# The Use of Induction, Deduction or Quasi-Induction in Argumentative Essay Organization by Arabic-Speaking Advanced Learners of EFL

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**Abstract:**

When producing an argumentative text, the writer adopts a definite position and advances arguments in support of it. The textual arrangement of these two cardinal components of argumentation varies across cultures, causing difficulties in learning to write persuasively in foreign languages. The present paper investigates the text organization of a sample of English argumentative essays written by a group of Arabic-speaking learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). The analysis aims at delineating the factors leading them to project texts non-conforming to English argumentative discourse conventions. The findings reveal that multiple factors underlie learners' textual preferences.

**Keywords**: argumentation, deduction, induction, quasi-induction, essay organization, Arabic-speaking learners of English.

En produisant un texte argumentatif, l'auteur adopte une position définie et avance des arguments à l'appui de celui-ci. L'arrangement textuel de ces deux composants cardinaux de l'argumentation varie selon les cultures, provoquant des difficultés dans l'apprentissage de l'écriture persuasive en langues étrangères. Le présent travail examine l'organisation de texte d'un échantillon d'essais argumentatifs anglais écrits par un groupe d'apprenants arabophones d'anglais langue étrangère. L'analyse vise à tracer les facteurs qui les amènent à projeter des textes non-conformes aux conventions de discours argumentatif anglaises. Les résultats révèlent que des facteurs multiples sont à la base des préférences textuelles des apprenants.

**Mots clés:** argumentation, déduction, induction, quasi-induction, l'organisation d'essai, apprenants arabophones d'anglais.

**ملخص:**

عند تحرير أي نص حجاجي يتبنى صاحب النص اتجاهاً محدداً و يقوم بتقديم البراهين اللازمة لدعمه، يتغيــر الترتيــب النصي لهذين المكونين الأساسيين للخطاب الحجاجي تبعاً للثقافات مما يسبب صعوبات عند تعلم الكتابة الحجاجية بلغــة أجنبيــة. يتضمن هذا المقال دراسة البنية النصية لعينة من مقالات حجاجية تم تحريرها من طرف مجموعة من متعلمي اللغــة الإنجليزيــة كلغة أجنبية و الذين كانت لغتهم الأم هي اللغة العربية، و الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تسليط الضوء على العوامل المؤدية بهم إلى تحرير نصوص قد تحيد في بناءها عن قواعد تركيب الخطاب الحجاجي باللغة الإنجليزية.  تظهر النتائج بأن عدة عوامــل تقــف وراء الاختيارات النصية المنتهجة عند كتابة النصوص المدروسة.

**كلمات مفتاحية:** الحجاج ، الاستنتاج ، الاستقراء ، شبه الاستقراء ، بناء المقال ، متعلمو اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

## 1. Introduction

In the course of daily communication, be it spoken or written, language users often make claims and attempt to lead their target audiences to the acceptance of their positions by means of advancing some evidence. Such linguistic practice is but a case of argumentation. O'Keefe (1977) distinguishes two senses of argument: a static sense and a dynamic sense. In the former, argument is made. It is a product. In the latter, argument is thought to be a process in which people engage, similar to bull sessions and discussions. Any treatment of argumentative discourse ought to be explicit about which sense is espoused. Adopting a static conception of argumentation and applying it to writing, the latter can be delineated as "attempts to support a controversial point or defend a position on which there is a difference of opinion" (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, p. 337). In essence, the act of argumentation, which aims at convincing another party of the acceptability of one's claims, is seen to be a highly complex, multifaceted form of discourse, even when producing texts in one's native language.

The case of learning to write convincingly in a foreign language is no exception. It is reported in the literature that learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) project argumentative texts that sound alien to a native speaker, despite exhibiting a high linguistic proficiency (Reid, 1984). Such discourse non-conformities in EFL learners' texts are explainable in terms of several paradigms. Most prominently, they may relate to the influence of the learners' native culture and its rhetorical traditions (Hinkel, 2002; Kaplan, 1966), to developmental factors in acquiring the target language discourse conventions (Mohan and Lo, 1985) or to the instructional context (Clyne, 1987; Rienecker & Jörgensen, 2003). Regardless of the source of the problem, in EFL academic circles, the need to produce opinion texts which respond to the expectations of English readerships remains a basic criterion in the evaluation of learner academic success. In this paper, the preferences of a group of Arabic-speaking EFL learners as to the use of induction, deduction and quasi-induction in organizing argumentative essays are explored. The rationale is to verify whether the rhetorical features of Arabic at this level of argumentative discourse account for certain discourse difficulties that these learners confront when attempting to develop argumentative papers in English.

