

# Error Analysis in Written Tasks of Albanian-Speaking GFL Learners at B1 Level: Common Types and Causes

Viola Salihi

German Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo

Sadije Rexhepi\*

German Language and Literature, Faculty of Philology, University of Prishtina, Prishtina, Kosovo

**Abstract**—Understanding common errors that students of a foreign language make and their causes can enhance our ability to adjust teaching methodologies. This paper aimed to analyze errors that Albanian students of German language and literature make when writing texts in German as a foreign language. This qualitative and quantitative analysis set out to identify and classify errors and find the causes of errors. The study is based on 100 students of German at the B1 level, including participants from language schools and first-year students from the German Department at the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina”. Students were required to submit written texts for analysis. The analysis of these texts was used to address the following research question: What are the typical and recurrent errors made by learners of German as a foreign language (GFL) and what are their causes? The analysis of written texts showed that errors occur at all linguistic levels, with grammatical errors being the most common, followed by orthography and punctuation and syntax. Most errors arose from interference between the native Albanian and the foreign language English, followed by competence and overgeneralization.

**Index Terms**—error types, error causes, grammatical errors, interference, competence errors

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today’s society, foreign language skills are of great importance as they provide access to various cultures and enable deeper interpersonal communication. The German language, in particular, has increasingly captured the interest of Kosovo, as evidenced by the continuously rising number of participants in related language courses.

When learning a foreign language, learners or students are confronted with the basic structures of grammar and the peculiarities of the new language that were previously unknown to them. In this process, it is common to produce erroneous written expressions, which may arise from ambiguities, carelessness, or the influence of other languages. Errors are therefore characteristic of foreign language learners, especially in writing, where they appear as deviations from the language system and are recorded on paper. This is particularly pronounced as writing skills in German as a Foreign Language (GFL) instruction have long been neglected. Pogner (2010, p. 1583) notes that writing has long been “neglected” in foreign and second language (L2) didactics.

To identify erroneous expressions of learners and determine their causes, a comprehensive error analysis is essential. Existing research has examined errors made by GFL learners that result from interference between German and various European languages. However, this study will specifically focus on the errors made by GFL learners who are native Albanian speakers.

The hypothesis of this work claims that learners tend to produce erroneous expressions when learning a new foreign language, especially due to the influence of other linguistic elements, such as native language structures. Thus, most errors arise from the transfer of structures from one language to another.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Errors are pervasive in the process of language acquisition, affecting both oral and written communication. Such errors are regarded as indications of intermediate phases in the evolution of linguistic proficiency and ought to be addressed in a constructive manner (Gerlach & Leupold, 2019, p. 117).

In the Duden<sup>1</sup> Online Dictionary, an error is defined as “something that is incorrect, deviating from what is right; inaccuracy,” whereas in the DWDS (Digital Dictionary of the German Language)<sup>2</sup>, an error is seen as “a deviation from

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\* Corresponding Author

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.duden.de/rechtschreibung/Fehler>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dwds.de/wb/Fehler?o=fehler>

what is correct, mistake". Rösler (2012) defines errors as "unconscious deviations from the norm" (p. 151), with the Duden being considered the authoritative source for the norm (Rösler, 2012, p. 152).

Kleppin (1998, p. 19f) has compiled various definitions from language researchers who have explored this topic.

The assessment of errors depends on various factors, including grammar rules, communication contexts, social norms, and individual learning processes. Errors in language acquisition should not be viewed negatively. Krumm (1990) emphasizes:

that we should make it clear to students that errors are necessary stages on the path to language mastery, and that we as teachers only 'look for errors' to improve our teaching. Errors also provide learning experiences for classmates, where the relevant learning issue might not yet be apparent. (p. 99ff.)

Error analysis, also known as error studies or error linguistics, is a crucial tool in applied linguistics. It not only allows for the identification of linguistic inaccuracies but also provides insights into the learning progress and needs of learners. According to Jung (2007, p. 50), error analysis is the description, explanation, and evaluation of linguistic inaccuracies. It helps prevent errors or correct them through appropriate learning and practice materials.

The various steps of error analysis, as described by Hufeisen and Neuner (1997, p. 97), include the identification, classification, explanation, correction, assessment, therapy and prevention of errors. This structured approach enables the recognition of not only individual errors but also their causes and allows for the implementation of appropriate corrective measures. Chlosta et al. (2008, p. 273) also highlight the importance of four key steps in error analysis: error identification, error levels and classifications, error causes, and error assessment.

The identification of errors can be based on the five criteria proposed by Kleppin (2010, p. 1061ff.), namely linguistic correctness, comprehensibility, cultural situational appropriateness, instructional criteria, and flexible criteria related to the learner. The correctness of a statement is determined by its conformity to the established rules and standards of the language. An error is defined as a deviation from the established rules of the language. The question of comprehensibility pertains to the impact of errors on communication. Anything that is comprehensible is not regarded as an error, even if it contravenes grammatical norms. Situational appropriateness entails an examination of a statement's conformity to social and cultural norms, encompassing both form and content. The evaluation of instructional criteria entails the assessment of a statement's alignment with the rules taught in the classroom, with reference to the content of textbooks and the guidance provided by teachers. The final criterion, flexibility, allows for the assessment of errors to be modified according to the specific learner group and stage of instruction in question.

