



# Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures

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## Doctoral Programme: Humanities – General Linguistics

Doctoral Thesis

### Kosovo Students' Academic Writing Skills in English – Challenges and Solutions

**Ph.D. Candidate:** Fjolla Kallaba

**Thesis Supervisor:** Prof. Irena Vassileva, Dr. phil.habil.

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## OVERVIEW OF THE Ph.D. THESIS

This study focuses on investigating the challenges faced by EFL college students in Kosovo when writing essays in English. It also examines students' needs in producing effective essays to better understand the obstacles they encounter in the writing process. Additionally, the perspectives of lecturers who teach writing courses are explored to ensure balanced findings and well-informed recommendations. So, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- What difficulties do Kosovo's EFL students face when composing essays in English?
- What common errors are evident in their essays?
- What strategies do students use to manage the essay-writing process?
- What challenges do lecturers encounter in teaching writing?
- What strategies and techniques do lecturers consider most effective in improving EFL students' writing proficiency?

The study was divided into two stages, employing both qualitative and quantitative methods, and was conducted across several public and private universities in Kosovo, offering English language and academic writing courses.

*Stage 1:* A qualitative case study analyzing 50 argumentative essays (1,000–1,500 words) written by students enrolled in English composition courses during the 2022/2023 academic year. The study identifies and categorizes grammatical, structural, and mechanical errors, examines their frequency, and evaluates essay organization using analytic scoring to highlight key writing difficulties.

*Stage 2:* A quantitative survey based on two separate questionnaires—one for students and one for lecturers. The student questionnaire (400 respondents) examined writing challenges, and strategies related to grammar, organization, and language use. The lecturer questionnaire (40 participants) explored their perspectives on students' difficulties and the strategies and methods they use or recommend to improve academic writing skills.

The research is divided into seven chapters. **Chapter I** focuses on the introduction part of the study, where the importance of writing as a fundamental academic and communicative skill is highlighted, particularly for EFL students who are required to produce academic work in English. It outlines the challenges faced by Kosovo's undergraduate and postgraduate students in essay writing, emphasizing the complexity of academic writing and the essential components of a well-structured essay. The chapter also discusses the role of lecturers and effective teaching strategies in supporting students' writing development. Overall, it highlights the importance of identifying essay-writing difficulties and implementing effective strategies to improve students' writing proficiency and motivation.

Writing is a fundamental skill for expressing ideas, especially in academia, where English has become the dominant language. Many EFL students, including those in Kosovo, are required to produce academic work in English, which presents significant challenges. Essay writing, a key academic task, demands strong organization, critical thinking, and mastery of grammar, vocabulary, and coherence. Despite its importance, many students struggle to produce clear, well-structured, and error-free essays, particularly when writing in a foreign language.

Although educators continue to develop strategies to improve writing instruction, teaching academic writing remains complex, and students often face persistent difficulties that can affect their motivation and performance. As a result, there is a growing need to identify these challenges, analyze common errors, and explore effective strategies for improvement. This study addresses this gap by investigating the essay writing difficulties of Kosovo EFL students and incorporating both students' experiences and lecturers' perspectives to provide practical recommendations for enhancing academic writing skills.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**Chapter II** consists of approximately twenty pages of literature review and is organized into several sub-sections: Historical Perspective, Academic Writing in Higher Education, The Academic Essay as a Form of Academic Writing, The Process of Essay Writing: Elements and Types, Exploring Academic Writing Difficulties: Research Overview, Error Analysis, Classification of Errors, Grammatical Errors, Approaches to Teaching Writing, AI and Essay Writing. Brief summaries of the sub-sections are outlined below.

### **Historical Perspective**

Academic writing has evolved over centuries alongside educational and scholarly traditions, with roots in ancient civilizations and significant development in modern English-speaking contexts. Contemporary approaches to academic writing emerged in the 20th century through movements such as Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Disciplines (WID), followed by the academic literacies framework in the 1990s, which emphasizes the social, cultural, and contextual nature of writing. Academic literacies share similarities with English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and address growing concerns related to diversity, access, and language use in

higher education. In recent decades, digital technologies and globalization have further transformed academic writing, making it more collaborative, accessible, and multilingual.

### **Academic Writing in Higher Education**

Academic writing is a fundamental component of higher education, enabling scholarly communication, critical thinking, and knowledge development across disciplines. It allows students to demonstrate understanding, develop analytical and metacognitive skills, and participate effectively in academic discourse. Scholars describe academic writing as a formal, structured, and cognitively demanding genre that requires careful organization, critical analysis, and adherence to academic conventions. For example, Oshima and Hogue (2007) argue that academic writing focuses on the type of second-language learners used in university settings, high schools, and colleges. It is not the same as creative writing, the genre in which stories are written. They assert further that academic writing is more challenging than other types of writing where proper organization and grammar are required; hence, it needs much study and practice to develop learners' writing skills. Proske et al. (2010) suggest that academic writing is a complex task involving various cognitive and metacognitive elements. Cognitively, academic writing requires critical thinking skills to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information where writers deeply comprehend their subject matter, draw connections between concepts, and formulate arguments or hypotheses based on evidence. Consequently, proficiency in academic writing is essential for academic success across various genres, including essays, research papers, and dissertations.

### **The Academic Essay as a Form of Academic Writing**

The essay is a key genre of academic writing that enables students and researchers to conduct analysis and explore ideas within their fields of study. Originating from the French word *essayer*

(“to try”), the modern essay can be traced back to Michel de Montaigne’s 16th-century *Essais*, which established the essay as a reflective and exploratory form of writing. Over time, the essay evolved into an essential mode of expression in academic, creative, and professional contexts. Common definitions describe an essay as a short, focused, and analytical piece of writing that presents ideas from a structured or personal perspective..

