument, the skill of presenting arguments, the skill of constructing a personal argument, and the skill of formulating an argument.	1.62	0.74	Low
2	The skill of identifying claims includes identifying the main claim, identifying information and knowledge that supports this claim, identifying the ideas in the text, constructing arguments that are consistent with or contradict the ideas in the text, and presenting a clear claim supported by evidence.	1.63	0.75	Low
3	The skill of presenting arguments includes deciding on the quality of the arguments presented and determining the strength and weakness of the argument presented.	1.70	0.77	Moderate
4	The skill of constructing a personal argument includes identifying the opinions of others, presenting opinions in pro or con form, presenting an argument that supports one's position, and providing reasons that justify that position.	1.64	0.75	Low
5	Formulating an argument means being able to reach a conclusion	1.72	0.76	Moderate
The overall mean for the second axis		1.66	1.68	Low

As shown in Table 3, the average response of the Arabic language teachers at the middle school level regarding the sub-skills included in argumentative writing skills was low, with an arithmetic mean of 1.66. Specifically, two items received a moderate rating with means of 1.70 and 1.73, while three items received low ratings with means ranging between 1.62 and 1.64. This suggests that the Arabic language teachers have a limited perception of the specific skills involved in argumentative writing and a lack of awareness of these important skills that they should aim to develop among their students. This is further evidenced by the statement of one teacher during the interviews, who expressed that argumentative writing skills may mean the skills of identifying the ideas in the text and presenting a claim supported by evidence about these ideas. It became clear during the discussion that this teacher does not have a clear understanding of argumentative writing skills, claiming that they may be more appropriate to develop for high school students rather than middle school students.

TABLE 4
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THE IMPORTANCE OF DEVELOPING ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING SKILLS

N	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	The student is exposed to many different ideas and opinions	1.77	0.82	Moderate
2	It contributes to developing students' analytical and critical thinking abilities	1.73	0.81	Moderate
3	It helps students to provide the best means for discussing various claims, solving problems and then achieving.	1.74	0.82	Moderate
4	It helps students prove facts and investigate their validity in various fields	1.81	0.83	Moderate
5	It helps students to take effective roles to participate in political life and various social issues in society	1.80	0.82	Moderate
6	It helps students acquire the ability to present evidence that supports a particular claim, and to review his thinking logically	1.74	0.81	Moderate
7	The student uses it in all areas of knowledge, such as: debates that include judging historical, religious, social, and scientific events.	1.71	0.81	Moderate
8	It helps students discover whether his knowledge is sufficient or insufficient in some topics or issues.	1.70	0.82	Moderate
9	It helps students learn methods of free thinking, speaking, listening and expressing opinions	1.72	0.81	Moderate
The overall mean for the third axis		1.75	2.45	Moderate

Table 4 shows that the average responses of the middle school Arabic language teachers regarding the importance of developing argumentative writing skills among middle school students came with an arithmetic mean of 1.75. For the individual items, all nine items received an arithmetic mean rating of moderate, with values ranging between 1.70 and 1.80. This indicates that the level of perception of Arabic language teachers about the importance of developing argumentative writing skills is moderate, and they are aware of the importance of developing this type of writing among middle school students. One of the teachers also reported during the interview that despite the current Arabic language curricula not paying much attention to developing argumentative writing skills, they believe it is necessary to focus on it in the coming stage due to its significant effects on the level of students' thinking and the development of their linguistic skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening, in general.

TABLE 5
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING THE REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPING ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING SKILLS

N	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	It requires distinguishing between facts and opinions, making a claim, and gathering evidence and proof	1.82	0.81	Moderate
2	It requires awareness of the audience, and considering its characteristics and values, as the readers' reactions represent an essential element on which the student relies when writing the authentic text.	1.77	0.80	Moderate
3	It requires providing multiple reasons for an idea or point of view, evaluating it, and citing scientific facts, statistics, and aphorisms.	1.82	0.80	Moderate
4	Specific linguistic abilities, such as: the ability to express sophisticated language, and to generate and manage arguments effectively	1.78	0.81	Moderate
5	High levels of knowledge and construction of complex sentences to express ideas efficiently.	1.82	0.82	Moderate
The overall mean for the fourth axis		1.80	1.81	Moderate

Table 5 shows that the average responses of the middle school Arabic language teachers regarding the requirements for developing argumentative writing skills came with an arithmetic mean of 1.80. For the individual items, all five items received an arithmetic mean rating of moderate, with values ranging from 1.77 to 1.82. This indicates that the level of perception of Arabic language teachers about the requirements for developing argumentative writing skills is moderate, and that they are somewhat aware of what these requirements entail. One of the teachers also reported during the interview that the requirements for developing argumentative writing skills may be similar to the requirements for developing any type of functional writing, but with the addition of the higher-order thinking skills such as analysis, interpretation, and presenting evidence, due to the nature of argumentative writing.