Error classification is a fundamental element of error analysis, wherein errors are grouped according to specific characteristics in order to gain a deeper understanding of the difficulties encountered in language acquisition. Edge (1989, p. 9ff.) proposes a categorization of errors into three distinct categories: slips, mistakes and attempts. This classification is based on the significance of the error in the context of classroom language acquisition. A slip is a mistake that a student can self-correct, while an error is a mistake that the student cannot self-correct, although the class is familiar with the correct form. An attempt occurs when the student has not yet learned the necessary language or when it is unclear what they are trying to express.

An alternative method proposed by Corder (1967, p. 166f.) categorizes errors into two distinct categories: performance errors and competence errors. Errors of competence are not identifiable due to a lack of knowledge, whereas errors of performance arise from incomplete automation or slips of the tongue, which the learner may be aware of. In a similar vein, Kleppin (1998, p. 41f.) proposes a classification based on language levels, namely phonological, morphosyntactic, lexical-semantic, pragmatic, and content errors.

The causes of errors in foreign language learning are diverse and complex, often involving multiple factors simultaneously. As Hufeisen and Neuner (1999, p. 70) observe, identifying the source of errors necessitates not only an understanding of linguistic principles but also an appreciation of psychological and pedagogical assumptions. One particularly common cause is interference, whereby disruptive influences from an already known linguistic system (such as the mother tongue or another foreign language) affect the target language system (Karbe & Piepho, 2000, p. 127). The distinction is made between interlingual and intralingual interference. Interlingual interference refers to the influence of the native language/mother tongue or another foreign language on the target language, with Kabatek and Pusch (2009, p. 189) identifying five processes: replacement, over-differentiation, under-differentiation, over-representation, and under-representation.

In contrast, intralingual interference refers to errors occurring within the target language as a result of processes such as overgeneralization, regularization, and simplification. Overgeneralization occurs when learners apply rules that are normative in the target language to areas where they are not. Regularization happens when irregular phenomena in the target language are made regular (Kleppin, 1998, p. 33). Simplification, however, leads to reducing complex linguistic structures to simpler forms. In this case, learners omit certain linguistic phenomena that are necessary for the target language (Chou, 2015, p. 58).

In addition, communication strategies also influence the occurrence of errors. Kleppin (1998, p. 34) describes it as a communication strategy when learners try to paraphrase unknown words, use gestures, and facial expressions to make themselves understood, or ask their conversation partner or teacher for help with their problem, such as by asking for the missing word in the foreign language, expressing it in their native language, using another foreign language, or creating a new word.

Learning strategies also play a role when learners consciously try out new linguistic means, even if they are not fully familiar with them or do not conform to norms, hoping to learn through corrections from their conversation partner. This not only shows their willingness to learn but also their adaptability.

In foreign language teaching, practice transfer can occur when intensely practiced linguistic skills are automatically applied to other situations where these rules do not apply. Raabe (1980) refers to this as “influence through linguistic and extralinguistic disproportions” (p. 83), where frequently used linguistic elements replace less common ones.

Personal factors such as fatigue, stress, or nervousness can also lead to errors, as they impair the ability to recall specific linguistic structures. According to Kleppin (1998, p. 38), such causes occur more frequently in spoken language use than in written. Sociocultural factors can further influence writing and speaking by transferring culturally influenced expressions or writing conventions from one’s own culture into the target language, leading to errors that may be interpreted as expressions of cultural influence or the writer’s character. Kleppin (1998) refers to this as “cultural interference” (p. 38).

Various studies have been conducted in different languages on error analysis. We also conducted a study analyzing errors made by students in translating literary texts and concluded

that the translation of literary texts is a challenge for the students of the German department at the University of Prishtina, be it due to a lack of linguistic competence, a lack of general knowledge, but also a noticeable influence of German language, which in most cases lead to faulty and incorrect translations. The analysis shows that morpho-syntactic errors occur most frequently in translation. (Rexhepi et al., 2024, p. 946)

### III. METHODOLOGY

The study consisted of a theoretical and an empirical component. The theoretical component included a literature review. The empirical component included a detailed examination of error analysis, including the identification, classification, causes, correction, and comparison of errors.

The theoretical section elucidated the various types of writing tasks and examined the writing requirements at the B1 level in accordance with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). Furthermore, the study explored the phenomenon of errors in the context of foreign language teaching.

The empirical section of the study was comprised of an investigation of writing competence in the context of German as a Foreign Language instruction. A total of 100 GFL learners at the B1 level were selected for inclusion in the study, comprising participants from language schools and first-year students from the German Studies Department at the University of Prishtina “Hasan Prishtina” in Kosovo. A comparison of writing competence between language schools and the university was also performed, as both language course participants and students were involved. Following this, an error analysis was conducted based on written texts produced by the participants from language schools and students.

This analysis addresses the following research questions:

What are the typical and recurring errors produced by GFL learners?

What are the underlying causes of these errors?