### **The Process of Essay Writing: Elements and Types**

Essays are structured academic texts that present ideas through analysis, argumentation, and reflection, typically consisting of an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Each section plays a distinct role: the introduction presents the topic and thesis, the body develops arguments with evidence and transitions, and the conclusion reinforces key points and offers final insights. Effective essay writing also requires understanding different essay types, as each serves a specific communicative purpose. Common types include narrative, descriptive, expository, definition, process, compare-and-contrast, argumentative, persuasive, cause-and-effect, and critical essays, all of which are widely used in academic contexts. *A narrative essay*, also known as a personal or reflective essay, blends storytelling with academic argumentation. It enables the writer to convey a lesson or argument through personal experiences. *A descriptive essay* portrays an event or object using rich sensory details, including sight, smell, taste, touch, and sound. *Expository essays* provide a neutral explanation of a topic, allowing writers to showcase their knowledge or expertise in a specific subject; teachers frequently assign these essays to evaluate students' comprehension. *Definition essays* are a form of expository writing that aims to define a term or concept while exploring intricate or abstract subjects through detailed analysis and explanations; as such, they are frequently found in academic and research contexts (Excelsior College, n.d.). *Process writing* is a rhetorical style that offers step-by-step instructions or guidance.

Students typically write process essays to explain how to perform a task. In this way, process essays function as recipes or technical manuals in essay writing. A *compare and contrast essay* examines two subjects side by side, highlighting their similarities and differences to illustrate a broader idea. Typically, these essays are structured with body paragraphs divided into two main sections: one for comparisons and another for contrasts (Excelsior College, n.d.). *Argumentative essays* are commonly found in academic writing and play a significant role across various disciplines. They aim to persuade the reader to adopt a particular stance by presenting relevant information. A *persuasive essay* is a form of writing designed to convince the reader to embrace a specific viewpoint or take a certain action. In contrast to argumentative essays, which focus primarily on facts and evidence, persuasive essays typically engage the reader's emotions, values, and beliefs. A *cause-and-effect essay* identifies and examines events that lead to specific outcomes. It is often organized chronologically, first explaining the cause and then illustrating its effect (Excelsior College, n.d.). A *critical essay* is a literature-focused piece in which the writer examines a brief work of literature, sometimes even a single sentence, to construct an argument regarding the author's intended message.

### **Exploring Academic Writing Difficulties: Research Overview**

Research on EFL students' academic writing consistently shows that essay writing is a complex and demanding task influenced by linguistic, cognitive, and psychological challenges. Students are required to master grammar, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics while simultaneously developing critical thinking skills such as analyzing, synthesizing, and evaluating ideas. Many EFL learners struggle with generating ideas, writing thesis statements, organizing arguments, paraphrasing sources, avoiding plagiarism, and revising their work, often due to limited prior experience and low confidence. Studies also reveal that difficulties extend to responding to

feedback and engaging in peer review, although technology-mediated approaches have been shown to support drafting, revision, and teacher–student interaction. In the EFL context, writers deal with numerous hindrances, including deciding on a topic, starting with the first sentence, developing their essay, extracting relevant information from the readings they have previously done, and trying to make deductions by using their own words and ideas. One idea to note from Morgan (2016) reveals that postgraduate EFL students often become stuck when they want to start writing about their first idea. Moreover, they are confused and usually not confident about how to express their ideas and experiences, how to write a thesis statement, to clarify the purpose of the essay, and they seldom take into account the audience or the reader who will read their essays. Based on his explanation, since the essay is a basic academic writing form while in college, all of the abovementioned difficulties should be overcome. Rahmatunisa (2014) found out that EFL students experience three basic obstacles in essay writing: linguistic, cognitive, and psychological. Recognizing these challenges, she proposed several strategies to help students improve their writing skills. On a cognitive level, Vahapassi (1988) divided writing into three types. To begin with, it may entail the reproduction of copying and dictation. Secondly, it may entail the organization of ideas, events, reports, and summaries. Lastly, it may create or generate ideas or viewpoints. Unlike Rahmatunisa (2014) and Kellog (2001), other researchers found three types of primary impediments presented by students, including grammatical, punctuation, and spelling issues (Younes and Albalawi, 2015). Further research revealed that various factors contribute to students' difficulties in essay writing, as seen by their viewpoints. Keeping this in mind, another study (Cheng, 2007) shows that students tend to be passive when revising teacher feedback. Although they may not take teachers' feedback seriously, they lack the confidence to provide feedback to their peers or act as peer editors for their friends' essays. Overall, the literature

emphasizes that academic essay writing is a cognitively intensive process and that effective instructional strategies, motivation, and continuous practice are essential for helping EFL students overcome writing difficulties and improve their proficiency.

### **Error Analysis**

Error analysis (EA) is a key tool in teaching essay writing, offering insights into students' difficulties and linking theory with practical teaching strategies. Emerging in the mid-20th century through Corder's work, EA views errors as systematic indicators of learners' interlanguage development rather than random mistakes, emphasizing their role in facilitating language acquisition. Scholars define errors as deviations from target-language norms that reveal learners' competence and highlight areas needing support. Being one of the most influential theorists 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. These stages are likewise outlined by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005). 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 the confusion 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). The EA process involves collecting language samples, identifying, describing, explaining, and evaluating errors, distinguishing between mistakes (occasional lapses) and consistent errors, and categorizing them (e.g., verb errors, omissions, misordering, misinformation). Errors may

arise from overgeneralization, L1 interference, or developmental stages, and can be global—affecting overall sentence comprehension—or local—affecting only individual elements. By systematically analyzing errors, teachers can diagnose learning problems and design targeted interventions to improve students' writing skills.

### **Classification of Errors**

Errors are an inevitable part of second language acquisition, arising from individual differences and challenges in mastering the target language. They are generally classified into interlingual (transfer) errors, caused by the influence of a learner's first language, and intralingual (developmental) errors, resulting from incomplete understanding or overgeneralization of target language rules. Interlingual errors often involve directly applying native language grammar to the second language, while intralingual errors include overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete rule application, and false concept hypothesizing.

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 to irregular verbs.

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 an 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.

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, in particular, pose significant challenges, as they can disrupt sentence coherence and hinder effective communication. Understanding these error types helps educators identify learners' difficulties and provide targeted support to improve language acquisition.

### **Grammatical Errors**

Effective writing requires a clear understanding of writing styles, with grammar as the foundational element for constructing meaningful sentences. Grammar governs how words are modified and combined into coherent sentences, and mastery of it allows students to communicate accurately and appropriately. 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. 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. 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, in particular, face challenges with grammatical aspects such as verb forms, tenses, articles, subject-verb agreement, word order, and sentence structure, which can hinder coherent paragraph construction. Addressing these errors is essential, as strong grammar skills improve writing quality, facilitate clearer expression of ideas, and enhance both academic and real-world communication.

