# Investigating the Differences Between English and Arabic Organization in Essay Writing

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| Abstract | Keywords |
|---|---|
| The important point in the field of academic writing is organization . Information is presented to readers in a structured format . Academic writing employs a variety of organizational patterns. A good writer in every language should be familiar with both external organization features and internal organization, such as chapters, sections, and paragraphs. It is known that the term organization in writing is different from one language to another. This paper focuses mainly on the difference between English and Arabic languages with respect to the organization in writing and how the techniques used in Arabic affect when starting writing in English. This only can be achieved by addressing a questionnaire for both a group of a third year students, studying at faculty of education, Elmergib university and to the teachers teaching writing skills at the faculty mentioned. The study showed overall performance of students suggests that while participants reveal growing competence in writing mechanics, especially in identifying redundancy, there remains room for improvement in crafting effective conclusions. The questionnaire for teachers overwhelmingly identify linguistic interference from Arabic and structural writing issues as major struggles for students learning to write effectively in English. | *organization, writing, Arabic language , foreign language, patterns of organization* |

البحث في الفروق بين اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية فيما يتعلق بمصطلح التنظيم في الكتابة

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| الكلمات المفتاحية | الملخص |
|---|---|
| التنظيم، الكتابة، اللغة العربية، اللغة الأجنبية، أنماط التنظيم | المهم في مجال الكتابة الأكاديمية هو التنظيم ، حيث يتم تقديم المعلومات للقراء بطريقة منظمة. تعتمد الكتابة الأكاديمية على مجموعة متنوعة من أنماط التنظيم. يجب على الكاتب الجيد في أي لغة أن يكون على دراية بخصائص التنظيم الخارجي والداخلي، مثل الفصول والأقسام والفقرات. ومن المعروف أن مصطلح "التنظيم" في الكتابة يختلف من لغة إلى أخرى. تركز هذه الورقة بشكل أساسي على الفرق بين اللغتين الإنجليزية والعربية فيما يتعلق بتنظيم الكتابة، وكيف تؤثر التقنيات المستخدمة في اللغة العربية عند البدء في الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية. ولا يمكن تحقيق ذلك إلا من خلال توزيع استبيان على مجموعة من طلاب السنة الثالثة بكلية التربية بجامعة المرقب، وعلى الأساتذة الذين يدرّسون مهارات الكتابة في الكلية المذكورة. |

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## 1.0 Introduction

The term organization in writing is different from one language to another. Information is presented to readers in a structured format. Even short pieces of writing have regular, predictable patterns of organization. A writer can take advantage of these patterns, so that readers can still follow, even if he makes errors. For example, the acceptance letter is organized differently than the rejection letter. The news in the letter does not come at the same place. The writer of the good-news letter wants the correspondence to continue, while the writer of the bad-news letter wants the correspondence to end. Thus, this paper reviews the linguistic differences between English and Arabic Knowing the differences and similarities between the two languages help both the students as well as the researchers in the field of writing essay.

### 1.1 The Problem of the Study
It is noticeable that when writing essays ,English and Arabic have different rhetorical traditions. For example, English academic writing usually adopt linear organization which are clarity, and explicit thesis statement; whereas, Arabic writing uses repetition, wording, digression, or inductive patterns which reflect culture and linguistic norms. This difference may cause challenges for Arab learners who study English as a foreign language .Students might transfer Arabic organizational patterns into English essays, leading to difficulties in academic writing.

### 1.2 The Aims of the Study
This paper focuses mainly on the difference between English and Arabic languages with respect to the organization in writing and how the techniques used in Arabic affect when starting writing in English.

### 1.3 The Questions of the Study
This study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the main similarities and differences between English and Arabic essay organization?
2. To what extent do cultural and linguistic norms influence the organization of essays in English and Arabic?

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3. What challenges do Libyan students face adapting to English essay organization?

