

AN INTRODUCTION TO ACADEMIC ENGLISH ESSAY ORGANIZATION

By Mark Wynn

Writing began very slowly around 10,000 BC. It started as simple symbols on sealed pottery to represent what they contained. After about 8,000 years of development, the idea of an alphabet slowly spread around the Mediterranean. Today there are dozens of alphabets used to communicate the world's 6,000 languages. Some writing systems work differently than alphabets and use symbols to represent meanings rather than sounds.

Name and Power of Letters	HEBREW	PHOENICIAN	ARABIC	SAMARITAN	ETHIOPIAN	SYRIAC	GREEK
Alaph	א	𐤀	ا	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Α
Beth	ב	𐤁	ب	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Β
Gimel	ג	𐤂	ج	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Γ
Dalath	ד	𐤃	د	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Δ
He	ה	𐤄	ه	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ε
Vav	ו	𐤅	و	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ϝ
Zayin	ז	𐤆	ز	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ζ
Cheth	ח	𐤇	ح	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Η
Teth	ט	𐤈	ط	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Θ
Xeth	י	𐤉	ي	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ι
Kaph	כ	𐤊	ك	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Κ
Lamed	ל	𐤋	ل	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Λ
Mem	מ	𐤌	م	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Μ
Nun	נ	𐤍	ن	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ν
Samech	ס	𐤎	س	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ξ
Ajin	א	𐤏	ع	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Α
Yod	י	𐤐	ي	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ι
Tzade	צ	𐤑	ز	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ζ
Koph	כ	𐤒	ك	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Κ
Resh	ר	𐤓	ر	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ρ
Shin	ש	𐤔	ش	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Σ
Tav	ת	𐤕	ت	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Ⲁ	Τ

In addition to different writing systems, different cultures may prefer different methods of organization (Kaplan 1966). English essay organization is fairly straightforward, and may reflect Europe's and America's history of industrialization and its focus on efficient use of time. In Academic English readers expect an article to have a beginning, middle, and an end. Additionally, there should be a clear idea about what the entire article will discuss in the beginning. The middle is where details and support are presented. The end is to put it all together and remind the reader of everything that was covered.

Consider a simplified view of an English Essay:

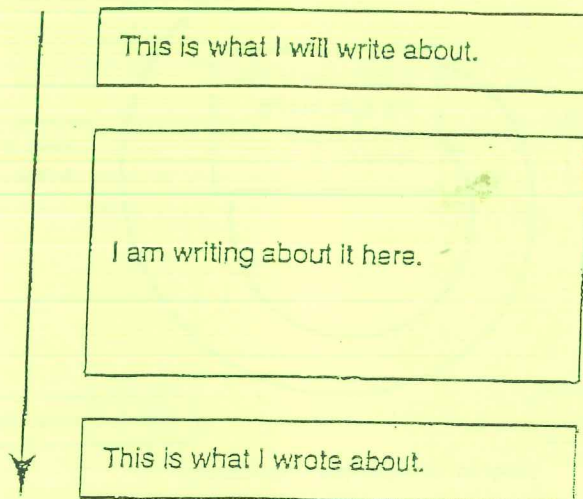


Diagram 1: English Organization

“Other languages organize writing differently. For example, Spanish organization is similar to English, but the line from beginning to end isn’t so straight. Spanish speakers write about the topic, but here and there they add something that is not directly related to the topic. To a Spanish speaker, this makes the writing more interesting. Here is a diagram of the Spanish style of writing.

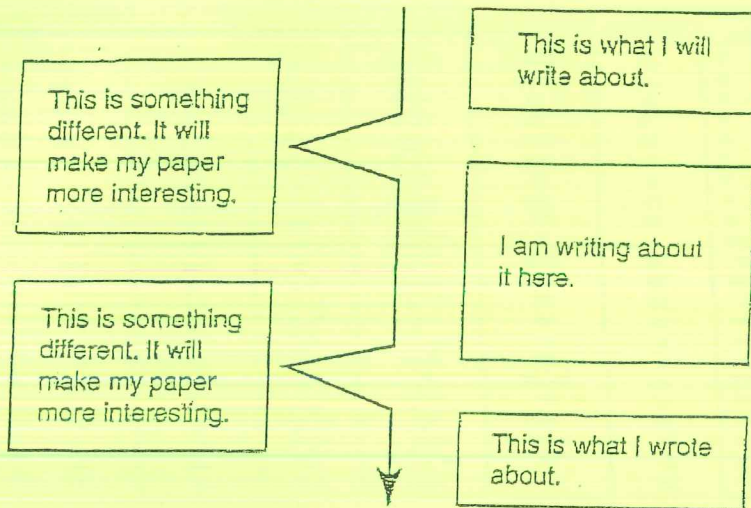


Diagram 2: Spanish Organization

The Japanese style of writing is often circular. This means that the topic comes at the end of the article. In fact, sometimes, the writer doesn’t say what the topic is. Instead, he gives hints to help the reader guess the topic. Here is a diagram of the Japanese style of writing.