### **Approaches to Teaching Writing**

Writing is the most challenging skill for ESL and EFL learners due to difficulties with grammar, vocabulary, idea development, and context. Effective instruction combines different approaches, including product, process, genre, and process-genre methods, to address learners' needs. The product approach focuses on imitating model texts, the process approach emphasizes drafting and revising, the genre approach highlights social context and purpose, and the process-genre approach integrates all three. Using these methods together helps students improve technical skills, creativity, and audience awareness, enabling them to become more confident and proficient writers in a second language. According to Lavelle and Bushrow (2007, p. 808), a writing approach "describes the relationship between writers' beliefs about writing and the writing strategies they use." This concept points out the broad perspective on how beliefs about writing are linked to writers' methods, ultimately influencing their writing outcomes. In essence, writing approaches encompass the ideas, principles, and ethics of the writing process, particularly in educational settings focused on teaching writing. Writing approaches are crucial for achieving writing goals

(Scott, 1996). By exposing students to various methods, they can better identify and apply the appropriate approach for their writing purposes, and students familiar with these approaches tend to produce higher-quality work.

### **AI and Essay Writing**

Artificial intelligence (AI) is increasingly used in EFL education, particularly through AI-driven writing tools like Grammarly, QuillBot, and ChatGPT, which provide real-time feedback, enhance grammar, vocabulary, and paraphrasing skills, and improve writing efficiency and quality. These tools support students' learning by offering personalized feedback, assisting with citations, and promoting academic integrity. However, challenges remain, including ethical concerns, data privacy, and the risk of overreliance, which may hinder critical thinking.

In language education, AI has facilitated the development of intelligent tutoring systems, marking a significant advancement in the field (Chan & Hu, 2023). Research by Gayed et al. (2022) indicates that generative AI writing tools positively influence students' writing abilities and self-confidence. They serve as valuable resources for learners by providing immediate feedback, thus enhancing writing skills. Typically, AI writing tools assess written content and offer feedback on grammar, vocabulary, syntax, content, and structure (Thorp, 2023). This feedback is generated through machine-learning algorithms that compare the text against extensive databases of correct and incorrect writing examples. As a result, EFL students benefit from immediate and personalized feedback that enables them to quickly identify and correct errors, fostering a better understanding of effective writing principles while supporting the development of their writing skills (Akgun & Greenhow, 2022). Moreover, AI-powered citation and reference management tools help students correctly arrange and format their reference lists, ensuring adherence to different citation styles. Similarly, AI-driven plagiarism detection tools assist students in upholding academic integrity by

spotting possible cases of unintentional plagiarism (Sharifi et al., 2021). Tools such as Grammarly and QuillBot have been shown to boost students' writing abilities significantly. These tools employ advanced algorithms to detect common grammar, punctuation, and syntax issues while offering suggestions for clarity and style improvement. For instance, a study by Tambunan et al. (2022) indicated that Grammarly effectively improved students' grammar and punctuation by providing real-time feedback on various aspects of writing, transforming the writing process into a valuable learning experience. QuillBot, known for its paraphrasing capabilities, helps students avoid plagiarism while preserving the original meaning of their work. Kurniati and Fithriani (2021) found that QuillBot significantly improved students' paraphrasing skills, an essential aspect of academic writing. Several studies indicate that AI writing tools can greatly improve both efficiency and quality of writing tasks regarding content and structure. Tools such as ChatGPT-3 and ChatGPT-4 are utilized to propose the next word or paragraph in a text, assisting writers in generating human-like compositions (Liu et al., 2023). This capability is driven by machine learning algorithms that predict text sequences based on extensive training data. Hence, the development and use of AI writing tools represent a major advancement in writing.

Despite its benefits, AI in academic writing raises concerns about data privacy, ethical issues, and students' overreliance, which may weaken critical thinking skills. Rodrigues (2020) points out that one major issue is the ethical implications surrounding data privacy and security. It is essential to address these considerations to protect students' intellectual property, as improper data handling could lead to unauthorized use or misappropriation of their work. While AI can support writing, teacher guidance, clear guidelines, and awareness of its limitations are essential for responsible use.

Overall, AI writing tools are increasingly used in higher education for their benefits to writing quality and productivity, but their effective integration requires addressing ethical issues, proper guidance, and continued research to ensure responsible use and improved learning outcomes.

## **METHODOLOGY**

**Chapter III** outlines the Methodology of the study, which is divided into two stages: Stage One, a qualitative approach to error analysis in writing, and Stage Two, survey analysis.

### **Stage One – A Qualitative Approach to Error Analysis in Writing**

This stage employs a qualitative research design to analyze grammatical and structural 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", "Universum College", and "IBCM College". Utilizing a case study approach, the research explores the types and frequencies of errors in the 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 was 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. The 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. Hence, this approach offers a clearer understanding of the errors in the students' essays, revealing their writing difficulties.

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

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

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

Patterns in errors were examined to elicit 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.

For the Organizational analysis, Brown's Analytic Scoring/Assessment was employed. This method is a comprehensive evaluation utilized in assessing writing by breaking down the assessment into distinct criteria, allowing for a more constructive analysis. Unlike holistic scoring,

which provides a single overall score, analytic scoring evaluates specific dimensions of writing, including the organization (introduction, body, and conclusion) of students' essays (Brown, 2003, p. 243). Each criterion is scored individually, enabling educators to provide focused feedback emphasizing strengths and improvement areas. Hence, this approach helps identify specific writing skills that may require further development and improve students' understanding of the writing process, ultimately improving their overall writing proficiency.

### **Stage Two - Survey Analysis**

This section utilizes two questionnaires to capture insights from both students and lecturers. The first questionnaire was distributed to students to identify their problems when composing academic essays. The second questionnaire targeted lecturers and professors to understand their perspectives on these challenges and to gather their suggestions for methods and strategies to help students overcome the obstacles and expand their academic writing skills.

The first (students) questionnaire comprised 15 structured questions with fixed responses to gather numerical data. Respondents were also allowed options to share their thoughts, providing deeper insights into their attitudes. The questionnaire aimed to assess participants' confidence and obstacles in academic writing in English. It contained a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions designed to gather insights into various aspects of the writing process, including overall writing abilities, perceptions of essay writing difficulty, specific challenges encountered, and difficulties with organization, language use, and style. Participants were also asked about their strategies for handling grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary issues, as well as how they integrate information from multiple sources and revise their work based on feedback. Additionally, the questionnaire explored the perceived significance of transition words in enhancing the flow of academic writing. Overall, the aim was to gather comprehensive data on the participants'

experiences and obstacles in academic writing to inform potential support and improvement strategies.