## 2. Cross-Cultural Differences in Organizing Argumentative Texts

Contrastive rhetoric research demonstrates that the organization of argumentation in essays, namely choosing to announce the writer's claim early in the text or to postpone the statement of the point after advancing arguments, varies across cultures, engendering difficulties for learners of foreign languages. Delineating the senses of "induction" and "deduction" and scrutinizing their variants would make the comprehension of such cross-cultural disparities more lucid.

Technically, the aforementioned methods of organization are labeled *deduction* and *deduction* respectively, and in mid position lies *quasi-induction*. Hinds (1990) explains that "deductive writing has the thesis statement in the initial position" (p.89). Non-deductive development can be of two forms: *inductive*, "having the thesis statement in the final position" (ibid) or *quasi-inductive,* "getting the readers to think for themselves, to consider the observations made, and to draw their own conclusions" (ibid., pp. 99-100). That is to say, in the last case, the thesis statement is not explicitly stated in any part of the essay. Research indicates that induction and deduction, seen as two principal macrostructures of persuasive

discourse, are end points of a wider continuum of organisations with additional variants. Warnick and Manusov (2000), for instance, have investigated the variation of the justificatory macrostructures in relation to cultural beliefs and values in four cultural groups: African Americans, Asian Americans, Asians and European Americans. In their study, it is shown that the inductive and deductive modes of reasoning, which are the principal forms of argumentation known in the Western European tradition, are not the sole patterns used in persuasion if one moves from community to another. Additional macrostructures such as *abduction* and *narration* are prevalently employed by speakers from other cultural groups.

Some scholars establish connections between *writer / reader responsibility* and the patterns of development used in writing. Hinds (1987), working towards an account for coherence, proposed a linguistic typology of languages based on the extent to which they place burden on the writer or reader to achieve text semantic connectedness. Two new terms are introduced to establish the distinction in written texts: *reader responsible* as opposed to *writer responsible* texts, based on the division of responsibility between readers and writers, namely, "the amount of effort writers expend to make texts cohere through transitions and other uses of metatext" (Connor, 2002, p. 496).

McCool (2009) states that reader responsible cultures "emphasize flowery and ornate prose, subjects over actions, theory instead of practice, and an inductive or quasi-inductive line of reasoning" (p. 2). Hinds' (ibid) findings on writer versus reader responsibility are mainly about argumentation styles in Japanese and English.

Commenting on these findings, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) state that in English argumentation, statements of points of view are found to be explicit and are usually placed near the beginning of the text. In comparison, Japanese-speaking writers conceal their standpoints while presenting the different sides of an issue, with their position coming only at the end. Hinds investigated the two parties' evaluation of the others' style. He concluded that "Japanese readers found the linear, deductive argumentation style associated with English-language texts to be dull, pointless, and self-involved.

At the same time, English speaking readers perceived Japanese argumentative patterns to be circuitous, abstract, and occasionally evasive" (Ferris & Hedgcock, ibid). A number of other pieces of research modeling Hinds' cross-linguistic typology are recorded. For instance, it is found that, unlike English texts which contain lucid, well-organized statements, German and Spanish texts put the burden on the reader to excavate for meaning (Clyne, 1987; Valero-Garces, 1996). In another study, it is concluded that writing in Hebrew has the same feature (Zellermayer, 1988).

Arabic is classified as a reader-responsible language (Almehmadi, 2012). Thus, it is postulated that Arabic-speaking writers tend not to use deduction in their writing. In the same vein, Pattberg (2009) argues that the Arabic/Islam cultural sub-system is one of the three central components forming the notion of *Oriental* cultural system, as opposed to the *Occidental* system. In his words, "The main difference between the Orient and the Occident, so people say, lies in their different mode of thinking: The East is inductive, the West is deductive" (p.6). Understanding the contrasts between English and Arabic in the rhetorical organization of argumentative texts is of relevance to predict "anomalies" in EFL writers'

texts. When diverging from the norms of English writing, EFL learners' texts are by no means erroneous. Calling their divergences anomalies implies that they will fail to meet the expectations of English readerships if they happen to perform in English academic circles as international students.