4. What teaching strategies can help students adjust to English organization effectively?

## 1.4 The Methodology of the Study

Because the research questions of the study attempt to explore cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences, as well as pedagogical challenges and strategies, a a quantitative approach would be ideal for this study. This approaches would provide a richer, and more nuanced understanding. The tools used in this study consisted of three types. The first tool is an open questionnaire given to a third -year university students in the academic year 2024/2025. It is of two types. Firstly, the participants are asked to insert transitional sentences to connect paragraphs using adverbial connectors. Make the reader go smoothly from one paragraph to another. Secondly, participants are asked to write a conclusion paragraph to the essay given. The second tool was a questionnaire of five likert-scale type presented to the academic teaching staff, teaching writing to third year students in the faculty of education, khoms. The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers to give their agreement about students' difficulties regarding writing essay.

## Literature Review

Academic writing employs a variety of organizational patterns. A good writer in every language should be familiar with external organization features, such as chapters, sections, and paragraphs. He should also become familiar with internal organization as well. One very common strategy in academic writing is to organize information in terms of problem-solution. Hoey (1983) mentions four parts for the organization of problem-solution which are as follows:

1. Description of a situation

2. Identification of a problem

3. Description of a solution

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## 4. Evaluation of the solution

writing paragraphs in English is the same as a cheeseburger , at a fast-food restaurant. A cheeseburger has a top bun (a kind of bread), meat, cheese, lettuce, and other elements in the middle of the cheeseburger, and a bottom bun. Thus, the top bun and the bottom bun are very similar. The top bum is the same as a topic sentence and the bottom is the same as the concluding sentence. Both buns hold the middle.

According to Canale (1983) as quoted by Kochubei(2021) to be fluent in English speaking is not enough because this fluency does not help a learner to know the technical aspects of essay writing which fall under discourse competence of communicative competence. Another study is conducted by AlMarwani(2020 )on postgraduate students of Saudia Arabia. The results of her study students' vocabulary and knowledge of grammar are not sufficient to express their ideas into English. Kochubei also mentions a study conducted by Mdodana and Marfugu( 2023) on South Africa students. The findings showed that students have problems in conceptualizing the essay's topic, organizing  its various paragraphs and selecting the right punctuations.

  It should be remembered that organization in English essay includes two aspects. They are: what to write and how to start. This will make the writer feel confident about the writing process and spend less time  waiting for inspiration. (c.f. Hilton and Hyder 1992,p. 84)

According to linguistic Structure, Arabic and English are different. For example, Arabic is a Semitic language with a different word order, complex morphology, and a rich system of root-based word formation ; whereas, English belongs to the west Germanic branches. Thus, it is interesting to note that each language has its own structure and style of organization. The organization of English for example is different from other languages. Boardman and Frydenberg(2008,p. xvi) state that "the organization in English is fairly simple". They also add that "English uses   a straight line from  beginning to end". This means that any article in English is of three parts: the beginning, the middle and the end. In the beginning , the reader will

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have an idea about the article and in the middle the reader will have an idea about the topic. The end should say what the topic was about. The following is a diagram of English organization of writing as quoted by Boardman and Frydenberg (2008,p. xv).
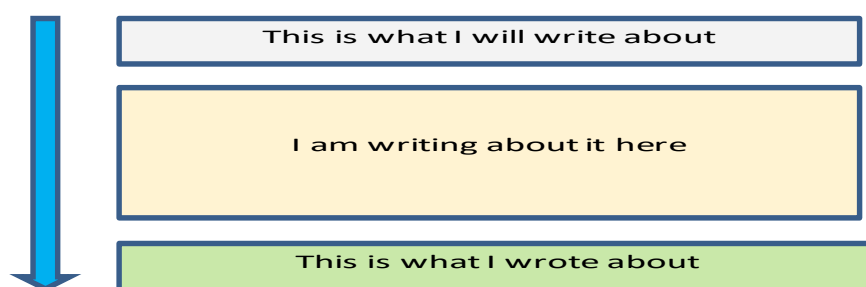
Diagram(1) English Organisation