The survey involved 400 respondents from the same universities and colleges used in the first stage of the study, which focused on error analysis in grammatical and organizational essay writing. The questionnaires were distributed both online and in person, ensuring anonymity for all participants. By completing the questionnaire, which took approximately 10 minutes, participants voluntarily consented to take part in the study. In terms of the respondents' demographics, the population was predominantly female, and the majority were first and third-year students. This suggests that academic writing is primarily taught or emphasized during these two years when students are often assigned to compose essays.

The second questionnaire, aimed at lecturers and professors, is designed to identify their perceptions of the difficulties faced by their students and the strategies and methods they employ or recommend to help overcome these obstacles. This part of the study included 40 professors and lecturers from the same institutions involved in the first questionnaire. These institutions offer programs that teach English language skills or include academic writing in English as part of their curricula, ensuring that the participating professors can provide relevant information for the survey. The questionnaire consists of 16 questions divided into three sections: the first section collects demographic information, the second addresses the complications students face, and the third focuses on strategies and solutions. Most questions are structured as fixed or multiple-choice, but open-ended questions were also included to gain deeper perceptions.

## FINDINGS, GENERAL DISCUSSION, AND CONCLUSION

**Chapter IV** provides an overview of findings and discussion, starting with Stage One – error analysis of essay writing in grammar. Thus, 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%).

*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.

*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.

***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.

***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.

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.

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.

***Subject-verb agreement*** errors. 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

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.

*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.

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.

*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.

**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.

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.

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.

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 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 improved academic performance. By addressing these foundational issues, educational institutions can better prepare students for success in their academic journey and upcoming professional paths.

**Error Analysis of Essay Writing in Organization**

This section involved the same essays previously analyzed for grammatical errors, maintaining the same participant population. The only change was the analytical method used to assess students’ organizational errors in their essays. The table below displays the categories and the scoring scale, which defines five levels for each category, ranging from "unacceptable" to "excellent".

*Figure 6. Brown’s Analytic Scoring approach for assessing the organization of students’ essays*

|                      |                             |                            |                            |                        |                                  |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <b>Organization:</b> | <b>5. Excellent to Good</b> | <b>4. Good to Adequate</b> | <b>3. Adequate to Fair</b> | <b>2. Unacceptable</b> | <b>1. Not college-level work</b> |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|

|                                    |   |   |  |   |   |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|
| Introduction<br>Body<br>Conclusion | Appropriate title, effective introductory paragraph, the topic is stated, leads to body, transitional expressions used; the arrangement of material shows plan (could be outlined by the reader); supporting evidence given for generalizations ; conclusion logical and complete | Adequate title, introduction, and conclusion; the body of the essay is acceptable, but some evidence may be lacking, and some ideas are not fully developed; the sequence is logical but transitional expressions may be absent | Mediocre or scant introduction or conclusion; problems with the order of ideas in the body; the generalizations may not be fully supported by the evidence given; problems of organization interfere | Shaky or minimally recognizable introduction; the organization can barely be seen; severe problems with ordering of ideas; lack of supporting evidence; conclusion weak or illogical; inadequate effort at organization | Absence of introduction or conclusion; no apparent organization of body; severe lack of supporting evidence; the writer has not made any effort to organize the composition (could not be outlined by the reader) |
|------------------------------------|---|---|--|---|---|

Figure 7. Writing Assessment Rubric (Brown, 2003)

| Students Essays | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 |
|-----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| Student 1       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 2       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 3       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 4       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 5       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 6       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 7       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 8       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 9       |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 10      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 11      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 12      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 13      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 14      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 15      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 16      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 17      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 18      |   |   |   |   |   |
| Student 19      |   |   |   |   |   |

|            |
|------------|
| Student 20 |
| Student 21 |
| Student 22 |
| Student 23 |
| Student 24 |
| Student 25 |
| Student 26 |
| Student 27 |
| Student 28 |
| Student 29 |
| Student 30 |
| Student 31 |
| Student 32 |
| Student 33 |
| Student 34 |
| Student 35 |
| Student 36 |
| Student 37 |
| Student 38 |
| Student 39 |
| Student 40 |
| Student 41 |
| Student 42 |
| Student 43 |
| Student 44 |
| Student 45 |
| Student 46 |
| Student 47 |
| Student 48 |
| Student 49 |
| Student 50 |

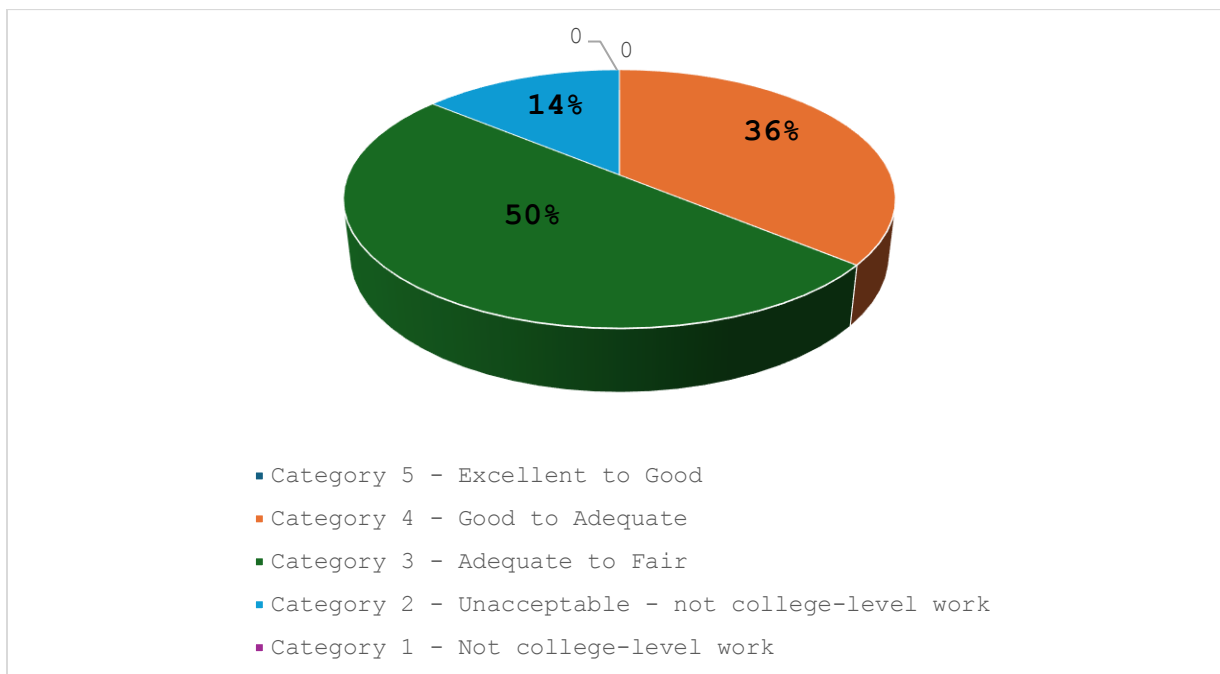
Based on Brown’s approach to essay analysis, 50 essays were evaluated individually. Each component of the organization—introduction, body, and conclusion—was assessed and categorized according to a specific rubric ranging from 1 to 5. From Figure 7 above, it is evident that half of the students (25 out of 50) fall within scale 3, which ranges from adequate to fair, and according to Brown (p.244), this suggests that their introductions and conclusions may be mediocre or lacking, with issues in order of ideas and body. Moreover, generalizations may not be fully supported by the provided evidence.