TABLE 6
MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS REGARDING OBSTACLES TO DEVELOPING ARGUMENTATIVE WRITING SKILLS

N	Paragraph	Mean	Standard Deviation	Rank
1	Argumentative writing is complex in nature. Writing persuasively is more difficult than speaking persuasively	2.72	0.55	High
2	Argumentative writing represents a cognitive challenge because it requires students to transform knowledge into strong arguments to respond to counterarguments	2.63	0.68	High
3	Lack of basic language skills among middle school students	2.70	0.52	High
4	Students' weak ability to analyze and think critically about complex topics and analyze ideas in depth	2.70	0.56	High
5	Lack of practical training for students on argumentative writing	2.80	0.49	High
6	The teacher's inability to develop students' argumentative writing skills due to lack of knowledge	2.86	0.43	High
The overall mean for the fifth axis		2.73	1.34	High
The overall mean		1.78	5.36	Moderate

Table 6 shows that the average responses of the middle school Arabic language teachers regarding the obstacles to developing argumentative writing skills came with a high arithmetic mean of 2.73. For the individual items, all six items received a high arithmetic average rating, ranging from 2.63 to 2.86. This indicates that the level of perception of Arabic language teachers about the obstacles to developing argumentative writing skills is high, and they are aware of the nature of these obstacles, whether related to the inherent characteristics of argumentative writing itself or related to the students' abilities or teachers' skills, as one of the teachers reported during the interview. The obstacles to developing argumentative writing skills are clear to many teachers due to the nature of this type of writing, which they have not previously been trained on, and which is also not explicitly required by the current Arabic language curricula.

As for the overall result of the level of perception of Arabic language teachers at middle school for developing argumentative writing skills, it came with an arithmetic mean of (1.78) average. This indicates that the teachers' perceptions are moderate, that they have a good understanding of the skills of argumentative writing, especially in the field of its importance, requirements, and obstacles. As for its concept and skills, results were at a lower level due to the lack of knowledge of many of them about the nature of the concept of argumentative writing and its detailed skills.

To answer the third research question about the factors that affect the implementation of teaching argumentative writing skills for middle school students, semi-structured interviews were analyzed. Results revealed that there is a positive perception among middle school Arabic language teachers about developing argumentative writing skills, but they do not have a clear idea about the nature of the skills of this type of writing compared to descriptive writing and other types. The participants explained that one of the factors affecting the implementation of teaching argumentative writing is the students' weak ability to analyze and think critically. Students may have difficulty understanding complex topics and analyzing ideas in depth. This may be due to a lack of critical thinking training in the early stages of education.

One of the participants added another influential factor which is the lack of basic language skills among some students, particularly the difficulty in forming sentences properly or employing vocabulary accurately. Therefore, it becomes difficult to clearly and persuasively express ideas in writing. They also explained that the lack of practical training in argumentative writing is a very important factor, as not enough time may be allocated in the curriculum to teach and practice argumentative writing appropriately. The focus may be more on grammar or descriptive writing.

In addition to a lack of appropriate motivation and support, when teachers do not encourage students to develop argumentative writing skills and provide guidance and constructive feedback, they may not feel like improving this skill. Feeling a lack of self-confidence can be a major obstacle. If a student feels they are unable to write effectively, they may avoid practice and development.

They added that if students do not practice writing regularly outside the classroom, it may be difficult to improve their skills in this area. There are social and cultural factors, such as living conditions and personal challenges, which may affect students' ability to focus and develop their skills.

V. DISCUSSION

The results of this study agreed with the results of previous studies, including Zahran (2015), Salem & Al-Mutairi (2019), Abdulqader (2022), Al-Zahrani (2023), and Issa (2023), which emphasized the importance of developing argumentative writing skills at all school stages, since it enables learners to develop skills of argumentation as well as critical and deductive thinking, enabling students to express themselves and defend their points of view with argument and logic. Besides, students develop the skills of learning, research and communication which lead to reaching the higher levels of Arabic language mastery. Therefore, developing argumentative writing skills has become an urgent necessity in an era in which success and excellence are linked to the extent of the ability to think. Given that argumentative writing is one of the most complex cognitive activities, there were challenges and difficulties that affected the perceptions of middle school Arabic language teachers in the Riyadh region towards developing argumentative writing skills. These are cognitive and structural difficulties that accompany the process of argumentative writing and others related to the structure of argumentative writing, which teachers have not been prepared and trained to address. The literature indicates that any deficiencies in cognitive, perceptual, and linguistic functions affect the acquisition of argumentative writing skills (Salem & Al-Mutairi, 2019), which affects the roles of Arabic language teachers, representing the study sample, in teaching argumentative writing to middle school students.

