| RESEARCH ARTICLE

Grammatical Error Analysis in Academic Essays: A Comprehensive Study of University Students in Kosovo

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| ABSTRACT

This study examines the grammatical difficulties encountered by students in Kosovo's universities that provide English language programs or incorporate academic writing into their curricula, emphasizing the vital significance of academic essay writing in higher education. An analysis of 50 student essays revealed a total of 894 grammatical errors, with punctuation (52.7%) and sentence structure issues, such as run-on sentences (17.9%), preposition misuse (13.2%), as well as article errors (12.5%), being the most prevalent. The findings indicate that students struggle significantly with fundamental grammatical rules, suggesting deficiencies in their foundational grammar knowledge, likely due to inadequate prior instruction. The consistency of error patterns across submissions highlights a widespread lack of awareness regarding essential grammatical conventions. The study advocates for targeted instructional strategies, including grammar-focused workshops and personalized feedback, to address these common errors. By adopting these approaches, educators can strengthen students' writing skills, enhancing their academic success and preparing them for professional opportunities.

| KEYWORDS

| ARTICLE INFORMATION

Introduction

Academic essays are essential to a university education, playing a fundamental role in developing students' critical thinking skills and evaluating their learning. Their presence across various academic fields emphasizes how crucial it is to inspire students to engage deeply with the course material, convey complex ideas, and generate well-reasoned arguments. Additionally, academic essays help students develop the ability to research, synthesize information, and analyze, which is essential for their educational and professional success. Beyond serving as a means of communication within university and college communities, academic essays also function as an intellectual activity, a method of learning, and a mode of instruction (Weigle, 2002). However, writing academic essays poses significant challenges, as students often struggle to structure their essays, apply proper grammar and syntax, and adhere to academic conventions. These challenges are particularly encountered by non-native English speakers who also have to cope with language barriers. Most EFL students make writing mistakes regardless of how long they have studied or mastered English (Wee et al., 2009).

In Kosovo, English is generally taught as a second language and is a mandatory part of the curriculum in many universities. However, not all fields of study require students to write in English; many programs allow or require students to complete assignments in their native language. This situation can create challenges for those who need to compose academic essays in English, as they often struggle with various language components, particularly writing. Writing skills are crucial for students studying English as a second language, and many institutions offer courses to enhance their proficiency. These courses prepare students for the demands of university-level writing, where they must create various types of essays, including

argumentative, descriptive, narrative, persuasive, cause and effect, and definition essays. However, they often face a variety of challenges in this process.

One significant issue is committing linguistic errors, which adversely affect the structure of their sentences and the clarity of the ideas they wish to communicate. Mastering writing is a challenging skill that demands a broad vocabulary and a strong grasp of grammatical rules. In line with this, Brown (2007) asserts that making mistakes, particularly in writing, is a natural part of the learning process and should be considered an integral component of cognition. Errors made by students provide valuable insights for teachers into the difficulties students face, making them an indispensable aspect of the learning-teaching process. Therefore, understanding and addressing these grammatical errors is crucial for improving students' writing proficiency, which is needed for academic and professional success. Moreover, thoroughly examining and properly assessing learners' errors is essential for providing effective remedial education.

Literature Review

Writing essays at the university level is a core component of assessment in higher education; it lets students show that they understand the material and can engage in scholarly discourse. An essay, defined as a short piece of writing on a particular subject expressing the author's arguments, analysis, and interpretation (Merriam-Webster, n.d.), serves this purpose effectively. Moreover, essay writing is essential for developing critical thinking, analytical skills, and the ability to articulate complex ideas clearly and coherently. Grammar is integral to this process, with its correct application being crucial in all forms of writing, including essays. According to Ur (1996), grammar consists of linguistic rules that govern the accurate or correct formation of sentences, phrases, and words. It ensures that sentences are well-constructed, ideas are logically presented, and arguments are effectively communicated. Proper grammar is fundamental to clarity and coherence, the key to making a persuasive and impactful argument. Grammar is the set of rules that governs the structure of sentences in a language, including the arrangement of words, phrases, and clauses to convey clear and coherent meaning. It encompasses various aspects such as syntax (sentence structure), morphology (word formation), and punctuation, ensuring that communication is both accurate and comprehensible (Harmer, 2007). Noam Chomsky's theory, on the other hand, defines grammar as a system of rules that enables speakers to generate an infinite number of sentences, including ones they have never heard before. Chomsky introduced the concept of "generative grammar," which posits that the human brain contains an inherent set of grammatical principles shared by all languages, known as Universal Grammar. This framework allows individuals to understand and produce language in a rule-governed yet flexible manner (Chomsky, 1957). Even with these thorough conceptions of grammar, students frequently have trouble using grammar rules accurately in their essays, and adherence to rules of grammar has always been problematic. Such issues can seriously affect their writing's accuracy and clarity, impeding their ability to convey ideas effectively. Hence, to overcome these difficulties, error analysis is a valuable method for identifying and comprehending the barriers students face.

Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) is an essential component of applied linguistics and language education that was developed to recognize the importance of errors in language learning. Accordingly, to fully grasp the L2 acquisition process, one must carefully analyze the errors made by learners (Brown, 1980). This approach gained prominence in the middle of the 20th century, influenced by the work of Stephen Pit Corder and later other linguists and scholars. His publication ''The Significance of Learner Errors'' in 1967 marked a shift towards comprehending the systematic nature of errors made by language learners. According to his argument, errors are not random; rather, they reveal underlying processes in the learner's interlanguage – a transitional linguistic system that they develop as they move towards complete L2 competency (Corder, 1967). Errors are considered ''indispensable'' for learners because committing errors in the target language can be seen as a tool that facilitates learning - Corder further explains.