In contrast, 18 students are categorized on a scale of 4, indicating a range from good to adequate. This suggests they can create satisfactory titles, introductions, and conclusions. While

the body of their essays is generally acceptable, some evidence may be lacking, and certain ideas may not be fully developed. The sequence of ideas is logical, but the transition may be missing (Brown, 2003, p.244).

Finally, 7 students fall within scale 2, categorized as unacceptable and not meeting college-level standards. Students in this group typically present weak or barely recognizable introductions and exhibit poor organizational skills. They face significant difficulties with the order of ideas, lack supporting evidence, and provide conclusions that are either weak or illogical. Overall, their efforts at the organization are inadequate. Notably, no students were placed in categories 1 or 5, indicating that none of them achieved either excellent or insufficient performance for college-level work. .

*Figure 8: Essay Analysis Organization*



## **Stage Two**

### **Student Survey Analysis**

The survey results reveal comprehensive insights into students' confidence and challenges in academic writing. While many students exhibit moderate self-assurance in their writing abilities, they face considerable barriers, particularly in integrating research, generating ideas, and managing essay structure. The complexity of the body of the essay emerged as a primary concern for a substantial number of respondents, indicating that while students are willing to engage with their writing, they often encounter difficulties in executing their ideas effectively. The reliance on grammar tools and external feedback suggests a proactive approach to improvement; however, issues such as sentence structure and the need for clarity present ongoing challenges. External factors, including motivation and time constraints, further complicate the writing experience, emphasizing the varied aspects of academic writing difficulties. The findings also illustrate a critical gap in students' ability to implement feedback during the revision process, signaling a need for better strategies to bridge this divide. When asked about the strategies and methods they use to overcome these pitfalls, most students rely on prewriting techniques and actively seek feedback from their peers, professors, or tutors.

### **Lecturers Survey Analysis**

The first section of this questionnaire collected demographic data, revealing that most respondents were Assistant Professors and Associate Professors, followed by lecturers, Adjunct Faculty, and teaching assistants. The second section initiated a series of questions focused on the difficulties experienced by students, whereas section 3 of the questionnaire focused on strategies and solutions. The findings from the questionnaire reveal diverse challenges and opportunities in improving students' academic writing skills. While demographic data indicate a predominance of experienced educators, the identified obstacles—such as difficulties in critical thinking, clarity, and coherence—underscore significant areas for instructional enhancement. Respondents

emphasized the necessity of individualized feedback and regular writing practice, yet there remains a gap in structured support mechanisms like workshops and peer collaboration. The impact of cultural differences and language proficiency further complicates students' writing experiences, stressing the need for tailored approaches that consider these factors. Strategies to motivate and engage students, such as clear objectives and a supportive classroom environment, are fundamental for promoting a positive writing experience. However, the lower emphasis on integrating real-world applications and celebrating student achievements points to potential areas for growth. On the whole, addressing these obstacles through targeted instructional strategies and expanded support systems will be essential in promoting students' academic writing proficiency and confidence.

**Chapter V** covers the Conclusion and Suggestions part. The study was divided into two main parts: error analysis and two sets of survey questions. More specifically, the error analysis examined aspects of grammar and organizational structure, drawing from a random selection of essays written by students enrolled in various universities and colleges that offer courses in Academic Writing in English, while the second part of the study involved a questionnaire aiming at gathering insights from both students and lecturers. This approach was designed to provide a deeper understanding of the specific issues encountered in academic writing. Additionally, it sought to uncover the strategies and solutions proposed by students and lecturers to address these challenges effectively. By comparing the questionnaire responses with the findings from the error analysis, the study aimed to identify similarities and discrepancies between the obstacles demonstrated by students in their written work and their perceptions, as well as how lecturers view or perceive students' struggles in academic writing and the strategies/solutions they propose. This comparative analysis allowed the author to assess the extent to which the difficulties highlighted

in the essays corresponded with the issues identified in the questionnaire responses, ultimately enriching the dialogue between students and lecturers/educators regarding effective academic writing practices.

The initial phase of the study focused on analyzing the grammatical errors found in students' essays. This section draws on Richard's (1974) theory, which categorizes intralingual errors into four types: overgeneralization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and the false concepts hypothesized. Based on the data collected from students' essays, the most common types of errors were found to be related to punctuation and sentence structure. Punctuation errors fall under Richard's category of "false concepts hypothesized", where students misunderstand the function of punctuation in English, leading to frequent omissions or incorrect usage. On the other hand, errors in sentence structure, particularly run-on sentences, are classified as "incomplete application of the rule". This occurs when students have a general understanding of a grammatical rule but fail to apply it fully or accurately, resulting in sentences that are unclear or improperly structured. In the second part of the study, when students were surveyed, their responses revealed that punctuation was not felt as their primary challenge, despite the findings from their essays. Instead, they identified sentence structure as their main difficulty in grammar. Based on the survey results, punctuation errors ranked third in their list of challenges. Notably, students' responses aligned with those of their lecturers, who also ranked sentence structure as the top issue.