Specific focus was dedicated to the identification of the linguistic levels at which learners commit the majority of errors. The errors were classified according to the following criteria: grammatical, syntactic, lexical-semantic, orthographic, and pragmatic. The subsequent phase of the study was dedicated to the identification of the underlying causes of errors, with a particular focus on the causes that contribute to their occurrence.

This study employed both analytical and contrastive methods. The descriptive method was also employed for the description of the study, which encompassed both a practical and a theoretical component. In this latter regard, the error analysis from the literature was also examined.

In order to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the results, each error in the texts was subjected to a thorough and comprehensive analysis. The most prevalent types of errors were examined through quantitative analysis, while the underlying causes were investigated through qualitative analysis. The findings of these analyses were also compared with the self-assessments provided by the learners in the questionnaires.

The study concludes with a summary of the principal results and findings.

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The empirical component of this study focused on analyzing errors in texts written by 100 native Albanian GFL learners at the B1 level. The participants were informed about the research and provided their consent to participate. The task asked each participant to write an email of 80 to 100 words in length in an informal style, considering different aspects of written communication at B1 level. This included appropriate greetings and closings for an informal tone, as well as a clearly structured and comprehensible writing style. Despite the informal nature of the task, basic writing skills, such as correct spelling and grammar, were expected.

The participants were asked to provide texts for the writing tasks at B1 level for topics that included every day and personal experiences, such as moving from the country to the city to study, a report on a concert attended, a description of a graduation party at the end of a German course, an account of an accident, and a report on moving into a new

apartment. These tasks have been designed in the style of the Goethe B1 exam and aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to ensure an accurate assessment of language proficiency at the B1 level.

100 texts of the participants were analyzed on different levels. Initially, to ensure accurate results, all sentences in the corpus of the texts that contained errors were first identified. These errors were then carefully corrected before a comprehensive analysis was carried out. The errors were categorized in order to determine precisely their nature and cause. This process took into account grammatical, syntactic, orthographic, lexical-semantic, and pragmatic aspects. In addition, subcategories of errors were defined to allow a more detailed examination. Once the linguistic level had been determined, each error was analyzed for its specific cause.

The analysis of the texts shows that the participants made errors at all linguistic levels. Out of a total of 1,523 errors, 44% were related to grammar, 26% to orthography and punctuation, 19% to syntax, 9.5% to lexical-semantic errors and only 1.5% to pragmatic errors.

The analysis also shows that 55% of the errors were made by university students and 45% by private course participants. Course participants had slightly more grammatical difficulties: 46% of the errors were made by them compared to 42% by the university students. This could be due to the fact that grammar is a mandatory subject at university from the start, whereas private German courses take an integrated approach that includes other language skills.

The difference is clear when it comes to orthography and punctuation errors: students are 30% ahead of course participants, for whom the percentage of errors is 22%. This may be attributed to the fact that, based on the questionnaire, 20% of the university students initially learned German through television. They have a good command of the spoken language and no problems with listening comprehension, but their writing skills may not have been sufficiently developed due to a lack of opportunities to practice.

In the categories of syntax, lexical semantics, and pragmatics, the course participants made slightly more errors than the students, although the difference was only minimal (Figure 1):

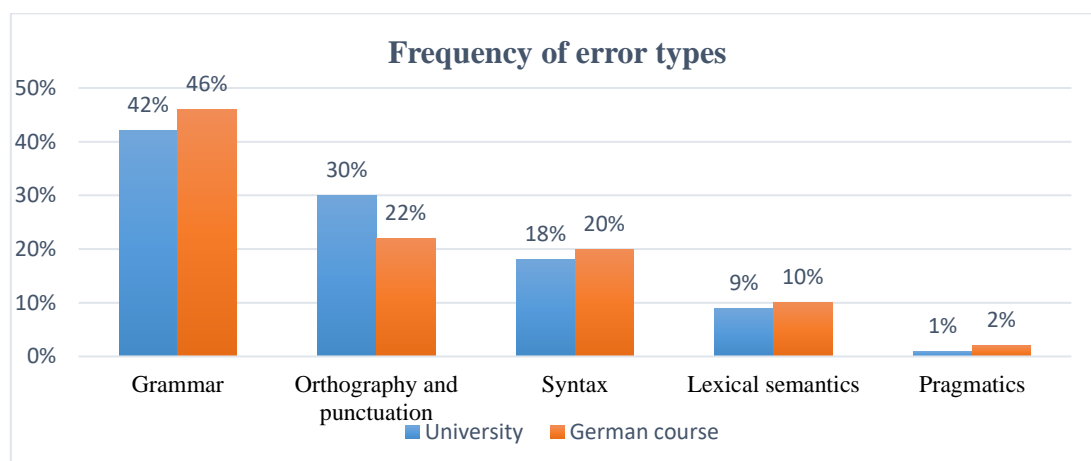


Figure 1. The Frequency of Error Types

In the participant questionnaire, respondents were specifically asked to self-assess their sources of error. They were asked to indicate where they thought they made the most errors, so that this self-assessment could be compared with the results of the detailed error analysis. The following findings emerged from the evaluation:

Most participants (47% of students and 36% of learners) said that they had particular difficulty in expressing their thoughts accurately by choosing the right words. This self-perception was then compared with the results of the error analysis. It was found that lexical-semantic errors, related to word choice and meaning, were only in fourth place among the error categories identified. A possible explanation for this could be that participants avoid complex sentence structures and try to express their thoughts in a simplified way.