In addition to Corder's theory, many scholars have provided various definitions of Error Analysis. For instance, David Crystal (2011) describes Error Analysis as a ''technique for identifying, classifying and systematically interpreting the unacceptable forms produced by a learner of a foreign language''. Similarly, according to Sinha (1997), such analysis reveals learners' errors, thereby indicating the level of competence they have achieved. From the perspective of Kusumawardhani (2017), an error represents a deviation from native speaker grammar, highlighting the interlingual proficiency level of the learners. By identifying the areas where learners' competency is weak, EA draws attention to such challenges to instructors, syllabus designers, and textbook writers and recommends remedial action. One of the most influential theories of second language acquisition, Corder addresses a set of procedures that must be followed when analyzing errors. These include gathering a sample of the learner's language, identifying, describing, explaining, and evaluating errors. Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005) likewise outline these error analysis stages.

To identify errors, the learners' sentences must be compared with what is considered correct or normal in the target language (Ellis, 2002). However, as he points out, reconstructing the correct sentence can be challenging because the writer's

intended meaning is often unclear (p.16). Furthermore, identifying errors made by learners is often challenging due to distinguishing between errors and mistakes. He explains that errors arise from a lack of knowledge, where learners do not know the correct form and thus make errors. Mistakes, however, are occasional lapses in performance, occurring when learners fail to apply what they know correctly (p.17). Ellis (2002) further clarifies that errors and mistakes can be identified based on the consistency of incorrect usage. If learners sometimes use the correct form, it is considered a mistake, whereas consistent incorrect usage indicates an error. The next step in error analysis is describing them. Ellis suggests categorizing errors into various types, such as verb errors, omissions, misinformation, and misordering, with errors involving verbs specifically identified as verb errors. Failing to include a necessary element in an utterance is called omission, while substituting one grammatical structure for another is known as misinformation, and incorrectly arranging words is termed misordering. Ellis explains that categorizing errors in this way can help diagnose learners' learning problems more effectively. The explanation of errors is the next phase. As Ellis (2002) indicated, some errors stem from learners applying their own rules, which differ from those of English. Certain universal errors appear when learners substitute one grammatical form for another at specific stages of language learning. In addition, errors are common among learners who share the same native language (L1), often resulting from overgeneralization during the learning process. At the same time, L1 interference can lead to transfer errors, further complicating language acquisition. The last step is evaluating the learners' errors. Ellis (2002) categorizes some errors as global, which disrupt the entire sentence structure, making it difficult for the readers to understand. In contrast, local errors, another type of error, are less likely to cause significant processing issues as they ''affect only a single constituent of the sentence'' (p.20).

Classification of Errors

Learning a foreign language or second language acquisition often leads to errors, which can be attributed to individual differences among learners. Classifying these errors is a critical stage in the error analysis approach. While mistakes are an inevitable and essential part of the learning process, it is important to understand the underlying reasons that lead learners to make errors and the challenges they face in correcting them. Researchers in second language acquisition, including Corder (1974) and Scovel (2001), have identified language transfer as a primary source of errors. Many linguists and language factors contribute to errors in second language use. This influence is often described using terms such as interference (Weinrich, 1953), interlingual errors (Richards, 1974), and language transfer (Selinker, 1973).

Several theorists have identified various sources and causes of errors. Nonetheless, Brown (2000) argues that the two main ones are Interlingual/transfer and intralingual/developmental errors. According to Kavaliauskiene (2009, p. 4), such errors may occur because learners lack essential information about the target language, preventing them from developing proper language usage habits. In other words, interlingual errors occur when learners' habits in their first language prevent them from acquiring the patterns and rules of their second language (Hourani 2008, p. 11). Such errors often stem from the inherent complexity of the language itself. For example, many EFL students tend to think in their native language and directly translate their thoughts when speaking and writing in a second language. Drawing from the observations of various researchers, it can be deduced that interlingual errors stem from the influence of a learner's native language on their second language usage. Many students tend to apply the grammatical rules of their first language to their second language. On the other hand, errors made due to incomplete learning or comprehension of the target language are referred to as intralingual errors (Keshavarz, 2003, p.62; Fang and Jiang, 2007, p. 11). Because they do not know the target language well, students may make mistakes and find it challenging to use it. Intralingual errors arise from a lack of understanding of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and incorrect assumptions, all of which contribute to overgeneralization (Richard & Schmidt, 2002). Ellis (1996) explains that overgeneralization errors occur when learners create irregular structures that differ from the target language's norms. Unawareness of rule restrictions involves applying rules in inappropriate contexts. Additionally, Ellis notes that imperfect rule implementation happens when learners do not develop a complete structure, and false concepts are assumed to result from misunderstandings of distinctions within the target language. Richard (1974) categorizes intralingual errors into four types: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and false concepts hypothesized, also known as semantic errors.

a) Overgeneralization occurs when learners create an incorrect structure based on familiarity with other structures in the targeted language. For example, Littlewood (1984) notes instances of learners forming plurals by adding "s" even to irregular plurals and applying the "-ed" past tense form.
b) Ignorance of rule restrictions is another type of intralingual error that occurs when learners use rules in inappropriate situations. Thus, learners could misuse grammar rules within specific contexts because they are not aware of specific rules.
c) When learners do not completely follow the rules of the target language, they commit the error called "incomplete application of rules." They may partially understand the rule but fail to apply it correctly in all instances, which leads to errors in the language they produce.
d) False concepts hypothesized, the final category in Richard's taxonomy of intralingual errors, arise when learners'

incorrect understanding of the distinctions between target language elements leads to false conceptualization and the development of inaccurate hypotheses about the language.