### 3. The Organization of English Argumentative Essays

In English written discourse, it is indispensable to have a straightforward verbalization of the principal ideas related to the text's thesis right at the beginning (Swales, 1990). Thus, the deductive mode, in which the expression of claim precedes advancing of arguments, is seen as the predominant or the "default" approach in English writing. In specific situations, however, English writers do use the inductive development, which starts by the presentation of evidence and proceeds to draw a conclusion. Hinds (1990) writes in this connection:

> *English-speaking readers typically expect that an essay will be organized according to deductive style. If they find that it is not, they naturally assume that the essay is arranged in the inductive style. English speaking readers know that an inductive style must have certain characteristics and is used in certain circumstances. The author expects a hostile audience and feels the audience must be led step-by-step to the legitimate conclusion based on evidence presented. (p. 99)*

The choice to write deductively or inductively in English when arguing the validity of a claim is largely dependent on the writer's needs and the preferences of the subject (Gillett, Hammond & Martala, 2009). Most remarkably, in the sciences, the inductive method is usually employed, whereas in other disciplines argument usually is developed deductively to prescribe a particular conclusion (Murray & Hughes, 2008). On the whole, English writing is highly deductive. In this connection, Scollon and Scollon (1995) state that standard composition textbooks tell that the deductive structure is not only typical of essays in English, but is the norm in writing paragraphs or even whole books:

> *In a short essay of several paragraphs or several pages, that thesis should appear in the first paragraph. In a longer essay or in a book, the thesis might be delayed until after a bit of preliminary material, but in any event, the reader should be able to determine the main point within the first formal section of the text. . . . Each paragraph, according to standard composition textbooks, should have a topic sentence, and that sentence should be the first sentence in the paragraph. . . There is little question that the essay, as it is presented in standard composition textbooks, is a completely deductive rhetorical structure. (p. 103)*

The differences between inductive and deductive organizations manifest themselves various levels. Gillett et al. (2009) explain how thoughts are structured in inductive and deductive argumentative essays. In the first, which they dub the *balanced* approach, the writer discusses both sides of an argument, not essentially including any opinion. The latter follows the evidence and is expressed only at the end of the essay. The structure of such essays, therefore, goes as follows:

  a. Introduction of the argument to the reader (e.g. why it is particularly relevant).
  b. Reasons against the argument (state the position, the evidence and the reasons).

    c. Reasons in favour of the argument (state the position, the evidence and the reasons).

    d. After summarizing the two sides, the writer's point of view is stated and justified.

In the second type, which they call the *persuasive* approach, the order of evidence and claim is reversed. The writer's point of view is stated right away. Then, it is supported by evidence to convince the reader of its validity. On the whole, the thought movement is controlled by the writer. The form of a deductive essay is as follows:

    a. The topic is succinctly and generally introduced, and then the writer's point of view is stated.

    b. What is intended to be corroborated is explained

    c. Reasons against the argument are advanced.

    d. The main oppositions to the writer's case are disposed, providing evidence and reasons.

    e. Reasons for the writer's argument are presented and supported with evidence, reasons and examples.

    f. In the conclusion, the writer restates his/her claim and explains why it is important.

McMillan (1984) demonstrates the way these two types of development affect reader expectations and focus in the product texts. In the deductive essay the reader already knows the point of the writer and only expects fuller elaboration on it. By contrast, the interest of the reader of an inductive essay is held as s/he encounters a question or a problem at the inception which leads him/her to share thinking and arrive at an inevitable conclusion with the writer through the evidence unpacked to him.

As far as focus is concerned, a deductive essay is thought of as product, whereas an inductive one is seen as process: the deductive essay stresses the outcomes and repercussions of a claim and works to achieve an approving reaction from the reader by presenting details to explain and justify the claim; conversely, the inductive essay reconstructs the thought process itself by exhibiting the way the conclusion develops out of the details.