Many participants (31% of students and 33% of learners) emphasized the challenges they face with grammar, and this assessment was confirmed by the error analysis, as most errors occurred at this level (42% of students and 46% of learners). Self-perception proved to be accurate.

Only 7% of students and 3% of course participants reported difficulties with orthography and punctuation. This self-assessment led to the assumption that errors were less frequent at this level. However, the error analysis shows that spelling and punctuation is the second most common error category after grammar.

In addition to the types of errors, the analysis also identified the causes of these errors, as shown in Figure 2 below.

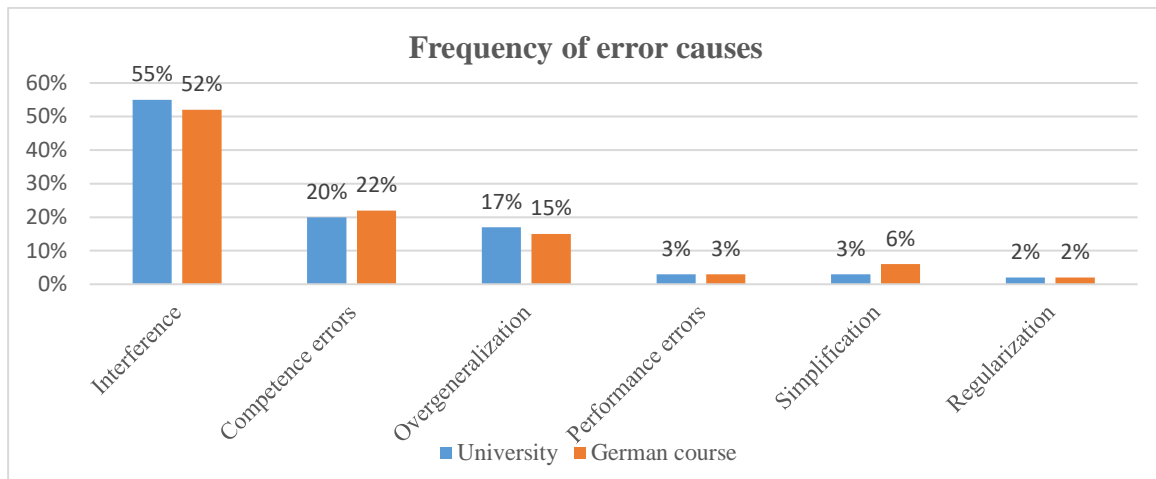


Figure 2. The Frequency of Error Causes

As outlined in the hypothesis, most errors were caused by interference between Albanian and English. The second most common cause was competence errors due to lack of knowledge or underdeveloped language skills. The third were errors due to overgeneralization, where linguistic rules are applied excessively. Other causes of error include performance errors, which can be due to lack of concentration or fatigue. These are difficult to identify, but the analysis suggests their presence when a linguistic phenomenon is used mostly correctly and rarely incorrectly. There are also simplifications, where complex forms are avoided, such as omitting sentence elements or not using adjective declension, and finally regularizations, where irregular phenomena are used regularly. No significant differences were found between students and course participants.

Students were also asked to self-report what they perceived to be the causes of their errors. The questionnaire results do not show a clear majority for any particular cause of error, with the responses fairly evenly distributed between the various causes. 36% of the students believed that their errors were due to lack of concentration, i.e., performance errors. In contrast, 31% of the course participants thought their errors were caused by lack of knowledge, i.e., competence errors.

As mentioned above, the analysis showed that most errors were caused by interference. However, only 26% of students and 21% of course participants said that their errors were due to interference from their native language/mother tongue or another foreign language.

In the following, some examples from the analysis are presented and analyzed:

#### - - Grammatical errors

The error analysis and the results of the learners' questionnaires clearly show that grammar is the main source of difficulty for most learners. Problems with case are particularly prominent, followed by difficulties with gender and the correct use of prepositions. There are also problems with the formation of the perfect tense, the formation of the plural, the use of the article, and the conjugation of verbs. Errors in tense, number, and conjunction are less common.

In Albanian, the case is marked by the endings. The indefinite article *ein* (Eng. *a/an*), which corresponds to the Albanian indefinite article *një*, is not declined. For example, in (1) the masculine nouns *Fernseher* (Eng. *television*) and *Flur* (Eng. *hall*) should be declined as accusative objects with *einen*, which is due to interference.

(1) Error: "Wir haben **ein** Fernseher, ein Sofa, ein Bad und **ein** Flur." (Correct: Wir haben **einen** Fernseher, ein Sofa, ein Bad und **einen** Flur. = We have **a** television, a sofa, a bathroom, and **a** hallway.)