Diagram 1: English Organization

However, other languages have also different organization in writing. For example, although Spanish organization is similar to English organization, the line from beginning to end is not so straight. To make writing more interesting, Spanish writers usually add something which is not related directly to the topic. The following shows the Spanish organization of writing according to Boardman and Frydenberg (2008,p.xvi):
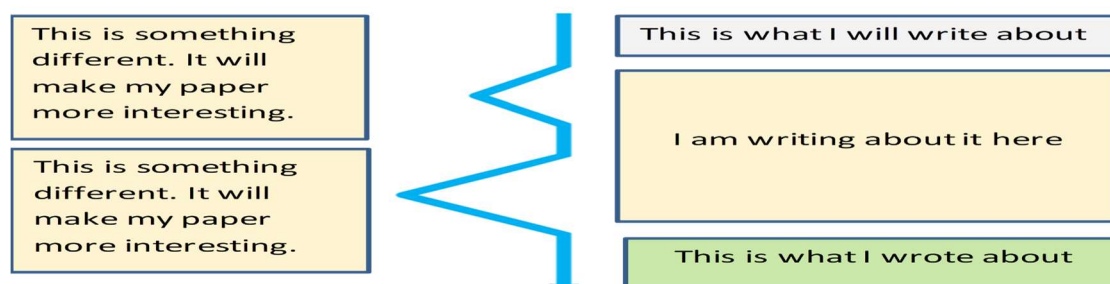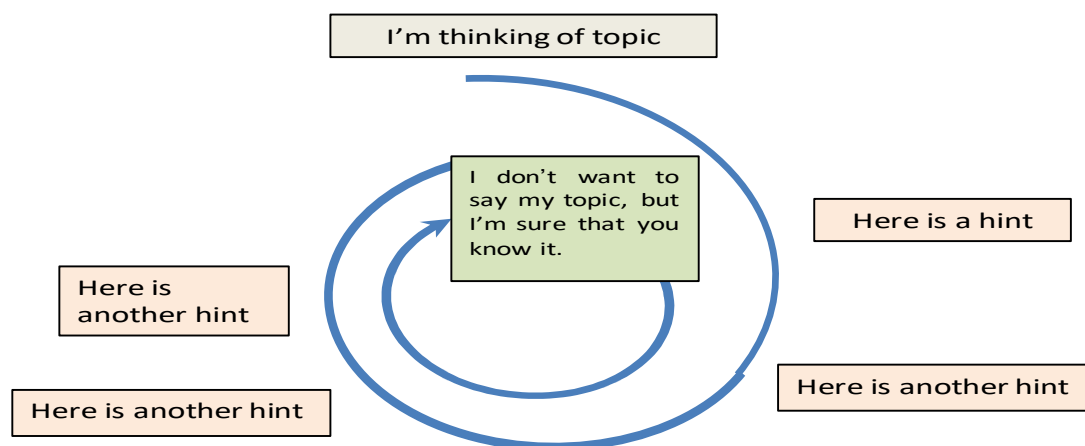
Diagram (2) Spanish Organisation



Diagram 2: Spanish Organization

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It should be remembered that the organization in Japanese is completely different from English. For example the shape of Japanese style of writing is always circular. In other words the topic here is stated at the end of the article. The writer gives hints to help the reader guesses the topic. Diagram 3 explains the Japanese organization of writing as stated by Boardman and Frydenberg (2008,p. xvi):

Diagram (3) Japanese Organization



Arabic also employs another style of organization which of course is different from English. For example, a good writer in Arabic should use parallel style in his writing. That is the writer has to use coordinate conjunctions such as but, so, and ,or. In English; however, the writer should use subordinate conjunctions such as when, while, whereas, before, until. Another difference is that Arabic writing is more repetitive than English writing, with the main points being restated in different ways in order to make the style more elegant. This style is not of course accepted in English academic writing. Diagram (4) explains Arabic organization of writing as illustrated by Boardman and Frydenberg (2008,p.xvii):

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Diagram (4) Arabic Organisation



Diagram 4: Arabic Organization

In the same vein Ivy Panda(2019) in her paper published on the Net the differences between English and Arabic in essay writing. She also suggested some solutions to such problems. These issues are: Run on sentences, redundancy, punctuation, writing organization. For example "the circular way of writing in English essay is differentiated with linear example in Arabic where there is introduction of fresh ideas in the conclusion. It is also the repletion of the synonyms in one sentence is allotted in Arabic languages because such synonyms show the writer fluency and stresses the ideas.