Having briefly surveyed the literature on the deductive and inductive styles across cultures and languages, the study reported in the present paper attends to the following research questions:

1. Do the argumentative essays written by advanced Arabic-speaking EFL learners show preference for non-deductive text organization?

2. Do the argumentative essays written by advanced Arabic-speaking EFL learners demonstrate non-conventional discourse features in text organization other than those typical of Arabic discourse?

**4. Methodology**

    Fifty-two (52) Algerian Master students, who were enrolled at the Department of English for the academic year 2012-2013 at Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla, Algeria, participated in the present study. All of them speak Algerian dialectal Arabic as a first language. They had been learning English for more than ten years. All of them had first received tutoring in Standard Arabic, which was used as a means of instruction, from primary to secondary school, followed by French as a first foreign language starting from the third or

fourth year of their education and finally English as a second foreign language starting from middle school.

At the data collection stage, the researcher opted for the use of a non-parametric, researcher-designed writing test, whose objective is to obtain a textual corpus of argumentative essays from the student participants. The test consists of a free writing task, entailing the writing of two short argumentative essays on controversial subjects (See appendix A). The argumentative texts had to be projected in form of an essay, whose length ranges between 200 and 400 words. The specified length is compatible with that of examination essays. To elicit background information on the respondents, a short opening questionnaire was set before the writing task. The students responded to the test upon a one-week prior notification from the researcher. The writing task was explained to the participants, and each received a copy of the test, with a two-week deadline to return it. Only a number of the students responded to the test.

A three-stage procedure was followed in data analysis. To make their identification possible, the collected essays were first attributed codes. Next, an analysis of each text's organizational layout was undertaken. Following Hinds (1990), text organisation is measured according to (1) the placement and (2) explicitness of the essay's thesis statement. According to these criteria, essays can be deductive, inductive or quasi-inductive. In the argumentative essay genre, the thesis statement presents the writer's standpoint, and it is the central move around which the whole essay is focused (Hyland, 1990).

Operationally, the thesis statement of the analyzed essays is the one in which the participant writers express their opinions as regards the topics given to them. To locate exactly the placement of the thesis statement in the essays, the technique developed by Tirkkonen-Condit and Leiflander-Koistinen (1989) was followed.

First, when the thesis statement appears in the first one-third of an essay, it is said to be at the beginning and the organisation is deductive. Second, if it appears in the second one-third, it is taken to be in the middle and if it appears in the final one-third, it is said to be at the end of the essay. In either case the organisation is said to be inductive. Thirdly, if there is not an overtly expressed statement that summarises the writer's standpoint in the essay, the thesis is seen as being implicit and the organisation is quasi-inductive.

## 5. Results and Discussion
## 5.1. General Results

This study seeks principally to reveal if the argumentative essays under scrutiny follow a non-deductive text organization. As shown in Table 1, the analysis of the corpus revealed that, in the 104 essays, 47.11% of the participants showed preference for the deductive text organization, with the thesis statement placed at the beginning, while 40.38% (3.84% + 36.53%) of them followed an inductive organization, placing their thesis statement either at the very end of the composition (36.53%) or in the middle part (3.84%). Finally, 12.5 % of the essays had a quasi-inductive organization, where the thesis statement is not explicitly stated. These results demonstrate that 52.88% of the essays under consideration have a non-deductive organization.

**Table 1**
*Frequency Distribution of the Placement of the Thesis Statements in the Essays*

| Text organization | Deductive organization | Inductive organization | | Quasi-inductive organization | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Placement of thesis statement** | Thesis statement in initial position | Thesis statement in middle position | Thesis statement in end position | Implied thesis statement | |
| **N° of essays** | 49 | 04 | 38 | 13 | 104 |
| **Percentage** | 47.11% | 3.84% | 36.53% | 12.5 % | 100% |

## 5.2. Inconsistencies in Deductive Essays

Added to the classification of the essays under the induction, deduction and quasi-induction categories, the results of the analysis revealed that the participants have further problems in the organization of their deductive argumentative essays that do not comply with the conventions of arrangement advocated in Western usage and that are not traceable to the effects of their native culture.

Table 2 summarizes the additional rhetorical deviations in the writings of the participants as regards deductive essay organization with their frequencies to the totality of deductive essays.