In addition to examining students' grammar errors, the study also focused on organizational error analysis. Brown's (2003) approach to essay analysis was used, evaluating 50 essays individually across the three main components: introduction, body, and conclusion. Each component was categorized according to a specific rubric, ranging from 1 to 5. The results

indicated that half of the students scored a 3, which reflects a range from adequate to fair. This suggests that their introductions and conclusions were mediocre or missing, with notable issues in organizing ideas within the body. Students' responses to the survey revealed the same because when asked about which part of the essay they regarded as the most complex, the majority claimed that the body followed with the introduction, whereas the conclusion was less favored. Concerning lecturers' responses, the analysis showed a strong alignment with both student feedback/responses to the survey and essay performance. Most lecturers perceived students' organizational skills in academic writing as inconsistent, often leading to issues with clarity and coherence throughout the body of their writing.

Comparisons were also made with other survey questions, marking both similarities and differences between students' and lecturers' responses. This analysis aimed to identify the most common hurdles, their causes, and potential solutions to address them. For example, students identified the integration of sources and idea generation as their top concerns, choosing from multiple options. In contrast, lecturers believed that students primarily struggle with critical thinking, clarity, and cohesion. On the other hand, the students ranked clarity and cohesion as the least significant challenge. In addition to identifying general challenges, another question explored the external factors contributing to this difficult process. Both students and lecturers agreed that time constraints and poor time management are significant issues. These factors often lead to procrastination, and at times, students may rush to complete assignments, resulting in poorly composed essays. Another similarity found in the survey data from students and lecturers pertains to the difficulties encountered with source integration. The results indicate that both groups identified pitfalls in balancing students' ideas with external sources, as well as issues related to

citing and referencing those sources. These were the main factors underlined in the questionnaires by both students and lecturers.

The study aimed not only to identify the issues associated with essay writing but also to explore potential solutions and strategies for overcoming these obstacles. Understanding the complexities of the writing process can greatly enhance students' abilities to articulate their thoughts and ideas clearly. Therefore, this investigation into the struggles and potential remedies in essay writing is of paramount importance.

Data collected during the study revealed both similarities and differences in the responses of students and lecturers, providing profound insights into their respective perspectives on the writing process. For instance, both groups agreed that seeking feedback from peers, professors, or tutors is an invaluable part of the writing journey. This consensus stresses the importance of collaboration and communication in enhancing writing skills. Feedback serves as a critical tool for students to identify areas for improvement and to refine their writing techniques. However, while both groups acknowledged the value of feedback, students emphasized specific techniques that they found helpful, such as outlining, brainstorming, creating multiple drafts, and implementing various organizational methods like tracking sources and utilizing writing tools. These practices were notably absent from the lecturers' responses, which might suggest that they consider these techniques fundamental and self-evident. This gap in perceptions stresses a potential lack of connection between students and lecturers regarding effective writing strategies. For instance, students may benefit from more explicit instruction about these techniques, which could empower them to adopt structured approaches to writing. This finding points to a need for clearer communication and collaboration between students and lecturers to ensure that effective writing practices are fully understood and utilized. In contrast to the students' focus on specific writing

techniques, lecturers emphasized the importance of providing individualized feedback on students' written assignments. They accentuated on the necessity of identifying each student's strengths and areas for improvement, which plays a critical role in fostering academic growth. Personalized feedback both helps students recognize their progress and motivates them to continue developing their skills. To effectively provide individualized feedback on students' written assignments, lecturers can adopt several concrete strategies. First, they can use a structured feedback template that outlines specific criteria for evaluation, including strengths, areas for improvement, and actionable recommendations. Additionally, scheduling one-on-one conferences allows for detailed discussions about individual assignments, enabling students to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of their progress. Incorporating peer review sessions encourages students to exchange feedback with their classmates, fostering critical evaluation skills. Utilizing digital tools, can facilitate annotated feedback directly on electronic submissions, making it easier for students to see their writing in context. Moreover, setting up feedback workshops can help students learn how to give and receive feedback effectively. Creating a feedback loop that encourages students to revise their work based on feedback and resubmit it for further evaluation reinforces the notion that improvement is a continuous journey. Finally, keeping a record of students' assignments and periodically sharing a summary of their progress can praise their development and motivate them to engage more deeply with their writing.

Lecturers also stressed the importance of assigning specific writing tasks and exercises designed to promote regular practice and skill development. These elements were not prominently reflected in the students' responses, suggesting that students may not fully recognize the value of the structured writing practice. This discrepancy highlights a potential area for improvement in the

educational approach, as integrating these elements into the curriculum could maximize students' writing abilities.

Moreover, lecturers proposed additional strategies that could support students in their writing activities. These included offering one-on-one tutoring sessions with writing instructors or language specialists, which would provide personalized feedback and guidance tailored to individual student needs. Such tailored support can be particularly beneficial for students who may struggle with specific aspects of writing. Integrating grammar and language support activities into writing instruction was another suggestion aimed at addressing specific language challenges that students may face. By focusing on the foundational elements of writing, lecturers can help students build confidence in their abilities.

Furthermore, lecturers advocated for the organization of workshops, seminars, or tutorials that focus on key aspects of academic writing, such as thesis development, paragraph structure, and proper citation practices. These structured learning opportunities could considerably enrich students' understanding and application of writing conventions. A workshop format allows students to engage with the material actively, ask questions, and receive immediate feedback, creating a dynamic learning environment.

In response to an open-ended question about additional support mechanisms, lecturers expressed the need to reform academic writing instruction as early as primary and secondary education. They argued that many of the problems students face in university writing stem from a lack of readiness in these essential skills. This suggests that early intervention could mitigate future difficulties. The idea is that if students are equipped with strong foundational skills, they will be better prepared to tackle the complexities of academic writing at the university level. This proactive approach could lead to a more seamless transition into higher education writing

requirements. To effectively reform academic writing instruction starting in primary and secondary education, lecturers can collaborate with educators at these levels to develop a curriculum that emphasizes foundational writing skills. In addition, implementing writing-focused workshops or after-school programs can provide students with additional practice and support. These programs could include activities like peer editing sessions, where students learn to give and receive constructive feedback, fostering a collaborative writing environment. Lecturers might also call for professional development opportunities for primary and secondary teachers, focusing on effective writing instruction techniques. Providing teachers with the tools and resources they need can improve their ability to teach writing skills effectively. Additionally, establishing partnerships with local universities to create mentorship programs can connect university students with high school students, offering insights into college-level writing expectations and providing guidance on how to prepare.