VI. CONCLUSION

The current research examined Arabic language teachers' conception of argumentative writing and their perceptions towards developing argumentative writing skills among middle school students, aiming to help students develop their abilities to express opinions and construct proper arguments that support these opinions, providing students with the opportunity to learn methods of free thinking, self-expression, organizing ideas, drawing conclusions, and generating creative abilities and expressing them in a written form, as Saudi society needs prominent individuals who are distinguished by the ability to express their opinions, feelings and thoughts through written texts.

Although the research showed that the degree of perceptions of Arabic language teachers was between weak and moderate, their interviews confirmed their conviction of the necessity of developing argumentative writing skills as means for critical, analytical, and creative thinking and the production of meanings and ideas they require. Consequently, the research recommends the need to train Arabic language teachers to employ argumentative writing skills in their teaching and develop the linguistic argumentation included in the research instrument, which showcased the teachers' weakness in these skills.

The findings of this study have important pedagogical implications. There is a need for extensive professional development programs to equip Arabic language teachers with the knowledge and strategies to effectively teach argumentative writing skills. Additionally, the Arabic language curriculum should be revised to place greater emphasis on the development of argumentative writing skills at the middle school level.

Though the study reached key findings, it has two notable limitations. The research was limited to middle school Arabic language teachers, potentially limiting the generalizability to other grade levels. Additionally, the study relied on self-reported teacher data, which may be subject to bias. Future research could expand the sample to examine perceptions across grade levels and incorporate classroom observations and student data for a more comprehensive understanding of argumentative writing skill development.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author would like to thank the Arabic language teachers who generously participated in this study and shared their valuable insights and experiences. Thanking goes as well to Imam Mohammad Ibn Saud Islamic University.

REFERENCES

- [1] Abdulqader, M. (2022). Mustawa Tamakun Mo'almy Allogha Alarabya Bil Marhala Althanwaya Min Asalib Tanmyt Maharat Alketraba Aliqna'ya. [The Level of Mastery of Arabic Language Teachers at the Secondary Stage with Methods Develop Persuasive Writing Skills] *Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, Ain Shams University, 18(4), 202-224. <https://search.mandumah.com/Record/1351675>
- [2] Abdullah, A., Mohammed, M. & Nazir, W. (2022). *The Effect of Counterarguments Strategy on Developing Persuasive Writing Skills in the English language and Critical thinking Skills for Secondary School Students*. Master thesis. Helwan university, faculty of education.