Grammatical Errors

To develop an effective writing strategy, one must clearly understand different writing styles and their importance in conveying meaning and achieving desired outcomes. However, grammar serves as the foundational element for this. Additionally, mastering grammar is an essential skill in writing, as it enables students to create meaningful sentences. Khairunisa and Nadrun (2018) define grammar as the rules governing how words are modified to convey different meanings and how they are combined into sentences. Consequently, grammar is a method for forming various word meanings to construct coherent writing sentences. Writing is a complex process that requires careful thought to express ideas through words, combining them into sentences, and structuring sentences into paragraphs while adhering to grammatical rules. Haryudin and Argawati (2018) emphasize that writing involves producing written content that others can read, interpret, and utilize. In this context, many students face various obstacles and challenges as they strive to improve their writing abilities. Grammatical errors are a significant writing challenge, especially for EFL students. Grammar errors, as defined by Garner (2012), are instances of incorrect, unusual, or contestable usage in grammar, such as a misplaced modifier or an incorrect verb tense. Grammar is considered a language's entire system and structure, including syntax, morphology, and sometimes phonology and semantics. It encompasses morphosyntax – form, meaning, and pragmatics - use (Hsu, 2013). Grammatical errors indicate inaccuracies in form, semantics, and use. Moreover, Hsu (2013) claims that mastering these dimensions enables L2 learners to use the language accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. Hernandez's research (2011) also provides insights into grammatical errors, attributing them to incorrect structures, including incorrect verbal forms, verbal tenses, and syntax problems or issues. Those grammar errors can occur in articles, verbs, pronouns, spelling, word order, and prepositions, among other grammatical aspects. EFL students face significant challenges in distinguishing between spoken and written words. They also struggle with grammatical issues, such as subject-verb agreement and the proper construction of sentences to form coherent paragraphs (Al Fadda, 2012). Correspondingly, Farooq (2020) asserted that constructing sentences, structures, and paragraphs poses significant challenges for EFL students, with grammar as the most challenging aspect of writing. Mastery of grammar skills includes managing sentence forms, subject-verb agreement, parallel construction, modifier placement, and tense consistency. In essence, addressing grammatical errors is crucial for EFL students, as mastering these aspects elevates the quality of their writing and enhances their overall communication skills, enabling them to express their ideas more clearly and effectively in diverse real-world writing scenarios, from academic essays to professional correspondence.

Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design to analyze grammatical errors in academic essays written by students from various public and private universities in Kosovo that offer the English Language as a field of study or include writing in English as part of their curricula. Participants include students from institutions such as the University of Prishtina - Faculty of Philology, University of Prizren - Faculty of Philology, RIT Kosovo, UBT College, AAB College, and Universum College. Utilizing a case study approach, the research explores the types and frequencies of errors in these essays. The participants include 50 students enrolled in English Composition courses such as Academic English, English for Academic Purposes, and English for Specific Purposes during the 2022/2023 academic year. Enrollment in these courses typically depends on the institution's policies and language proficiency criteria, with students generally required to have at least a B1 or B2 level of English. Participants were selected through convenience sampling to ensure diverse representation. Data were collected by having each participant submit one academic essay, approximately 1,000 to 1,500 words, on a topic of their choice. The task was specifically framed as an argumentative essay to uphold academic standards. This structure ensured that the essays focused on developing critical thinking skills and engaging with scholarly discourse despite the freedom of topic selection. These essays serve as the primary source for grammatical error analysis, and a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of each error type. Grammatical errors in the essays are identified and categorized into structural, grammatical, and mechanical errors, based on a combination of established frameworks in writing assessment and my observations during the analysis process. The classifications were influenced by existing literature on error categorization, but adjustments were made to fit the specific requirements of the study better. Thus, this approach offers a clearer understanding of the errors in the students' essays, highlighting their writing difficulties.

Structural Errors: Issues related to sentence structure (e.g., Run-on sentences, Sentence fragments, and Parallel Structure).

Grammar Errors: Problems with grammar rules (e.g., Subject-verb agreement, Plural/singular forms, Gerunds and infinitives, Pronoun use, Tense uses, Possessives/genitive case, Conjunction use, Adjective and Adverb use).

Mechanics Errors: Issues related to punctuation and spelling (e.g., comma use, punctuation use, and typographical errors).

Patterns in errors were examined to highlight common difficulties faced by students. Ethical considerations included obtaining informed consent, with consent forms signed by all participants, ensuring anonymity and confidentiality, and allowing participants the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Results and Discussion

The analysis of the essays identified a total of 894 grammatical errors across the 50 submissions. The most common types of errors included punctuation marks (52.7%), run-on sentences (17.9%), preposition usage (13.2%), and article usage (12.5%). Other notable errors were sentence fragments (6.6%), parallel structure (6.5%), and subject-verb agreement (6.1%). The least frequent mistakes occurred in tense usage (5.4%), typographical errors (3.4%), plural/singular forms (3.2%), conjunction usage (2.5%), pronouns (1.8%), possessives/genitive case (1.5%), gerund/infinitive forms (0.9%), and adverb use (0.8%).

*Figure 1: Types of grammar errors observed in students' essays*
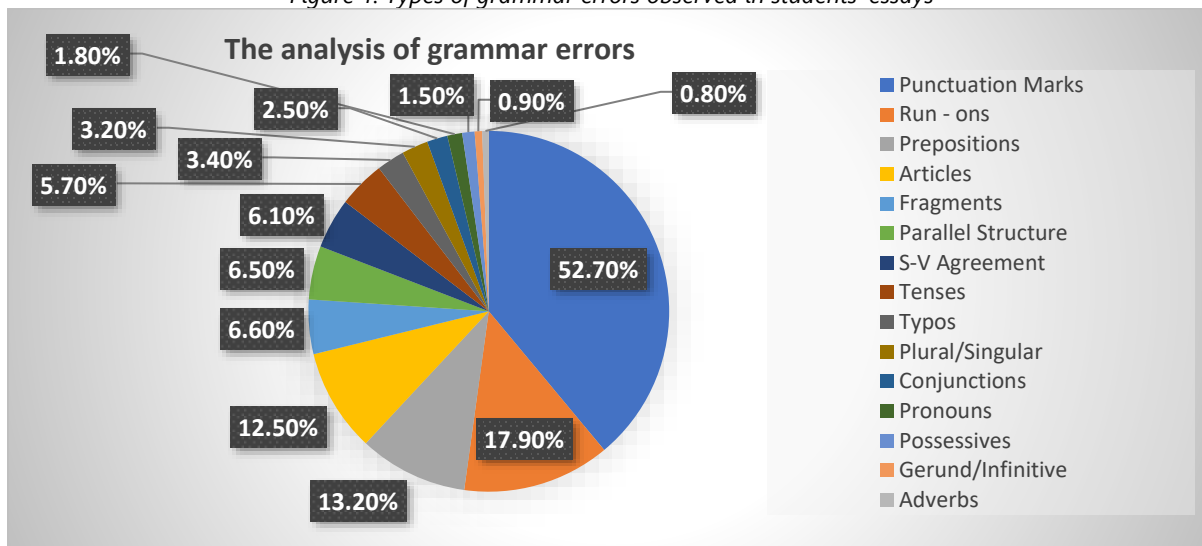
Punctuation Marks