Moreover, lecturers commended that students should not only focus on developing academic writing skills in English but also fortify their writing abilities in their native language. This dual approach would equip students with a more comprehensive skill set, allowing them to express their ideas effectively. If they can articulate their thoughts well in their mother tongue, it will be significantly easier for them to do so in another language. This is particularly relevant for students in Kosovo, where English is a foreign language.

Regular writing workshops specifically tailored to the needs of Kosovo students were also suggested, with special emphasis placed on courses designed to improve English language proficiency. Such workshops could provide a supportive environment for students to practice their writing skills, receive constructive feedback, and engage with their peers. The opportunity to collaborate with others can also foster a sense of community among students, making the writing

process feel less isolating. To further support students, lecturers emphasized the necessity of extensive preparatory English writing and language classes. These classes would ensure that students are adequately prepared to participate in university-level writing courses, thereby enhancing their overall academic experience. To implement regular writing workshops, lecturers can organize a series of sessions focused on specific writing skills, such as academic essay writing, research paper structuring, and citation practices, all designed to develop English language proficiency. For example, workshops could include interactive activities like peer editing, where students review each other's drafts and provide constructive feedback, fostering collaboration and a sense of community. To complement these workshops, extensive preparatory English writing and language classes should be established, focusing on foundational skills such as grammar, vocabulary development, and writing mechanics. This dual approach ensures that students practice their writing skills in a supportive environment and build the necessary proficiency to excel in university-level courses.

Additionally, they proposed implementing cultural exchange programs that would allow Kosovo students to interact with peers from diverse cultural backgrounds. Such interactions could foster cross-cultural understanding and enrich students' perspectives on writing and communication. Exposure to different writing styles and cultural contexts can broaden students' horizons, allowing them to appreciate the nuances of language and expression.

Furthermore, lecturers showcased the importance of incorporating more hands-on activities into the curriculum. Engaging students through practical exercises, such as games, group work, and in-class mini-projects, would make learning more enjoyable and interactively reinforce writing skills. These activities could encourage collaboration and creativity, making the writing process

feel less overwhelming for students. By incorporating varied teaching methods, lecturers can cater for different learning styles and create a more inclusive and engaging classroom environment.

Many lecturers strongly encouraged students to read more regularly as part of their suggested strategies. Reading widely can exceptionally refine vocabulary, comprehension, and writing style, serving as a vital part of their overall development as writers. By immersing themselves in various texts, students can gain a deeper understanding of different writing techniques and styles, which can ultimately influence their own writing positively. Lecturers can play a crucial role in promoting reading by recommending diverse literature and creating assignments that encourage students to explore various genres and subjects. To effectively encourage students to read more regularly, lecturers can create a recommended reading list that includes a diverse range of genres, such as fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and essays, catering to different interests and reading levels. For example, they might include contemporary novels, classic literature, and relevant academic articles that relate to the subjects being studied. Additionally, lecturers can assign reading reflections that require students to analyze the writing techniques used by the authors, prompting them to consider how these techniques could be applied to their own writing. Organizing reading groups or book clubs can also foster a sense of community and discussion among students, allowing them to share insights and interpretations of the texts they read.

Lecturers also proposed a comprehensive range of additional strategies designed to motivate and actively engage students in the writing process, with a specific focus on addressing their reluctance toward writing assignments. Recognizing that many students may find writing daunting, tedious, or uninteresting, these strategies aim to expand students' overall experience and effectiveness in completing writing tasks, ultimately fostering a more positive attitude toward

academic writing. Furthermore, allowing students to choose their topics for writing assignments can significantly increase their motivation levels. When students have the autonomy to explore subjects that genuinely interest them, they are more likely to engage deeply with their writing. This sense of ownership transforms writing assignments from mere tasks into meaningful learning experiences that resonate with their personal interests and passions. By tapping into students' intrinsic motivation, lecturers can help them develop a greater appreciation for the writing process. Moreover, when students are passionate about their topics, they are more likely to invest time in research, organization, and revision, leading to higher-quality writing.

Creating a supportive classroom environment is another essential strategy that lecturers believe can significantly impact student motivation. By fostering a space where students feel safe to express their ideas, share their thoughts, and make mistakes, lecturers can encourage creativity and risk-taking in writing. This supportive atmosphere promotes individual expression and encourages collaboration among students. When students feel valued and supported, they are more likely to participate actively in class discussions and writing activities, further enhancing their writing skills and confidence. Additionally, fostering a sense of community in the classroom can lead to peer support, where students motivate and inspire one another, creating a more dynamic and enriching learning experience. Notably, these strategies were not mentioned in the students' responses, which may indicate a lack of connection between what lecturers perceive as beneficial and what students feel they need. This gap in understanding emphasizes the critical importance of open communication between students and lecturers. By fostering dialogue about the dilemmas students face and the types of support they desire, educators can tailor their approaches to better meet the needs of their learners. Regular feedback sessions, surveys, or informal check-ins could effectively bridge this gap, allowing lecturers to adapt their teaching methods and strategies based

on student input. Incorporating these motivational strategies into the writing curriculum is essential for creating a more engaging and effective learning environment. By addressing the problems students face in writing, lecturers hope to encourage a more positive outlook on academic writing, ultimately helping students to develop the skills and confidence necessary to succeed in their academic aspirations. Through these concerted efforts, the goal is to transform writing from a source of anxiety into an empowering and enriching experience.