- [3] Al Zahrany, M. (2023). Mahrat Alketaba Aliqna'ya Wa 'Elaqataha Bilhes Elloghawy Wa Atanzeem Alzaty Lada Talebat Asaf Althaleth Althanawy Bi Ta'ef. [Self-Regulation and Sense Linguistic the to its and Writing Persuasive Skills of third year secondary school students in Taif]. *Arab Bureau Education for Gulf States*, 44(167), 38-56.
- [4] Alnofal, A. I. (2003). *Arabic first language writing and English second language writing processes: a comparative study* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas, Teaching and Leadership).
- [5] Alshammari, S. (2016). *Improving Saudi English Learners' Second-Language Acquisition in Argumentative Writing Through Self-Regulated Strategy Development*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Kansas).
- [6] Anderson, S. (2010). *Gifted Voices: A Study of High School Students' Proficiency in Persuasive Writing and Their Perceptions of Personal Agency*. (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Denver).
- [7] Aziz, F. & Ahmad, U. (2017). Persuasive writing: How students argue. *Sains Humanika*, 9(4-2).
- [8] Aziz, F. Salam, S. & Said, S. (2023). Improving English Persuasive Writing in Malaysia: A Recommendation. *Asian Journal of Research in Education and Social Sciences*, 5(2), 63-72.
- [9] Baghdadorani, E. & Roohani, A. (2014). The impact of strategy-based instruction on L2 learners' persuasive writing. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 98, 235-241.
- [10] Caulfield, J. (2020, September 4). The Four Main Types of Essay: Quick Guide with Examples
- [11] Creswell, J. (2009). *Research design qualitative, quantitative, and mix methods approaches* (3rd ed.). California, USA: SAGE Publication, Inc.
- [12] Dastjerdi, H. & Samian, S. H. (2011). Quality of Iranian EFL learners' argumentative essays: Cohesive devices in focus. *Mediterranean journal of social sciences*, 2(2), 65-76.
- [13] Davis, M. & Robinson, P. (2017). Written Communication and Professional Credibility. *Journal of Business Communication*, 40(5), 312-327.
- [14] Elgazzar, S. (2021). The impact of persuasive writing on students' self-confidence in the EFL context. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 12(1), 1-14.
- [15] Foster, D. (2002). Making the transition to university: Student writers in Germany. In D. Foster & D. Russell (Eds.), *Writing and learning in cross-national perspective: Transitions from secondary to higher education* (pp. 192-241). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- [16] Graham, S., Harris, K. R., & Santangelo, T. (2019). Research-based writing practices and the common core: Meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. *The Elementary School Journal*, 120(3), 436-461.
- [17] Güneş, F. (2013). *Türkçe öğretimi yaklaşımlar ve modeller*. [Approaches and Models in Teaching Turkish]. Ankara: Pegem Akademi Publishing.
- [18] Harris, K.R., Graham, S., & Mason, L. (2003). Self-regulated strategy development in the classroom: Part of a balanced approach to writing instruction for students with disabilities. *Focus on Exceptional Children*, 35, 1-16.
- [19] Huang, Y., & Liu, J. (2020). Developing EFL Students' Persuasive Writing Ability through Genre-based Instruction. *English Teaching & Learning*, 44(2), 187-213.
- [20] Kamal, S. (2023). Using Critical Literacy Approach for Developing Some EFL Persuasive Writing Skills among Student Teachers at Faculty of Education. *Benha Journal of Education*, 34(133), 1-26. <https://doi.org/10.21608/jfeb.2023.314121>
- [21] Ismail, S. (2010). *Arabic and English persuasive writing of Arabs from a contrastive rhetoric perspective* (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania).
- [22] Issa, M. A. A. (2023). A Program in Extensive Reading Based on the Theory of Linguistic Argumentation to Develop the Skills of Analytical Argumentative Reading and Persuasive Writing for Non-Native Speakers of Arabic. *Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, 24(5), 224-294. doi: 10.21608/jsre.2023.217219.1577
- [23] Jacobson, L., & Reid, R. (2010). Improving the Persuasive Essay Writing of High School Students with ADHD. *Exceptional children*, 76(2), pp. 157-174.
- [24] Jusun, K. & Yunus, M. (2016). The effectiveness of using sentence makers in improving writing performance among pupils in Lubok Antu rural schools. *International Conference on Education (ICE2) 2018: Education and Innovation in Science in the Digital Era*, 469- 475.
- [25] Beyreli, L. & Konuk, S. (2018). A Research on The Improvement of Persuasive Writing Skill of Sixth Grade Students in Secondary School. *TED EĞİTİM VE BİLİM*, 43(193). 181-215. <https://doi.org/10.15390/EB.2018.7520k>
- [26] Mason, L. H., Kubina, R. M., Kostewicz, D. E., Cramer, A. M., & Datchuk, S. (2013). Improving quick writing performance of middle-school struggling learners. *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 38(3), 236-246.
- [27] Muhammad, H. A. (2001) *Arabic composition: Theoretical studies and practical models*. Riyadh, Saudi Arabia: Obaikan Bookstore.
- [28] Myles, J. (2002). Second language writing and research: The writing process and error analysis in student texts. *TESL-EJ*, 6(2), 1-20.
- [29] Ostler, S. E. (1987). *A Study of the Contrastive Rhetoric of Arabic, English, Japanese, and Spanish: By Shirley Elaine Ostler* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California).
- [30] Perin, D. (2013). Best practices in teaching writing for college and career readiness. In Graham, S., MacArthur, C. A., & Fitzgerald, J. (Eds.), *Best practices in writing instruction*. (pp. 48-70). New York, NY: Guilford Press.
- [31] Philippakos, Z. & MacArthur, C. (2016). The effects of giving feedback on the persuasive writing of fourth_ and fifth_ grade students. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 51(4), 419-433.
- [32] Razavi, A., Akbari, R., & Motallebzadeh, K. (2019). The Impact of Writing Selfregulation Strategy Development (SRSD) on Promoting EFL Learners' Argumentative Writing Performance. *International Journal of Instruction*, 12(2), 155-174.
- [33] Saed, H. & Al-Omari, H. (2014). The effectiveness of a proposed program based on a mind mapping strategy in developing the writing achievement of eleventh grade EFL students in Jordan and their attitudes towards writing. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 5(18), 88-110.
- [34] Saleh, W., & Malibari, A. (2021). Saudi Women and Vision 2030: Bridging the Gap? *Behavioral. Sciences.*, 11(10), 132; <https://doi.org/10.3390/bs11100132>