Another case error is illustrated in example (2), where the pronoun *ihn* (acc., Eng. *him*) is used. *Ihn* is a personal pronoun in the accusative case, used for direct objects when referring to a male person. However, since the verb *helfen* (Eng. *to help*) requires a dative object, the correct pronoun should be *ihm* (dat., Eng. *him*). In Albanian, on the other hand, the corresponding verb requires either an accusative object *të ndihmojmë atë* or a dative object *t'i ndihmojmë atij* (doubling of the object in the dative case). This suggests that the learner mistakenly applied the rule from their native language to German, where *helfen* takes a dative case.

(2) Error: "Ich denke, dass wir **ihn** helfen müssen." (Correct: Ich denke, dass wir **ihm** helfen müssen. = I think that we need to help **him**.)

Learners often transfer the gender of a noun from their native language to German. For example, *das Leben* (Eng. *life*) is neuter in German, while it is feminine (Alb. *jeta*) in Albanian.

(3) Error: [...], "weil **die** Leben in der Großstadt sehr gut ist." (Correct: [...], weil **das** Leben in der Großstadt sehr gut ist. = [...], because life in the big city is very good.)

Overgeneralisation is a common source of grammatical error, where grammatical rules are incorrectly applied to cases where they do not apply. In German, there are different endings for forming plurals. In example (4), the noun *Stuhl* (Eng. *chair*) was given the plural ending *-en* and the umlaut was not used.

(4) Error: “Das Zimmer hat vier Betten und nur ein Regal, einen kleinen Tisch und vier **Stuhlen**.” (Correct: *Das Zimmer hat vier Betten und nur ein Regal, einen kleinen Tisch und vier **Stühle**.* = *The room has four beds and only one shelf, a small table, and four **chairs**.*)

Another phenomenon is regularisation, where irregular forms are replaced by regular patterns. In example (5), the past participle of the irregular verb *schreiben* (Eng. *to write*) was mistakenly formed with the regular verb ending.

(5) Error: “Ich habe über die Möglichkeiten in der Stadt **geschreibt**.” (Correct: *Ich habe über die Möglichkeiten in der Stadt **geschrieben**.* = *I wrote about the possibilities in the city.*)

A common error involves learners not declining attributive adjectives at all. This could be due to interference from English and is also referred to as simplification. Learners reduce grammatical forms or rules, leading to errors.

(6) Error: “[...], weil ich mein **recht Bein** verletzt habe.” (Correct: [...], weil ich mein **rechtes Bein** verletzt habe. = [...], because I injured my **right leg**.)

#### - Errors in Orthography and Punctuation

Orthographic errors refer to spelling errors, which can include letter transpositions, incorrect letters, incorrect word hyphenation, or capitalisation issues. These errors affect the correct spelling of words and sentences and can affect the readability and comprehension of a text. A total of 314 orthographic errors and 88 punctuation errors were identified, making them the second most common type of error. Notably, students made significantly more errors in these areas than course participants.

The learners' self-assessment indicated that they did not consider orthography to be a major obstacle, but the error analysis showed the opposite. This discrepancy may indicate that orthography is not given enough attention.

The majority of orthographic errors in the analyzed texts concerned capitalization. In German, not only proper nouns but also all other nouns are capitalized, unlike in Albanian, where only proper nouns are capitalized.

(7) Error: “[...] ich vermisse meine **familie**, meine alten **freunde** und die schöne **natur**.” (Correct: [...] ich vermisse meine **Familie**, meine alten **Freunde** und die schöne **Natur**. = [...] I miss my **family**, my old **friends**, and the beautiful **nature**.)

Errors related to double consonants and umlauts are misspellings where these elements are omitted or incorrectly inserted. A total of 64 such errors were found in the analysed texts. Since the umlauts *ä*, *ö* and *ü* do not exist in either Albanian or English, learners may overgeneralise their use or place them where they seem logically appropriate.

(8) Error: “Es gibt **Schülen**, **Hochschülen** und öffentliche Bibliotheken.” (Correct: *Es gibt **Schulen**, **Hochschulen** und öffentliche Bibliotheken.* = *There are **schools**, **universities**, and public libraries.*)

Learners tend to adopt the spelling of words from other languages when they sound similar. In example (9), *Konzert* was written as *Koncert*, which is common in Albanian. This is a performance error because the learner used the word correctly several times in the text. The error occurred only once, probably due to a loss of concentration.

(9) Error: “Das Wetter war sehr schön und auf dem **Koncert** waren viele Leute.” (Correct: *Das Wetter war sehr schön und auf dem **Konzert** waren viele Leute.* = *The weather was very nice, and there were many people at the **concert**.*)

In the area of punctuation, errors mainly concerned the placement of commas, largely due to interference. In German, subordinate clauses are always separated by commas, whether they precede, follow, or are inserted into a main clause. In Albanian, commas are also used when subordinate clauses precede or follow a main clause. However, when the subordinate clause follows the main clause, the placement of the comma depends on the conjunction used and the type of sentence. For example, subject clauses, predicative clauses, and object clauses (with the conjunctions *që*, *se*, *sikur* (Eng. *that*, *as if*) or without conjunctions; with relative or interrogative pronouns; with interrogative adverbs) following the main clause do not require commas (Domi et al., 2002, p. 55).