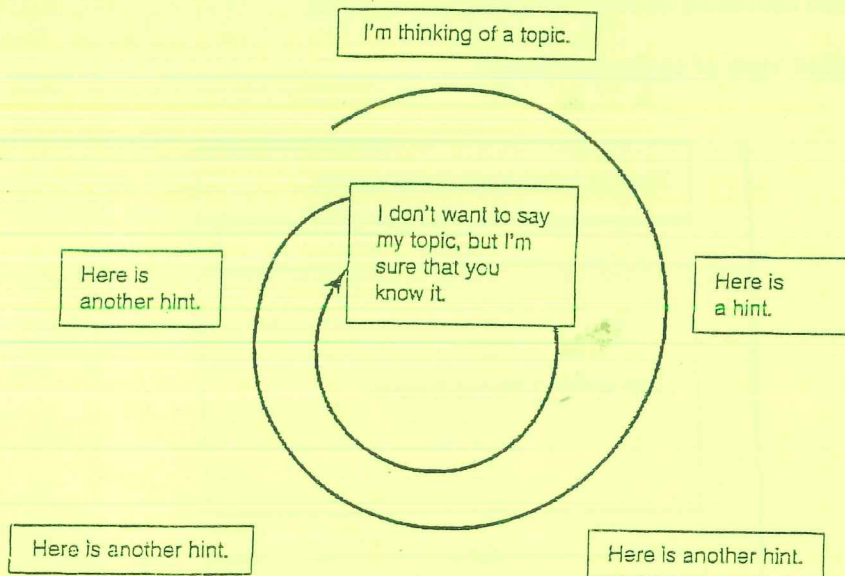


Diagram 3: Japanese Organization

Still another style of writing is used in Arabic. To be a good writer in Arabic, you need to write in a parallel style. This means that you write using coordinating conjunctions, such as *and*, *or*, or *but*. English, on the other hand, uses more subordinating conjunctions, such as *when*, *before*, or *until*. Arabic writing is also more repetitive than English writing. To an English reader, this coordination and repetition would be boring, but to an Arabic reader, this style is elegant and what is expected. Look at this diagram. It shows the repetition and coordination that is necessary for good Arabic writing” (Boardman 6-7).

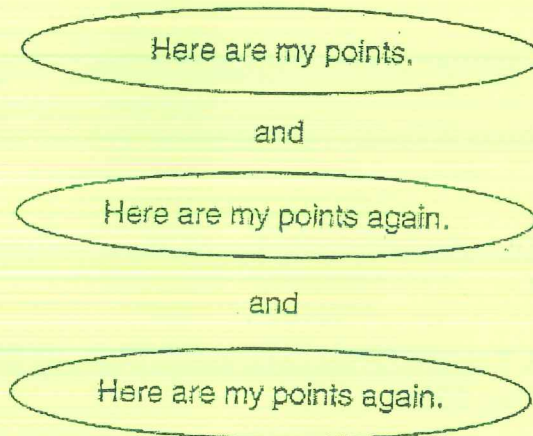
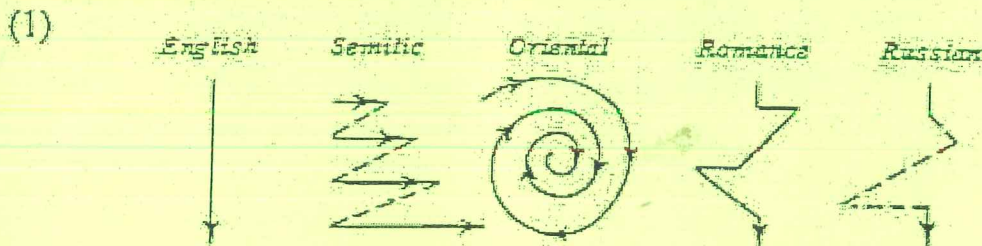


Diagram 4: Arabic Organization

It is essential to understand that not only are languages different but also cultures. You are probably already bilingual, but you may also become bicultural. No culture or language is better than another, but to be a successful writer in one culture you need to learn the rules, just like you have to learn the rules of a language.

Consider another diagram of what has been presented above before you begin organizing your essay on the next page:



1. Boardman, Cynthia A. *Writing to Communicate 3*. Pearson Longman. 2009. Print.
2. Kaplan, R.B. "Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education." *Language Learning*, 16(1), 1966. Print.

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