Punctuation errors were the most common, with 472 instances accounting for 52.7% of the total number. Misusing punctuation marks—such as commas, periods, colons, and semicolons—can lead to confusion and misinterpretation. Comma errors were particularly prevalent, with 424 recorded instances. They often arose from misunderstandings about when to use commas to separate clauses, list items, or set off introductory phrases. Misplaced or omitted commas can change a sentence's meaning, creating confusion; for example, failing to place a comma before a conjunction in a compound sentence can lead to run-on sentences, while excessive comma usage disrupts writing flow, as seen in students' essays.

 Example 1: "*Throughout the history women were seen as property of men and had very few rights it also mentions how different religions condemn divorce because it is an eternal oath, and is a metaphysical, moral, and legal impossibility*". In this sentence, the first error is missing a comma after the introductory phrase *'throughout the history'*. Next, there is a missing comma before "*it*" in the clause "*rights it also mentions how different religions condemn divorce.*" This segment consists of two independent clauses; a comma is needed to separate them. Additionally, the phrase "*it is an eternal oath, and is a metaphysical, moral, and legal impossibility*" incorrectly uses a comma before the conjunction "*and.*" In this case, the clauses should be connected without a comma, forming a compound predicate.

Figure 2: Common errors in punctuation usage in essays
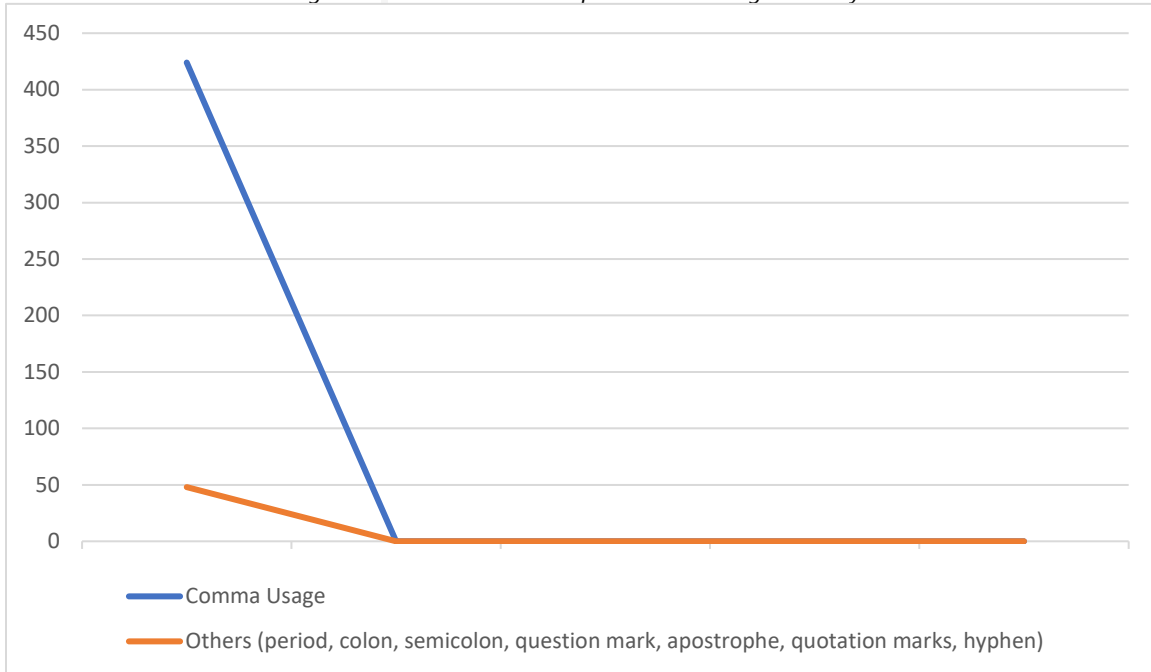
In another instance, incorrect punctuation was introduced, specifically a colon placed before "flexibility". This disrupts the flow and creates confusion because colons typically introduce a list, explanation, or elaboration that follows directly. In this case, however, the list of qualities—knowledge, flexibility, and ability to learn—is already integrated into the sentence structure.

 Example 2: "*This exemplifies the value of AI neural networks, which are employed to categorize sick spreads quickly. Time and experience are essential.*" This type of error occurs when students have incorrect assumptions about how a grammatical rule works, a phenomenon categorized by Richard (1974) as a "false concept hypothesized". In this context, students may misinterpret the role of punctuation in English, leading to frequent omissions or inappropriate usage. For instance, punctuation marks serve an important function in written language, such as indicating pauses, clarifying meaning, and establishing the structure of sentences. Thus, when students fail to grasp this function, they may overlook the necessity of certain punctuation marks, resulting in sentences that are difficult to understand or convey meaning. This misunderstanding can originate from their native language (in this case, Albanian), where punctuation rules differ significantly from those in English. As a result, students might not recognize, for example, the importance of commas in separating clauses or the role of periods in signaling the end of a thought.