(10) Error: “Ich hoffe\_ dass es dir gut geht.” (Correct: *Ich hoffe, dass es dir gut geht.* = *I hope that you are doing well.*)

(11) Error: “Am wichtigsten ist\_ dass ich die Ruhe vermisse.” (Correct: *Am wichtigsten ist, dass ich die Ruhe vermisse.* = *The most important thing is that I miss the peace and quiet.*)

#### - Syntactic Errors

Syntactic errors reveal irregularities in sentence structure. In the analysis, syntactic errors were divided into two sub-categories: incomplete sentences and incorrect word order. A total of 284 syntactic errors were identified, with comparable results for students and course participants.

In German, the finite verb is usually placed second in a main clause, even when the sentence begins with an adverbial, such as a temporal adverb or a modal particle. The errors that occur are often due to interference from Albanian or English, where the verb can be in the third position.

(12) Error: “Danach ich **bin** sehr schnell zum Arzt gegangen.” (Correct: *Danach **bin** ich sehr schnell zum Arzt gegangen.* = *After that I **went** to the doctor very quickly.*)

(13) Error: “Vielleicht ich **vermisse** das Leben auf dem Dorf ein bisschen.” (Correct: *Vielleicht **vermisse** ich das Leben auf dem Dorf ein bisschen.* = *Maybe I **miss** life in the countryside a little bit.*)

In subordinate clauses introduced by subordinating conjunctions such as *weil* (Eng. *because*) or *dass* (Eng. *that*), the finite verb is placed at the end in German. Learners tend to overgeneralise this rule and also apply it to conjunctions where it does not apply (14).

(14) Error: “*Ich vermisse meine Familie, jedoch ich sie am Wochenende **besuche**.*” (Correct: *Ich vermisse meine Familie, jedoch **besuche** ich sie am Wochenende.* = *I miss my family, but I **visit** them on weekends.*)

In Albanian, the impersonal pronoun *es* (Eng. *it*) does not exist, and reflexive verbs are indicated by the ending of the verb, similar to the passive forms in present. As these linguistic elements are new to learners and not common in their mother tongue, they are often omitted.

(15) Error: “*Manchmal ist\_ besser in der Stadt zu leben.*” (Correct: *Manchmal ist **es** besser in der Stadt zu leben.* = *Sometimes **it's** better to live in the city.*)

(16) Error: “*Ich fühlte \_aber schlecht, dass du nicht kommen konntest.*” (Correct: *Ich fühlte **mich** aber schlecht, dass du nicht kommen konntest.* = *I felt bad that you couldn't come.*)

### - Lexical-Semantic Errors

Lexical-semantic errors concern the meaning of words and phrases in a language. They occur when a word or expression is used incorrectly, resulting in an inaccurate or inappropriate meaning. A total of 153 errors in this category were identified.

Lexical-semantic errors often involve interference from English, as both languages have many similarities due to their Germanic origins. Some words look or sound similar in both languages but have different meanings - these are called *false friends*. For example, in (17), the incorrect use of the verb *bekommen* in German. In German, *bekommen* means *to receive*, while the English *become* describes a change or development; in German, this is expressed by the verb *werden*.

(17) Error: “*Ich habe eine andere Person **bekommen**.*” (Correct: *Ich bin eine andere Person **geworden**.* = *I have **become** a different person.*)

Another example (18) shows the incorrect use of English verbs, where only the German 1st person singular ending was added by mistake. Instead of the German verb *vermissen*, the English *to miss* was used, resulting in the error *missee*. In some cases, an entire English expression was translated into German, such as “*I hope this email finds you well*”, leading to the error: “*Ich hoffe, dass die E-Mail dich schön findet*” (19).

(18) Error: “*Ich **missee** das Dorf schon jetzt.*” (Correct: *Ich **vermissee** das Dorf schon jetzt.* = *I **miss** the countryside already.*)

(19) Error: “*Ich hoffe, dass die E-Mail dich schön findet.*” (Correct: *Ich hoffe, dass **diese** E-Mail dich wohlauf **erreicht**.* = *I hope **this** email finds you well.*)

There was also interference from Albanian. One example (20) is the confusion of the verb *tregoj*, which in Albanian means both *to show* (Ger. *zeigen*) and *to tell* (Ger. *erzählen*). In English and German, however, there are two different terms for these actions. This is known as under-differentiation.

(20) Error: “*Schreib mir bitte, wenn du Zeit hast und **zeig** mir über die neuen Dinge, die im Dorf passieren.*” (Correct: *Schreib mir bitte, wenn du Zeit hast und **erzähl** mir über die neuen Dinge, die im Dorf passieren.* = *Please write to me when you have time and **tell** me about the new things happening in the village.*)

Translation errors also occurred, particularly with questions about well-being: While in German the question “*Wie geht es dir?*” is common, the Albanian question is “*Si je?*”. Learners often transfer this directly, leading to errors like “*Wie bist du?*”

(21) Error: “*Wie **bist** du?*” (Correct: *Wie **geht** es dir? = **How** are you?*)

Another common phenomenon transferred from the native language or mother tongue to German is double negation. In German, double negation is superfluous or even wrong. In Albanian, double negation is common, like *Mund të mësoj atje **pa asnjë** problem*.