- [35] Salem, M. & Al Matry, F. (2019). *Athr Altaqem Aldinamyky Altafa'uly Wa Atharuh Fi Tahseen Alketaba Aliqna'ya Lada Ghayer Nateqeen Bil Arabya Min Alkobbar*. [Interactive Dynamic Assessment and Its Impact on Improving Argumentative Writing among Non-Arabic Speaking Adults]. The Eighth International Conference of the International Council for the Arabic Language, Dubai, April 11-13, First conference book, 160-178.
- [36] Schulze, Joshua (2013). *Supporting the Persuasive Writing Practices of English Language Learners through Culturally Responsive Systemic Functional Pedagogy*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts).
- [37] Song, Y., & Ferretti, R. P. (2013). Teaching critical questions about argumentation through the revising process: effects of strategy instruction on college students' argumentative essays. *Reading and Writing*, 26(1), 67-90.
- [38] Teng, L.S., & Zhang, L.J. (2016). Fostering strategic learning: The development and validation of the writing strategies for motivational regulation questionnaire (WSMRQ). *Asia-Pacific Education Researcher*, 25, 123-134.
- [39] Uccelli, P., Dobbs, C. & Scott, J. (2013). Mastering academic language: Organization and stance in the persuasive writing of high school students. *Written Communication*, 30(1), 36-62.
- [40] Wijekumar, K. K., Harris, K. R., Graham, S., & Lei, P. (2022). A teacher technology tango shows strong results on 5th graders persuasive writing. *Educational technology research and development*, 70(4), 1415-1439.
- [41] Wolf, C.R., Britt, A., and Butler, J.A. (2009). Argumentation schema and the myside bias in written argumentation. *Written Communication*, 26(3), 183-207. doi: 10.1177/0741088309333019.
- [42] Zahran, N., Fahmy, I. & Abd El Azim, R. (2015). *Birnamij Qa'em Ala Ata'lom Alesteqsa'y Litanmyt Maharat `Alketaba Aliqna'ya Lada Tolab Almarhala Althanawya* [An Inquiry-Based Learning Program for the Development of Persuasive Writing Skills among High School Students]. *Journal of Scientific Research in Education*, Ain Shams University, 16(1), 265-304. Doi: 10.21608/jsre.2015.13727
- [43] Zhang, Y. (2018). A contrastive study on the application of mind maps in argumentative writing instruction for EFL Learners. *English Language Teaching*, 11(12), 93-100.
- [44] He, Y. (2022). Using Genre-Based Approach to Teach Persuasive Netvertisement for English Learners in a Chinese Vocational College. *Arab World English Journal*, 13(1), 173-195; <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol13no1.12>
- [45] Zumbunn, S., Bruning, R., & Hinton, C. (2017). The influence of a strategy-focused writing intervention on the argumentative writing performance of struggling adolescent writers. *Reading and Writing*, 30(2), 313-336.

Abeer Alsalem is currently an Associate Professor specializing in Curricula and methods of teaching Arabic language at the College of Education, Imam Mohamed Ibn Saud Islamic University. She obtained her MA degree in Curricula and teaching methods from the College of Education, Imam Mohamed Ibn Saud University in 2009. Her dedication to scholarly pursuits led her to successfully complete her doctoral studies in Philosophy, specializing in Curricula and teaching methods in Curriculum and Instruction, from the College of Education at Southern Illinois University in 2015. Throughout her career, Dr. Alsalem has held various significant positions at Imam University, including serving as the Assistant to the Deputy of the Female Student Study Centre from 2004 to 2005, as a Member of the Quality Committee of the Education Department at the Girls' Study Centre from 2009 to 2010, as the Vice Dean of University Development Deanship from 2017 to 2020, and as the Head of the writing team for university graduates' capabilities indicators (verbal part) in 2023. Her research interests include Arabic Language teaching, First Language teaching and learning, Curricula development, and Teacher Education. She actively participates in several professional associations, including the Saudi Society for Educational and Psychological Sciences, the Illinois Association of Teacher Educators, Kappa Alpha Psi, and the Golden Key International Honour Society. Her scholarly contributions are noteworthy, with ten research articles published in prestigious journals.