Run-On Sentences

Run-on sentences accounted for 116 errors, representing 17.9% of the identified mistakes in the analyzed texts, thus indicating a significant issue in written communication. These errors occur when multiple independent clauses are improperly connected and lack the necessary punctuation or conjunctions. Consequently, the sentences become lengthy and confusing, obscuring the intended message. This pattern often reflects a writer's difficulty in articulating complex ideas without proper structural organization. The study revealed that most run-on sentences were due to incorrect comma usage. Participants frequently used commas between independent clauses without the appropriate coordinating conjunctions, leading to unclear sentences. For example, one student wrote:

"*Many people believe that women are not suited for STEM fields they often think that men are naturally better at math and science"* *(Example 3).* This run-on sentence diminishes the readability of the text, hindering readers' ability to follow the logic and flow of ideas effectively. This error, known as "*incomplete application of rule*", arises when students have a general understanding of a grammatical rule but do not implement it entirely or accurately in their writing, leading to sentences that are structurally incorrect or unclear. One manifestation of this error is the creation of run-on sentences, where students may recognize that they need to connect two independent clauses but fail to use appropriate conjunctions or punctuation. This may stem from a lack of familiarity with punctuation rules or a misunderstanding of how coordinating conjunctions function, and as a result, they may not realize the importance of using commas before conjunctions or semicolons to separate independent clauses.

*Figure 3: Factors leading to run-on sentences*
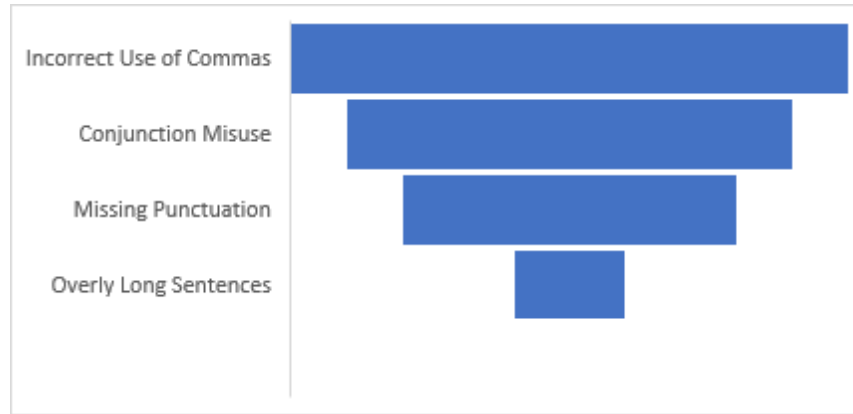
Preposition Usage

Preposition errors accounted for 118 or 13.2% of the mistakes observed. Prepositions are essential for establishing relationships between different parts of the sentence, and incorrect usage can lead to awkward or unclear phrasing. Common problems include using incorrect prepositions, leaving out necessary ones, and adding unnecessary prepositions, which can alter a sentence's meaning.

Example 4: "*The essence of eco-friendly electric cars highlights the positive impact for the environment in the long term.*". In one student's essay, the preposition "*for*" is misused; the appropriate preposition should be "*on.*" The phrase "*the positive impact on the environment*" indicates that the environment receives the positive effects of eco-friendly electric cars. Using "*for*" suggests an intention or benefit rather than a direct effect, which can confuse the reader about the relationship between electric cars and the environment. This misplacement changes the clarity of the message and emphasizes the importance of choosing the correct preposition to convey meaning accurately. This type of error belongs to the "overgeneralization" type. Students tend to use a preposition in a context where it is not appropriate, often due to a direct translation from their native language, Albanian. For instance, an Albanian speaker/writer might translate phrases word-for-word, leading to sentences like:

"*I am good in math*" instead of "*I am good at math.*". *(Example 5).* This error reflects their understanding of how prepositions function in Albanian, where different prepositions may be used in similar contexts. A different demonstration of the preposition misuse is the error made between the preposition "of" instead of "to".

Figure 4: Preposition usage issues
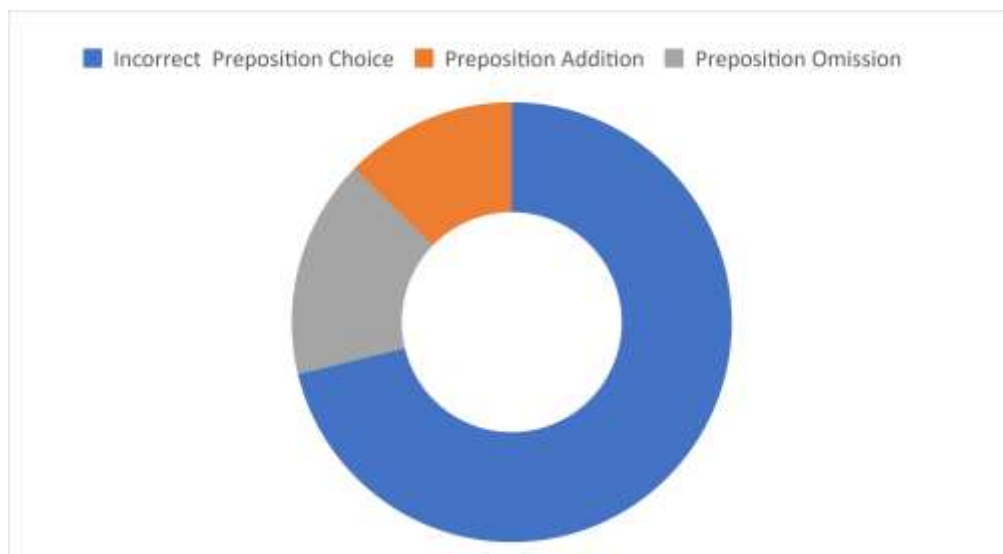
Article Usage

Article usage errors were identified in 112 instances, accounting for 12.5% of the total mistakes analyzed. The most common issues involved misusing the article "the," either by placing it unnecessarily or omitting it where it was required. For instance, in *Example 6:* "*The increase in numbers of cases of gaming addiction underscores the need for adequate treatment measures,*" the inclusion of "*the*" before "numbers" would clarify that it refers to specific counts of gaming addiction cases.
Conversely, in *Example 7,* "*The magnitude of these concerns is becoming global as the technology is developing rapidly,*" the use of "*the*" is less appropriate because the statement addresses a broad trend in technology, suggesting that it should simply refer to technology in general. However, there were instances where the indefinite articles "a" and "an" were incorrectly used in various ways, such as with uncountable and plural nouns, mixing them up before vowel and consonant sounds, and most commonly, using "a" or "an" with specific nouns when "the" was required:
 These examples illustrate a consistent pattern of article misuse that presents weighty challenges, especially for non-native English speakers, including students from Kosovo, who frequently struggle with article usage. Similarly to prepositions, articles belong to the "overgeneralization" category, where students apply rules about articles too broadly, leading to errors in their writing. In Albanian, the rules governing the use of articles differ from those in English, which can cause confusion. This results from directly translating phrases from Albanian to English, where definite and indefinite articles are not equivalent, or negative language transfer. By failing to recognize when to use "a", "an", or "the", students may create sentences that sound awkward.