(22) Error: “*Ich kann da **ohne kein** Problem lernen.*” (Correct: *Ich kann da **problemlos** lernen.* = *I can study there **without any** problems.*)

Occasionally, when dealing with compounds, errors occurred when learners switched the words in the compound and created neologisms.

(23) Error: “*In der Stadt gibt es bessere **Einbildungsrichtung**.*” (Correct: *In der Stadt gibt es bessere **Bildungseinrichtung**.* = *There are better **educational institutions** in the city.*)

(24) Error: “*Die **Kreisfreundschaft** wird größer mit der Zeit werden.*” (Correct: *Der **Freundeskreis** wird größer mit der Zeit werden.* = *The **circle of friends** will grow larger over time.*)

In example (23) it is assumed that the learner confused *Einbildungsrichtung* (Eng. *educational institutions*) with *Bildungseinrichtung*. In (24), however, the learner likely meant *Freundeskreis* by *Kreisfreundschaft*. This error could also be due to a direct translation from Albanian, where the expression *rrethi i shoqërisë* (Eng. *social circle*) is used, which was translated literally as *Kreisfreundschaft*. For German determinative compounds, the principle of right-headedness applies. “In contrast, Albanian uses both right-headedness and left-headedness principles. Thus, both variants exist: the determinants (specifier) can be either the first or the second constituent. The position of the specifier in a compound is

not easily determined in Albanian, which can cause difficulties in translating from German to Albanian and vice versa.” (Sadiku & Rexhepi, 2016, p. 325).

### - Pragmatic Errors

Pragmatic errors occur when linguistic expressions do not conform to social norms or expectations. The text analysis identified 18 such errors, the majority of which were made by course participants.

The texts to be written were intended as informal emails. Prominent errors in this context primarily involve participants either consistently using the formal address *Sie* throughout the text, which can be interpreted as a competence error, or switching between the informal *du* (Eng. *you*) and the formal *Sie* (Eng. *you*) within the text. The latter could be considered a performance error, as the learner had chosen a more familiar address but switched between forms due to a lack of concentration. Both cases represent inconsistencies in the linguistic register leading to pragmatic errors.

(25) Error: “*Deshalb lade ich Sie ein, in meine neue Wohnung zu kommen.* (Correct: *Deshalb lade ich dich ein, in meine neue Wohnung zu kommen.*” = *That's why I invite you to come to my new apartment.*)

Other pragmatic errors identified included using formal closing salutations when the task required informal communication.

(26) Error: “*Mit freundlichen Grüßen*” (Correct: z.B. *Liebe Grüße* = *Best regards.*)

In a particular text, no salutation was used at the beginning and no closing salutation was used at the end. In informal contexts, such as emails between friends or acquaintances, there are clear linguistic expectations and social norms regarding salutation and closing. The absence of these elements may be perceived as linguistically inappropriate or rude, as it contradicts the usual conventions of informal communication. As a result, this omission could be classified as a pragmatic error. In addition, it can be assumed that the writer was not familiar with this form, which could indicate a competence error.

The following small excerpt from the corpus<sup>3</sup> (Table 1) contains several erroneous cases that were analysed in more detail.