Another study was investigated by El- Dakhs (2020) on the differences between Arabic and English abstracts of research articles in terms of rhetorical structure and interactional features. Her study included 400 abstracts from prestigious journals in education field. The results revealed that English abstracts tend to follow conventional moves, while Arabic abstracts tend to focus on the moves of purpose, method, and findings. The study also showed that abstracts in English comprise lengthier introduction and conclusion, while Arabic abstracts include lengthier methods and findings in addition to the mentioned results, the combination patterns of moves showed much more variation in English than Arabic abstracts. Moreover, Alwahhabi(2024) adds that organization in English consists of three elements. They are: introduction, body and conclusion. If the reader reads the introduction and conclusion , he will understand the whole essay. Arabic writing organization; however, the writer uses a charming style which makes the reader

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read the beginning to the end.

Abu Saiba and eta l(2008) , mention some definitions of the articles in Arabic language. For example, Najm defines the article in Arabic language as a piece of prose which has limited length and subject matter and it is written in a spontaneous manner and it is free of affection. Aljahiz, as quoted by Abu Saiba mentions the characteristics of articles which are the unity, the novelty of the idea, the style of the suspense ,and the soundness of the presentation. Dayf also indicated that the Arabic essay articles was greatly influenced by the French articles as a result of the necessities of modern life and the emergence of the Press. The term essay appeared in the sixteen century. Montaigne is considered the father of essay.

The following table summarizes the differences between English and Arabic essay writing:

| | English writing organization | Arabic writing organization |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | In English, the organization looks like a hamburger! Yes, like a hamburger in its composition, the hamburger begins with a bread, a piece of meat, a bread again, this analogy is meant that the article must start with an introduction, followed by the heart of the topic, a conclusion, of his topic and not increase or decrease it. If the reader reads the introduction and conclusion , he will understand the whole essay. | In Arabic, the writer uses a charming style that makes the reader read the article from the beginning to the end, and if he reads the first paragraph of the article separately or the last paragraph of the article separately, he will not reach a complete perception of the content of the topic, which makes him obliged to read the whole topic in its lines. |
| 2 | In the academic writing in English "the topic" is not clear from its title" but "the topic is clear from its introduction" | In Arabic writing "the topic" is clear from its title. |
| 3 | In English, a full stop is used to end the sentence. | In Arabic, a comma is used |
| 4 | In English academic Writing, run on sentences and redundancy are not permitted. | Arabic allows using run on sentences and redundancy and the use of synonyms in one sentence. |
| 5 | In English, the writer should use subordinate conjunctions such as **when, while, whereas, before, after, until**. | In Arabic, the writer uses fewer adverbial connections to link paragraphs of the essay. Instead, he uses the coordinate conjunction ***and, so, or*** and a light introduction to pave the way to another new paragraph to appear. |

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## 1.6 Test Design

### 1.6.1 Students' questionnaire

The approached utilized in this paper is to measure the actual students writing assignments. Quantitative research was adopted in this research. Thus, an essay was given to the third-year students of faculty of education, Elmergib University and they were asked to insert sentences including transitional devices to make the paragraphs of the essay united. Also, they were asked to write a concluding paragraph to the essay given to them. The aim is to show and analyze students ability in recognized and producing coherent paragraphs and logical movements between the paragraphs of the essay given; and how they end up the essay by writing good and clear concluding paragraph.

### 1.6.2 EFL Teachers' questionnaire

Teachers' questionnaire comprised 9 items. It included five likert-scale ( strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, strongly agree, agree) The total number of the subjects consisted of 5 teachers who have long experience in teaching writing skills in the faculty. The participants were informed to choose the alternatives which represent their opinions.

## 1.7 Data Analysis

After collecting data from two questionnaires one for students and the other for teachers, the results were calculated, checked and analyzed to find the main differences between English and Arabic in the organization of essay writing. The following tables show the participants results.

## 1.7.1 Analyzing students' questionnaire

Table(1) Scores obtained by the population of the study under the heading Transitional sentences to connect the paragraphs of the essay

| Item | Correct answer | Percentage | Incorrect answer | Percentage |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| Transitional sentences to connect paragraphs of the essay | 5 | 35.71% | 9 | 64.28% |

The above table shows the participants answers in responding the item: transitional sentences to connect paragraphs in essay writing. The percentage of the correct answers was 35.71, whereas, the percentage of the incorrect answers was 6428%. The percentage of the incorrect answers was relatively high. This means that students are not familiar with organization of the essays and they lack practice in joining the paragraphs of the essay.