Figure 5: Definite and indefinite article errors
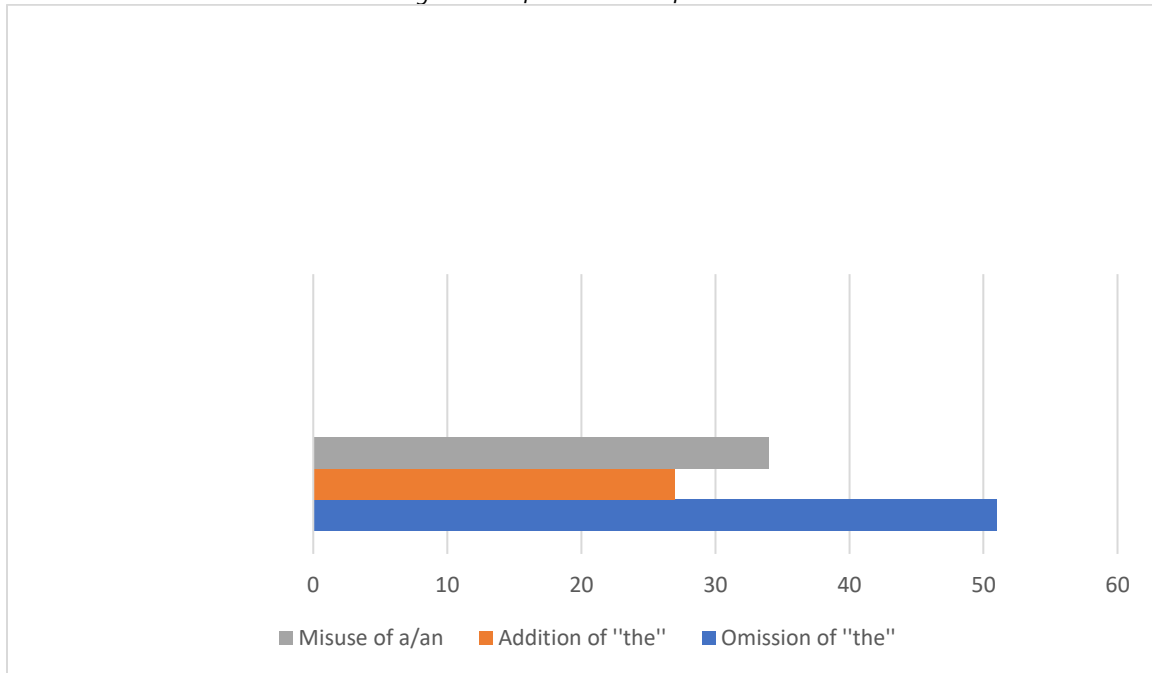
Sentence Fragments

Sentence fragments accounted for 59 errors, making up 6.6% of the identified mistakes. These fragments are characterized by incomplete constructions that lack either a subject or a verb, disrupting the flow of writing and potentially confusing readers, as they do not convey complete ideas. In this study, many fragments arose from writers isolating dependent clauses or failing to connect their thoughts effectively. For example, one student wrote: "*While electric vehicles offer numerous environmental benefits*" *(Example 8).* This illustrates the need for improved sentence structure, as the fragment leaves the reader in search of more information. Sentence fragments primarily belong to the category of "incomplete application of rule," and this happens when students do not fully apply the rules of sentence structure, resulting in incomplete thoughts. While they might be aware of sentence structure, they fail to apply the complete rules consistently. Albanian and English have distinct syntactic structures. Sentences in Albanian can sometimes be more flexible, allowing for ellipses or implied subjects that may not require explicit expression. This flexibility can lead learners to omit necessary components in English, leading to fragments. Also, Albanian students or writers of essays are accustomed to using subordinate clauses effectively without always completing them with a main clause. For example, they can write a sentence that begins with a subordinate clause:

Example 9: "*When I arrived*" but fails to follow through the main clause, ending up with a fragment in English. This phrase is a dependent clause that sets up an expectation for more information but does not provide a complete thought. In Albanian, however, it is acceptable, as context can fill in the gaps, "*When I arrived - Kur unë erdha*". In this way, the rules of Albanian grammar interfere with English sentence construction. If Albania allows for more concise expressions or relies heavily on contexts, students then struggle to adapt to English's requirement for complete sentences. Translation is also another factor that usually leads students to create fragments. When they attempt to translate their thought from Albanian to English, they inadvertently carry over structural elements that work in their native language but do not translate well in English, and this results in fragments that seem coherent in Albanian but incomplete in English. Writing in a second language requires cognitive effort, as one must think about vocabulary, grammar, and syntax simultaneously. This mental load can lead to oversight, causing students to produce incomplete sentences as they focus on other aspects of their writing.

Parallel Structure

Errors in parallel structures were identified in 58 instances, accounting for 6.5% of the total mistakes analyzed. This emphasizes the significance of consistency in writing. Violations of parallel structure occur when writers fail to use the same pattern of words to convey that multiple ideas are equally important. As a result, sentences often became awkward and challenging to read. For instance, lists that mixed different grammatical forms led to confusion, detracting from the clarity of the intended message. One such instance is given in the following *Example 10:*

"*EV are one of the top contributors to making this planet a much cleaner, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, provide better air quality, energy efficacy, and decreasing our usage on fossil fuels.*". The phrases "*reducing greenhouse gas emissions*" and "*decreasing our usage of fossil fuels*" are gerund phrases, while "*provide better air quality*" is in the base form of a verb. Additionally, "*energy efficacy*" is a noun phrase. This lack of uniformity disrupts the flow and clarity of the sentence.