An additional strategy put forth by lecturers involves setting clear and achievable objectives for each writing assignment. By outlining specific goals and expectations, students can gain a clearer understanding of what is required of them, which can effectively alleviate the confusion and anxiety often associated with writing tasks. When students know exactly what they need to accomplish, they are more likely to approach the assignment with confidence. This clarity helps in reducing stress as well as providing a structured framework that guides students through the writing process. To implement this adeptly, lecturers can begin each assignment by providing a detailed rubric that outlines specific goals and criteria for success. For instance, the rubric could include categories such as thesis clarity, argument development, use of evidence, and adherence to formatting guidelines, allowing students to understand exactly what is expected of them. Additionally, lecturers can break down larger assignments into smaller, manageable tasks with individual deadlines. For example, instead of assigning a full research paper due at the end of the semester, they could require students to submit a topic proposal, an annotated bibliography, a draft, and the final paper, each with its own set of objectives. This step-by-step approach helps students focus on one aspect of the writing process at a time, reducing the chances of being overwhelmed.

Furthermore, lecturers emphasized the importance of underscoring the relevance of assignments to students' lives and future careers. When students can see a direct connection

between their writing tasks and real-world applications, they are more inclined to invest the necessary time and effort into their work. This relevance can be particularly motivating for students who may struggle to see the value of academic writing in their everyday lives, making the writing process feel more purposeful and significant. One effective strategy to mark the relevance of assignments to students' lives and future careers is to incorporate real-world scenarios and case studies into the curriculum. By designing writing assignments that reflect current industry contestations, societal issues, or professional practices, lecturers can help students understand how their writing skills apply in various contexts. For example, lecturers could assign projects that require students to analyze and propose solutions to real-world problems within their chosen fields. Additionally, inviting guest speakers from relevant industries to discuss their experiences and the role of effective writing in their careers can reinforce this connection. By showing students how writing is used in practical situations, they will be more motivated to engage in their assignments, seeing them as valuable opportunities for skill development and future application.

In summary, the study pointed out a range of challenges students face in essay writing while also revealing valuable insights into potential solutions and strategies proposed by both students and lecturers. Bridging the gap between these perspectives could lead to more effective writing instruction and ultimately empower students to become more proficient and confident writers. By fostering a collaborative environment where students and lecturers actively engage in the writing process, educational institutions can better equip students with the skills they need to succeed in their academic and professional journeys. The findings of this study reinforce the value of ongoing dialogue and collaboration in enhancing writing education, emphasizing that writing is not just a skill to be taught but a process to be nurtured and developed through continuous practice and support.

In researching the difficulties faced by students in Kosovo regarding academic writing, it is essential to contextualize the findings within existing literature. While the strategies and solutions identified through the distributed survey provide valuable insights, it is important to note that there is a significant lack of comprehensive research in this area within Kosovo. Currently, the studies identified addressing these challenges are conducted solely in one institution. This limited scope does not adequately represent the wider academic landscape or the diverse difficulties encountered by students across multiple higher education institutions. In contrast, the current research encompasses a broader analysis by surveying all higher education institutions that teach academic writing in English. This comprehensive approach captures a wider array of student experiences while also drawing attention to the obstacles that students face in different contexts,fff

while incorporating the strategies, solutions, and recommendations proposed by lecturers, enriching the findings and providing meaningful insights for improving academic writing support. By emphasizing this broader scope, the research underscores its innovative nature and the importance of the findings.

Thus, this study fills a critical gap in the literature, providing a detailed examination of academic writing challenges that can inform the development of effective strategies and solutions tailored to the unique needs of students in Kosovo. By addressing this gap, the research contributes significantly to understanding and enhancing academic writing support in the region, ultimately aiming to improve student outcomes in higher education.

**Chapter VI** presents Limitations of the Study. One significant limitation of this study is the relatively small sample size, comprising 400 students and 40 professors. This sample may not adequately represent the broader population of interest, which can affect the generalizability of the findings. Consequently, the results may not capture the full diversity of experiences and

characteristics within the demographic. Additionally, the error analysis was based on essay samples from only 50 students. This limitation arose because the researcher faced challenges in obtaining consent from students and securing essays from various universities and colleges. Yet another limitation to note is the reliance on self-reported error analysis of essays. Although Brown's Analytic Scoring/Assessment was employed for evaluating the organizational aspects of students' essays, this method can still be considered a form of self-reporting, which may introduce bias. While this method is effective in identifying specific writing skills that may require further development and enhancing students' understanding of the writing process, the subjective nature of self-reported measures may still impact the reliability of the findings. Ultimately, 50 essays were evaluated using this rubric, but the potential for bias remains a concern.

For future research, it would be beneficial to expand the sample size and include participants from a wider range of institutions to enhance the generalizability of the findings. While a mixed-methods approach was already implemented in this study, future iterations could explore additional qualitative feedback mechanisms, such as interviews or focus groups, to gain deeper insights into students' writing processes and perceptions. Additionally, ensuring easier access to student essays and obtaining consent through streamlined processes could improve the effectiveness of the analysis in subsequent studies.

**Chapter VII** compiles 87 carefully selected references cited throughout the study, drawn from credible sources to strengthen the validity of the research.

Following the chapters outlined above, the thesis concludes with a set of appendices. These include Appendix A: Student Questionnaire; Appendix B: Lecturer Questionnaire; Appendix C: Sample Error Analysis of a Student's Essay; and Appendix D: Student Consent Form for the Use of Essays in Research.

### **Publications:**

Kallaba, F. (2025). Grammatical Error Analysis in Academic Essays: A Comprehensive Study of University Students in Kosovo. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 7(7), 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2025.7.7.1>

Kallaba, F. (2024). Examining Lecturers' Insights: Resolving Challenges and Implementing Strategies for Improving Academic Writing Proficiency Among Kosovo Students. *Yearbook of the Department of Foreign Languages and Cultures*, 4, 96–107. <https://doi.org/10.33919/flcy.24.4.4>

Kallaba, F. (2023). Kosovo Students' Academic Writing Skills in English: Challenges and Solutions. *Annual of Sofia University "St. Kliment Ohridski", The Department for Language Teaching*, Anniversary Volume 24, 132–144.

### **Conferences:**

June 2024 – Vienna, Austria

Participation in the 6th World Conference on Education and Teaching (ETCONF).

Presented research findings titled: “Examining Lecturers' Insights: Resolving Challenges and Implementing Strategies for Improving Academic Writing Proficiency Among Kosovo Students.”

November 2023 – Sofia, Bulgaria

Participation in the International Conference in Applied Linguistics: Current Trends and Prospects.

Presented research findings titled: “Investigating the Obstacles Encountered by EFL Students in Translating Idiomatic Expressions from English to the Albanian Language.