**Table(2)** Scores obtained by the population of the study under the heading **Writing a concluding paragraph**.

| Item | Correct answer | Percentage | Incorrect answer | percentage |
|------|------|------|------|------|
| Writing a concluding paragraph. | 8 | 57.14% | 6 | 42.85% |
| Run-on sentences | 9 | 64.28% | 5 | 35.71% |
| Redundancy | 10 | 71.42% | 4 | 28.57% |

Table 2 shows students correct and incorrect answers to the heading writing a concluding paragraph. The correct answers compared with incorrect answers were relatively high. The percentage for the correct answer was 57.14%; whereas, the percentage of incorrect answer was just 42.85%. These results assured that some participants have no idea about the organization of the essay in English. This is why they fail to end up the essay by writing good and clear concluding paragraph. The reason behind this failure is due to the influence of their native language. In Arabic, the writer uses a charming style which makes the reader read the essay from the beginning to the end. It is also noticeable that students have problems when they are asked to write a concluding paragraph. These problems are in both

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run-on sentences and redundancy. The percentages of the incorrect answers for each were 35.71% and28.57%.

It can be concluded that the overall performance suggests that while participants show growing competence in writing mechanics, especially in identifying redundancy, there remains room for improvement in crafting effective conclusions.

**1.7.2 Analyzing Teachers' questionnaire**

**Table (3) Explains the sample population under the heading of teachers' attitude.**

| No | Items | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | agree |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lack of vocabulary in both Arabic and English affects learning writing skills. | | | | 60% | 40% |
| 2 | The differences of linguistic structure between English abic affect learning the organization of essay writing in the | | | | 60% | 40% |
| 3 | Because Arabic language permits run on sentences and redundancy, students of the TL commit mistakes in writing. | | | 20% | 20% | 60% |
| 4 | Because writing a conclusion paragraph in Arabic writing is sometimes not needed, students of the TL language face difficulty to wrap everything up by tying it all together when they are asked to write a concluding paragraph.. | 20% | | 20% | | 60% |
| 5 | Students encounter difficulties in arranging their thoughts and ideas. | | | | 40% | 60% |
| 6 | Students face problems in writing the elements of essay: introduction , body, and conclusion. | | | 20% | 20% | 60% |
| 7 | Students face problems in using adverbial connectors to help the reader move from one paragraph to another. | | 20% | | 40% | 40% |
| 8 | Students face problems in writing clear thesis statement. | 20% | | | | 80% |
| 9 | Students' essays are clearly well- organized. | 20% | 80% | | | |
| | Total | 60 | 100 | 60 | 240 | 440 |

The results given in the above table can be explained and discussed as follows:

In item (1) the participant teachers complained that 60% of the students  have less stock of vocabulary in both languages and this of course affects learning writing in the target language. 40% of the participants agreed that students lack vocabulary in both languages. This finding supports the hypothesis that learner's competence in

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the L2 is partly dependent on the level of competence already achieved in the L1(Cummins1978-1979).

In item (2) 60% of the participant teachers strongly agreed that the differences in linguistic structure between English and Arabic affect learning writing organization; whereas, 40% agreed.

In the statement No.(3)"Because Arabic language permits run on sentences and redundancy, students of the TL commit mistakes in writing." The participants attitude vary from 20% to 60%. Thus, the results were 20% for neutral, 20% for strongly agree and 60% for agree.

In item (4) participants gave positive attitude towards this item. The percentage ranged from20% to 60%. The results were 20% for strongly disagree, 20% for neutral, and 60% for agree. This result showed that the participant teachers have relatively high attitude towards the effect of Arabic writing organization on learning the organization in English essay writing. Thue, students face difficulty to wrap everything up by tying it all together when they are asked to write a concluding paragraph.

In item (5) the participants revealed high positive attitude towards students' difficulties in arranging their thoughts and ideas. The responds were 40% for strongly agree and 60% for agree.

In the statement No. (6)"Students face problems in writing the elements of essay: introduction , body, and conclusion" the participants responds vary from 20% to 40%.The results were 20% for neutral, 20% for strongly agree and 60% for agree.