TABLE 1  
ERROR ANALYSIS: CORPUS EXCERPT

Error	Correction	Error types: - Grammar - Orthography and punctuation - Syntax - Lexical-semantic - Pragmatics	Causes of errors: - Interference - Overgeneralization - Simplification - Regularization - Competence - Performance
<i>Ich schlage vor, zum nächsten Konzert <b>gemeinsam</b> hinzugehen.</i>	<i>Ich schlage vor, zum nächsten Konzert <b>gemeinsam</b> hinzugehen. = I suggest going to the next concert <b>together</b>.</i>	Orthography	Interference
<i>[...] weil ich <b>brauche</b> deine Hilfe.</i>	<i>[...] weil ich deine Hilfe <b>brauche</b>. = [...] because I <b>need</b> your help</i>	Syntax (Word order in subordinate clauses)	Interference
<i>[...] dass ich eine Stunde <b>gefahren habe</b>.</i>	<i>[...] dass ich eine Stunde <b>gefahren bin</b>. = [...] that I <b>drove</b> for an hour.</i>	Grammar (Auxiliary verb) Grammar (Past participle)	Overgeneralization Regularisation
<i>[...] weil ich nur im Bett <b>stehen</b> musste.</i>	<i>[...] weil ich nur im Bett <b>bleiben</b> musste. = [...] because I only had to <b>stay</b> in bed.</i>	Lexical Choice	Interference
<i>Eigentlich haben wir viele Möglichkeiten in der <b>Stadt</b>.</i>	<i>Eigentlich haben wir viele Möglichkeiten in der <b>Stadt</b>. = Actually, we have many options in the <b>city</b>.</i>	Orthography	Performance errors
<i>Ich musste ein Projekt erledigen, deswegen <b>schreibe</b> ich dir nicht.</i>	<i>Ich musste ein Projekt erledigen, deswegen <b>habe</b> ich dir nicht <b>geschrieben</b>. = I had to finish a project, that's why I <b>didn't write</b> to you.</i>	Grammar (Tense)	Simplification
<i><b>Der wohnung</b> ist klein, aber genug für uns.</i>	<i><b>Die Wohnung</b> ist klein, aber für uns genug/reicht es. = <b>The apartment</b> is small, but enough for us.</i>	Grammar (Gender) Orthography (capitalization/lowercase)	Competence errors Interference
<i>Ich hoffe, dass wir <b>_</b> treffen können.</i>	<i>Ich hoffe, dass wir <b>uns</b> treffen können. = I hope that we can meet.</i>	Syntax (Incomplete sentence, missing reflexive pronoun)	Interference
<i>Im Vergleich <b>mit</b> dem Leben auf dem Dorf gefällt mir Berlin besser.</i>	<i>Im Vergleich <b>zu</b> dem Leben auf dem Dorf gefällt mir Berlin besser. = Compared to life in the countryside, I like Berlin better.</i>	Grammar (Preposition)	Interference
<i>Obwohl die <b>stadt</b> viele <b>vorteile</b> hat, vermisse ich meine <b>heimat</b>.</i>	<i>Obwohl die <b>Stadt</b> viele <b>Vorteile</b> hat, vermisse ich meine <b>Heimat</b>. = Although the <b>city</b> has many <b>advantages</b>, I miss my <b>hometown</b>.</i>	Orthography (capitalization/lowercase)	Interference
<i>[...] ich <b>könne</b> da lernen.</i>	<i>[...] ich <b>kann</b> da lernen. = [...] I <b>can</b> study there.</i>	Grammar (Verb Conjugation)	Regularisation
<i>Wir haben ein <b>klein</b> Balkon.</i>	<i>Wir haben <b>einen kleinen</b> Balkon. = We have a <b>small</b> balcony.</i>	Grammar (Case) Grammar (Adjective Declension)	Interference Simplification
<i>Die <b>Professors</b> in der Uni sind nett.</i>	<i>Die <b>Professoren</b> in der Uni sind nett. = The <b>professors</b> at the university are nice.</i>	Grammar (Plural Formation)	Interference
<i>Die Wohnung ist ziemlich <b>Klein</b> [...].</i>	<i>Die Wohnung ist ziemlich <b>klein</b> [...]. = The apartment is quite <b>small</b> [...].</i>	Orthography (capitalization)	Overgeneralization
<i><b>Ich</b> gefällt das Leben in der Stadt.</i>	<i><b>Mir</b> gefällt das Leben in der Stadt. = I like life in the city.</i>	Grammar (Case)	Interference

<sup>3</sup> In total, the corpus spans 61 pages, on which all 1,523 errors were listed and analyzed.

## V. CONCLUSION

The analysis of the written texts shows that errors occur at all linguistic levels, with grammatical errors being the most common. It is noticeable that course participants tend to have more grammatical difficulties. This could be due to the fact that grammar is taught as a compulsory subject at university, whereas the German course takes an integrated approach, combining different language skills.

In terms of spelling and punctuation, students have a higher error rate than course participants, suggesting that less emphasis is placed on these aspects, possibly due to teaching priorities.

The analysis of error categories also shows that students tend to make more errors in syntax, lexical-semantic, and pragmatic areas. Many participants report difficulties in expressing their thoughts precisely, especially in word choice. This contrasts with the error analysis, which shows that lexical-semantic errors are not the most common. A possible explanation could be that learners use simpler vocabulary, avoid complex sentence structures, and try to express their thoughts in a simplified way.

The study also determined the causes of errors. It was confirmed that learners often suffer from interference when learning a new foreign language, especially between their mother tongue, Albanian, and the foreign language, English. Competence errors, which occur when the necessary knowledge is lacking, are also significant. Errors due to overgeneralization, where rules are applied too broadly, follow in frequency. Performance errors, caused by lack of concentration or fatigue, as well as regularizations and simplifications, show only minor differences between the two groups. In terms of self-perception, many students cite a lack of concentration as the cause of their errors, while course participants often cite a lack of knowledge.

Overall, the analysis shows that there are no significant differences between students and course participants. As the students have completed their first semester and many of them have attended a language course before, their profiles are very similar.

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**Viola Salih** earned her Master's degree in German as a Foreign Language at the Department of German Language and Literature of the University of Prishtina, Kosovo. During the 2019/2020 academic year, she spent two semesters at the University of Vechta in Germany as part of the Erasmus+ program. In 2022, she was awarded a DAAD scholarship for a teacher training program in German as a Foreign Language at Heidelberg University. In 2023, she completed an internship at the German Bundestag through the IPS scholarship. She is currently working as a German teacher and ÖSD examiner at a language center in Prishtina. (ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-0023-2479>)



**Sadije Rexhepi** earned her PhD in linguistics at the University of Prishtina, Kosovo (part of research at Humboldt University-Berlin, on a DAAD Scholarship). She works as an Associate Professor for German Language at the Department of German Language and Literature at the Faculty of Philology of the University of Prishtina and teaches German grammar, text linguistics, text analysis, academic writing, testing and evaluation. Professor Rexhepi has a number of publications in journals on the topics of contrastive linguistics, text linguistics, German linguistics, etc. (ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0478-7560>)