Subject-Verb Agreement

A total of 55 errors were recorded, accounting for 6.1% of the cases analyzed. These errors were identified through a thorough examination of sentence structures, showcasing instances where the subject and verb did not agree in number.

Example 11: "*The use of social media have increased significantly among teenagers*". Such variations led to misunderstandings and decreased clarity, reinforcing the importance of careful attention to grammatical rules. These misunderstandings lead to the type of error known as "ignorance of rule restriction" and occur when students are unaware that certain grammatical rules apply only in specific contexts. They may not recognize the conditions under which a rule is valid or may fail to apply it correctly due to a misunderstanding of its scope. In this case, in subject-verb agreement, students struggle to identify the true subject of the sentence, especially in complex structures (e.g., collective nouns representing a single entity).

Tense Usage

The study revealed 51 tense usage errors, constituting 5.7% of the writing samples analyzed. This finding indicates a prevalent challenge among writers in maintaining consistent verb tenses throughout their texts. Inconsistent use of tense can confuse readers regarding the timing of events, making it difficult to follow the narrative. Writers often unintentionally shift tenses while recounting past events or discussing future possibilities, which disrupts the overall flow and coherence of their writing.

Example 12: "*Many artists rely on digital tools for their work, but they felt that these tools restrict their imagination*". Albanian and English have different systems of expressing tenses. Albanian grammar may influence English language learning, causing students to use the tense forms that are familiar to them rather than the correct English equivalent. For instance, English uses auxiliary verbs to form certain tenses, while Albanian does not employ the same structures. Besides, English has a more complex aspectual system that distinguishes between completed actions and ongoing actions (present perfect, present continuous). Albanians, on the other hand, express these ideas differently, causing errors when learners try to apply their native rules. This expression of ideas stems from Albanians' use of fewer tenses overall, which can lead learners to apply their native tense usage directly to English. For example, where English might use the present perfect to indicate a relevant past action *(Example 13:* "*I have eaten*")*,* Albanian might simply use the simple past tense, thus leading learners to say, "*I ate,*" even when the present perfect is more appropriate in English. Also, English has many irregular verbs that do not follow predictable patterns; thus, Albanian students may struggle with these, leading to incorrect past or participial forms. These types of errors are often classified as overgeneralization, which, as mentioned earlier, occurs when students/learners apply a general rule to cases where it does not apply, such as using regular conjugation patterns for irregular verbs. A relevant example of overgeneralization between Albanian and English in tense usage can be seen with the verb "to go". In English, the correct past tense form is "went", which is an

irregular verb. However, an Albanian may incorrectly say "goed" by applying the regular past tense rule (adding -ed) to the verb, as they might be used to forming past tense in Albanian. In Albanian, the verb "to go" is "shkoi" (past tense of "shkoj"), and because the structure is more regular, the learner may overgeneralize the English rule, resulting in the incorrect form. This illustrates how native language tendencies can lead to English verb tense usage errors.

Typographical Errors

Typographical errors were the least frequent in the analyzed writing samples, comprising 30 instances or 3.4% of the identified errors. These mistakes typically resulted from slips of the finger or lapses in attention during the typing process, leading to specific issues such as misspellings, misplaced letters, and incorrect formatting. While these errors may seem minor, they detracted from the overall professionalism of the students' work and could distract readers from the intended message. In the context of the formal writing assignments analyzed, where students were required to submit academic essays, even minor typographical errors can significantly undermine a student's credibility. An example of a typo can be found in one student's essay, where the word "*unreducible*" was used. This is likely a misuse or misspelling of the intended term "*irreducible.*"

Example 14: "*Although centuries of philosophical dualism have led us to consider consciousness as unreducible to physical interactions*".*)*. Other examples of typos found in students' essays include:

Plural/Singular Forms

In the analyzed writing samples, errors in plural and singular forms accounted for 29 instances, representing 3.2% of the total mistakes observed. This finding reflects a specific challenge faced by the students in maintaining grammatical accuracy. The errors arose when writers incorrectly used singular nouns in contexts that required plural forms or vice versa, resulting in confusion and ambiguity in their essays.

Example 15: "*Stress seems to be our body's reaction to certain situations or stimulus that are considered uncomfortable and dangerous*". In the above example, the noun "*stimulus*" is singular while the context suggests multiple instances of stress-causing factors; therefore, the correct irregular plural form should be "*stimuli*".

Example 16: "*The debate on abortion sparks strong emotions. Nations allow or ban it under differing conditions. Roe v. Wade legalized abortion in 1973, facing dispute and restriction*". The phrase "*strong emotions*" is in the plural to indicate the variety and intensity of feelings that people may have about the debate on abortion. Using the plural emphasizes that there are multiple perspectives and responses rather than a single, unified emotion. Therefore, using the plural forms "*disputes*" and "*restrictions*" highlights the complexity and multifaceted nature of the issue rather than implying a single, uniform situation.

Conjunction Usage

Conjunction usage errors were identified in 22 instances, accounting for 2.5% of the total mistakes. These errors often resulted in run-on sentences or fragments, disrupting the flow of thought and making the text difficult to follow. Proper conjunction usage is essential for clarity and coherence, as it helps readers understand the relationships between various ideas in the students' work. Additionally, some essays contained incorrect conjunction placement, which distorted the intended meaning of sentences. For example, in the sentence, "*Climate change causes extreme weather, but it can also lead to food shortages*" *(Example 17),* the use of "*but*" implies a contrast between the two effects. However, these effects are not opposing; rather, they are both consequences of climate change. Using the conjunction "*and*" instead would clarify that both statements are interconnected outcomes of the same issue. This suggests that students struggled to grasp how various conjunctions alter sentence structure or meaning, resulting in errors in their writing, and this example best illustrates the type of error known as "the ignorance of rule restriction".