**Table 2**
*Common Non-Conventional Patterns in Deductive Essays*

| Problems in deductive organization | N° of essays | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| a. Problems in the statement or placement of opinion | 11 | 22.44 % |
| b. Problems in the introduction | 05 | 10.20 % |
| c. Problems in the conclusion | 05 | 10.20 % |

**a. Problems in the statement or placement of opinion**: In the first category, the results in Table 2 show that while student writers largely opt for deductive organization, in which the writer's opinion is stated right away, it is still difficult for them to place and enunciate the opinion in the thesis stage of their argumentative essays. Firstly, the writer's opinion appears at the very beginning of the second paragraph, which is not the typical placement of a standpoint (essay 2-2).

In this connection, Scollon and Scollon (1995) clarify that the reader should be able to identify the main point in the first section of the text, even though a thesis statement might be postponed until after the presentation of some background information. They also add that at the level of each paragraph, there should be a topic sentence. It is usually its first sentence. In the same category, the opinion of some essays is not formulated as a complete thesis statement (essay 38-1).

By definition, a thesis statement is in the first place a statement. In deductive essays, its function is to project the writer's opinion and it may even allude to the opposing view. Formulating the opinion in a single assertive word would render the whole essay a mere imposition of non-debatable standpoints.

**b. Problems in the introduction**: In the second category, the deductive essays have internal deficiencies in their conclusions, which normally restate the writer's initial claim and explain why it is important. These essays have no conclusion or a very broad one, which is not directly related to the issue (essay 7-2).

**c. Problems in the conclusion**: In the third category, the deductive essays have further patterns that do not conform to Western usage as regards writing introductions. Some essays have two introductions (essay 28-1). Also, some have a very brief introduction with no thesis statement (essay 38-1). Added to that is the inclusion of details in the thesis stage (essay 35-2).

### 5.3. Inconsistencies in Inductive Essays

The inductive essays have patterns of the same kind in addition to certain deviations in the use of induction. The added non-conventional patterns in inductive essay development fall in three categories. Table 3 summarizes these patterns and their frequencies to the totality of inductive essays:

**Table 3**
*Non-Conventional Patterns in Inductive Essay Organization*

| Problems in inductive organization | | N° of essays | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| **a**. Absence of counter-argument | | 14 | 33.33 % |
| **b**. Opinion in the body     07 | 16.16 % | | |
| **c**. Problems in the conclusion | | 01 | 2.38 % |
| **d**. Problems in the introduction | | 02 | 4.76 % |

In the first category, the essays lack the component of counter-arguments. Gillett et al. (2009), elucidating the thought development in inductive essays, hold that it is essential for this argument arrangement that both sides of the issue are impartially discussed. Through refutation of opposite claims and advancing adequate evidence, the writer establishes his stance and eventually projects his/ her opinion (essay 32-2). Also, McMillan (1984) explains that in inductive development, the writer involves the reader in the thought process and attempts to develop a conclusion out of the details.

In the second category, the writers' opinions appear in the paragraph preceding the conclusion. McMillan (ibid.) stresses that the balanced approach followed in inductive essay development usually contains a conclusion that summarizes both sides and then states and justifies the opinion. Projecting an opinion before the concluding stage disrupts this essential function of an inductive essay conclusion. It can even cause the writer to add irrelevant moves in the last paragraph or just to reiterate previous material (essay 21-1, essay 8-1).

In the third and fourth categories, the writers use non-conventional patterns in writing introductions and conclusions. In some cases, the essay has two paragraphs which function as an introduction, and in others, the introductory paragraph is very broad in scope. Both instances reflect a non-linear thought pattern, which is atypical in English essays (essay18-2, essay 41-1).

### 5.4. Quasi-Inductive Essays

At last, as mentioned earlier, quasi-induction is a pattern that appears in 12.5 % of the essays. In this organizational method, the writer holds a standpoint and defends it with evidence without a clear projection of his stance, leaving the responsibility to the reader to glimpse the underlying position (essay 25-1, essay 17-1, and essay 16-1). What is noticed in some quasi-inductive essays is that some of them demonstrate the writer's lack of focus for there is no clear underlying opinion (essay 50-1).