In Item (7) the participants revealed high positive attitude towards this item, Thuse, the percentages were 20% for disagree, 40% for strongly agree, and 40%for agree. These results assured that students face problems in using adverbial connectors to help the reader move from one paragraph to another.

In item (8) the participant teachers showed high positive attitude towards students problems in writing clear thesis statement. The percentage of agree choice reached

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to 80%, whereas, 20% for strongly disagree. This result assured the assumption that most students have great problem in constructing clear thesis statement for their essays.

In item (9) teachers have also shown positive attitude towards this item. The responds were 80% for disagree and only 20% for strongly disagree. This assured the fact that the participant students have problems in organizing their essay clearly.

## 1.8 Conclusion

The study of English and Arabic organization in writing essay can bring to the teachers as well as students the differences between these two languages and try not to make such differences influence learning the target language. The study also showed that there is diversity between the use of transitional sentence device as well as writing concluding paragraph in both languages.

## 1.9 Recommendations

-The study revealed different organization patterns between English and Arabic so the findings of the study suggest vital and reasonable teaching language methodology in order to overcome the difficulties students may face in organizing essay in English writing.

-Teachers should raise students' awareness of the use of transitional sentences which help the paragraphs of the essay more united and coherent.

- Teachers should encourage their students to practice a three and a five-paragraph essay writing effectively.

- Teachers should help student write correct and appropriate concluding paragraphs free of run-on sentences and redundancy.

- Teachers should encourage students write an outline because it helps them organize their ideas and thoughts.

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**Student Questionnaire**

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**A) 1-Write in the spaces given the good transitional sentences to connect the paragraphs.**
**Advantages of Wearing the Same Uniform**

Wearing uniforms give all students equality, identity and pride. Most of the schools in Libya seek to apply uniforms for the students .

Primarily, uniforms give students equality. All students do not have the same financial resources and can't afford expensive clothes. Therefore, uniforms make it more equal among the rich and poor students. For example, student may want to wear designer clothes which some can afford but others can't.

……………………………………… …..Students feel a sense of belonging when everyone has the same uniform. Students can tell who is from their school and who is not according to the uniform. Others can tell which students are from which schools and if someone is not behaving well, others will know which school that person is from.

…………………………………………… .If a sports team does well, students can feel proud together of that accomplishment. In addition to this, if a student is a good musician, others can feel proud that they are his/her classmates. Hence, students can "advertise" their school just by wearing their uniforms and be proud of the school they attend.

**2- Give a concluding paragraph to the above essay.**

……………………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………………
………………………………………………………………………………….

**Table(1) shows students' questionnaire**

| Items | Correct answer | Percentage | Incorrect answer | percentage | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Transitional sentences to connect paragraphs of the essay | | | | | |
| Writing a concluding paragraph | | | | | |
| Total | | | | | |

The paper title is: **Investigating the Differences between English and Arab in Organizing Essay Writing**. Please answer the following questionnaire. Your answers will be calculated and analyzed. Thank you in advance.

The researcher

**Table(2) shows Teachers' questionnaire**

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| No | Items | Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral | Strongly agree | agree | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Lack of vocabulary in both Arabic and English affects learning writing skills. | | | | 60% | 40% | |
| 2 | The differences of linguistic structure between English and Arabic affect learning the organization of essay writing in the TL. | | | | 60% | 40% | |
| 3 | Because Arabic language permits run on sentences and redundancy, students of the TL commit mistakes in writing. | | | 20% | 20% | 60% | |
| 4 | Because writing a conclusion paragraph in Arabic writing is sometimes not needed, students of the TL language face difficulty to wrap everything up by tying it all together when they are asked to write a concluding paragraph.. | 20% | | 20% | | 60% | |
| 5 | Students encounter difficulties in arranging their thoughts and ideas. | | | | 40% | 60% | |
| 6 | Students face problems in writing the elements of essay: introduction , body, and conclusion. | | | 20% | 20% | 60% | |
| 7 | Students face problems in using adverbial connectors to help the reader move from one paragraph to another. | | 20% | | 40% | 40% | |
| 8 | Students face problems in writing clear thesis statement. | 20% | | | | 80% | |
| 9 | Students' essays are clearly well-organized. | 20% | 80% | | | | |
| | Total | | | | | | |

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