Pronouns

Pronoun errors were identified in 16 instances, accounting for 1.8% of the total mistakes in the analyzed writing samples. These errors often occur when pronouns do not agree in number or gender with their antecedents or when their references are unclear. The errors primarily involved issues with relative pronouns, possessive pronouns, and demonstrative pronouns. Specifically, the relative pronoun errors often occurred when students incorrectly used "*who*" instead of "*whom*" or omitted necessary relative pronouns altogether, leading to incomplete or unclear clauses. Possessive pronoun errors were frequently observed when students misused forms like "*its*" and "*it's*" or "*their*" and "*there.*" Such errors can alter the intended meaning. For example, consider a sentence from a student's essay:

Example 18: "*The student forgot their book*". may raise questions about whether the pronoun correctly reflects singular ownership if the context indicates a single student. Demonstrative pronoun errors were noted when students incorrectly used "*this*" with

plural nouns and "*these*" with singular nouns. Additionally, confusion often arose from ambiguous references, such as in. Additionally, students may confuse subject and object pronouns:

<u>*Example 19:*</u> "*Me and him went to the library*", instead of "*He and I went to the library*". The misuse of pronouns enters the category of false concept hypothesis – the final category of Richard's taxonomy of intralingual errors.

Possessives/Genitive Case

Errors in possessives and the genitive case were identified in 13 instances within students' essays, accounting for 1.5% of the writing samples analyzed. These errors often arise from confusion over when to use apostrophes to indicate possession, leading to misunderstandings about ownership or relationships.

<u>*Example 20*</u>: "*Ana's book*". This construction signifies ownership and is a fundamental aspect of English grammar. However, for Albanian speakers, the possessive structure is often expressed differently. In Albanian, possession is commonly articulated through phrases such as "*libri i Anës*" which translates to "*the book of Ana*". This difference in grammatical structure can result in confusion when learners attempt to apply their native language rules to English, a challenge that is commonly classified as "the ignorance of rule restriction".

<u>*Example 21*</u> also demonstrates instances of genitive case misuse: "*When elaborating COVID-19 on how much it impacted individual's mental health, the WHO in March of 2020 proclaimed that COVID-19 has significantly altered many facets of people lives.*". In this sentence, the possessive case is mistakenly used with "*individual's*" because it is in the singular form, suggesting ownership by one individual. Since the context refers to multiple individuals, it should be "*individuals'*" to indicate the mental health of many people. Additionally, "*people lives*" is incorrect; it should be "*people's lives*" to reflect the plural possessive form, indicating the lives of multiple people.

Gerund/Infinitive Forms

In the study's results section, gerund and infinitive form errors comprised 8 instances, or 0.9% of the total mistakes identified. These errors arose when students incorrectly used a gerund (the -ing form of a verb used as a noun) instead of an infinitive (the base form of the verb preceded by "to") or vice versa e.g. "*to going*" instead of "*to go,*" "*enjoy to swim*" instead of "*enjoying swimming.*" Errors involving the misuse of gerunds and infinitives can be classified as "overgeneralization of rule" category/classification. In Albanian, the use of verb forms differs significantly from English because Albanian often uses infinitive forms more flexibly, which may lead writers/students to incorrectly apply similar patterns in English. Moreover, certain verbs in English require either a gerund or an infinitive, and there may not be a direct equivalent in Albanian. This can create confusion about which form to use in specific contexts. Hence, Albanian students may transfer rules from their native language when learning English, resulting in incorrect assumptions about when to use gerunds or infinitives. For instance, if a student learns that a specific verb in English takes an infinitive, they might mistakenly apply that rule to other verbs that do not follow the same pattern (overgeneralization).

<u>*Example 22:*</u> "*In contrast, Covid-19 is not a factor that caused mental health issues on individuals because there has always been family support and awareness around social media in which prevented people <u>to fall</u> under the trap.*" In the sentence "*to fall under the trap,*" the verb "*fall*" should be in gerund form ("falling") instead of the infinitive ("to fall") because the verb "*prevent*" typically requires a gerund (the -ing form) when followed by another verb. So, the correct phrase should be "*prevented people from falling*" or simply "*prevented people falling.*"

Adverb Use

Errors in adverb use were the least frequent, accounting for only 0.8% of the identified mistakes. These errors typically arise from the misapplication of adverbs, resulting in awkward phrasing or unclear meanings. The following instances illustrate some errors in adverb usage taken from students' samples:

<u>*Example 23*</u>: "*The issue is clear overlooked*". The phrase "*The issue is clear overlooked*" is considered a mistake because "clear" is an adjective and does not correctly modify the verb "*overlooked.*" In this context, an adverb is needed to describe how the issue is overlooked. Using "*clearly*" (the adverb form) correctly modifies the verb "*overlooked,*" indicating how the issue is being overlooked. The correct sentence, "*The issue is clearly overlooked,*" effectively communicates that the oversight is obvious.

Conclusion

The findings reveal a significant struggle among students across various universities in Kosovo that offer English as a field of study, particularly with fundamental grammatical structures. This difficulty likely indicates gaps in their foundational grammar knowledge, which may derive from insufficient instruction or practice in earlier stages of their education. A detailed

examination of error patterns shows that students frequently make similar mistakes, pointing to a widespread lack of awareness or understanding of the rules governing essential grammatical forms. For instance, the prevalence of errors related to comma usage, run-on sentences, prepositions, and articles suggests that these areas require particular attention in teaching practices. As a result, targeted instructional strategies designed to address these common error types are needed. Implementing grammar-focused workshops, providing tailored feedback sessions, and integrating these elements into the existing curriculum could significantly benefit students. Moreover, the insights derived from this can help educators identify specific areas where students need additional support, ultimately leading to improved writing skills and academic performance. By addressing these foundational issues, educational institutions can better prepare students for success in their academic journey and upcoming professional paths.

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