### 6. Interpretations

The analysis of the text organisation of the argumentative essays indicates that 52.88% follow either an inductive or a quasi-inductive arrangement. These findings corroborate the claim that advanced EFL learners opt for a non-deductive organisation for the most part. In other words, the non-linear thought pattern that is held to be a feature of reader responsible languages, such as Arabic, manifests itself significantly when these Arabic speaking learners write in EFL contexts.

It should be emphasised, however, that the percentage of 47.11 % of essays with a deductive organisation is not minor. This signifies that the writers seem to abide by the English language discourse conventions of organising a deductive line of argumentation. Nevertheless, the findings bring to light the fact that the rhetorical tendencies detected in the deductive essays still point towards non-native-like patterns, reflecting developmental flaws. In the same way, the essays which are inductively organised_ where induction is not alien to English writing_ do reveal signs that the student writers lack proficiency in constructing evidence and leading readers, using the force of logic, to jointly arrive at the desired claim.

Finally, the percentage of 12.5 % quasi-inductive essays reflects the writers' inclination to use an oblique style, a marker of macro-level indirectness. At this level, writing instruction ought to work in the direction of substituting such transferred rhetorical features with patterns that are acknowledged in wider international contexts.

On the whole, the analysis of the results indicates that students' texts seem largely to be influenced by the Arabic rhetorical tendency of non-deductive writing, while at the same time, the deductive essays in the sample demonstrate inconsistencies whose main reason is lack of proficiency in English writing. One can even question the instructional methods followed in the teaching of deductive essays in the Algerian context. Such a claim requires empirical verification.

### 7. Conclusion and Recommendations

In this study, the rhetorical organisation of argumentative essays written by a group of advanced Arabic-speaking students of EFL has been put under scrutiny. Corroborating research in contrastive rhetoric, the findings show that the non-deductive mode of developing argumentative texts is the most prevalent pattern. The student writers do seem to be influenced by the writing convention characterising Oriental thinking at large.

The task of gleaning the point of an argumentative essay is left to the reader in most of the texts, a feature of reader-responsible languages such as Arabic. These textual preferences call for adapted instructional material, which focuses on extensive exposure to the English

argumentative essay genre. In using such materials, teachers of EFL writing should be perceptive of the differing text organizations across cultures and have to devise classroom activities accordingly.

On the other hand, when trying to abide by the target language conventions in text organisation, some EFL writers involved in this study fail in manoeuvring deductive and purposeful inductive writing.

The implication is that EFL learners have to receive training in the skills of revising and editing. In other words, teaching writing is such contexts ought to be more process-oriented.

Generally speaking, in the light of such two-dimensional findings, EFL writing instruction should be able to prepare EFL learners to produce argumentative essays in which they successfully attain the intended objective of persuasion.

This can only be reached if knowledge about the expectations of the target audience and skills of text production are equally highlighted when teaching EFL writing.

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**Appendix A: The Students' Writing Test**

Dear participant,

This test is part of a linguistic study conducted in connection with a doctoral research. Its objective is to investigate the writings of postgraduate students. You are kindly requested to respond to the following writing tasks.

_____

## I. The participant's profile

| | |
|---|---|
| **1. Name (optional):** | ........................................ |
| **2. Age:** | …… |
| **3. Gender:** | M (    )  \|  F (    ) |
| **4. Level of education** | |
| **5. Option** | ESP (    )          Lit (    ) |
| **6. What is your first language?** <br> **- What languages other than your first language do you speak and use before learning English?** <br> **- What languages have you learnt at school before English?** | - <br><br> - <br><br><br> - |
| **- At which level did you first start to learn English?** | - Primary school (    ) <br> - Middle school (    ) <br> - High school (    ) <br> - University (    ) |
| **2. Number of years studying English at university** | - |

## II. Writing Tasks

Write *two* compositions about the issues below. Use the language forms and essay organisation that you think are the most appropriate to convey your message to the readers.

**Issue 1:**

Women have participated in elections as candidates and managed to take important ruling positions in society. Should women be encouraged to take such positions?

**Issue 2:**

The study of subjects like "literature", "linguistics" and "civilisation" is useful to/ not needed by university students of English as a foreign language to help them learn this language better. State your position and defend it.

**NB: The length of every composition should approximately be between 200 and 400 words.**