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# DEVELOPING ACTIVE LEARNING THROUGH WRITTEN WORK ANALYSIS: FOCUS ON SYNTAX AND ORTHOGRAPHY

Albana Tahiri<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Albanian University, Faculty of Social Sciences, Department of Education and English Language, Tirana, Albania Zogu I Blvd, 1001, Tirana, Albania. Email: [albanatahiri@albanianuniversity.edu.al](mailto:albanatahiri@albanianuniversity.edu.al), [albanatahiri@gmail.com](mailto:albanatahiri@gmail.com), Orcid ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-0333-7675>

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Corresponding Author: Albana Tahiri  
([albanatahiri@gmail.com](mailto:albanatahiri@gmail.com))

## ABSTRACT

*Background: Mastering syntax and orthography are essential for developing speaking, reading, and writing skills in the Albanian language. However, traditional instruction often relies on memorization, neglecting the functional use of language in real-life communication. This limits students' ability to apply language meaningfully and reflectively. Aim: This study explores the effectiveness of written work analysis as a strategy for fostering active learning, particularly in acquiring syntactic and orthographic competence through functional language contexts. Method: A mixed-methods design was used, combining qualitative and quantitative tools: teacher interviews, student focus groups, document analysis, and surveys with 684 students and 70 teachers from two schools in Tirana and Peqin. Instruments were piloted with 50 education students to ensure validity and reliability. Findings: The integration of syntactic and orthographic instruction into functional writing tasks led to improved language accuracy, critical thinking, and metalinguistic awareness. Teachers reported increased student participation and reflection. Some challenges included distinguishing standard from dialectal forms and applying theoretical knowledge in practice. Implications: The study underscores the need for teacher training in functional language approaches and for revising traditional teaching methods. Written work analysis enhances active learning and supports the development of reflective language users in the Albanian classroom.*

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**KEYWORDS:** Active Learning, Functional Grammar, Written Work Analysis, Syntax, Orthography, Linguistic Competence, Reflection.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Developing active learning is one of the key objectives in contemporary education, shifting the focus from mechanical repetition to meaningful understanding and practical application of knowledge. This article explores the role of written work analysis as an instructional tool for enhancing linguistic competence, with emphasis on syntax and orthography in the Albanian language.

As a fundamental means of communication and thinking, the mother tongue plays a central role in the development of communicative competence and in shaping students' cultural and civic identity, as emphasized in the National Curriculum (Ministria e Arsimit dhe Sporteve, 2014/2018). In this context, linguistic components should not be taught solely as theoretical content, but transformed into functional skills that enable conscious and accurate language use (Ministria e Arsimit dhe Sporteve, 2014/2018).

Despite recognition of active learning as a pedagogical priority, the teaching of syntax and orthography in Albanian classrooms often remains mechanical, relying on rule memorization with limited functional understanding. This points to a pedagogical gap: insufficient use of reflective and applied approaches in grammar instruction.

To address this gap, this study proposes written work analysis as a strategy to improve linguistic accuracy, stimulate critical thinking, and increase student engagement. Grounded in the goals of the National Curriculum (Ministria e Arsimit dhe Sporteve, 2014/2018), and aligned with international frameworks such as CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) and UNESCO (2015), this approach aims to develop communicative competence through reflective and accurate language use.

According to CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) and UNESCO (2015), the mother tongue should function not only as a means of expression but also as a tool for reflection, reasoning, and practical learning in the classroom. Written work analysis supports these aims by enabling error identification, reflection, and self-assessment, thereby promoting a sustainable and active learning process.

This article aims to explore how this approach can be implemented in alignment with modern learning theories, supported by relevant literature, clearly defined methodology, data analysis, and evidence-based interpretation to inform and improve teaching practice.

### 1.1. Functional Grammar and Language

### *Instruction*

In accordance with the national legal and strategic framework including the National Strategy for Education Development 2021–2026 (Ministria e Arsimit dhe Sporteve, 2021), the Curriculum Framework for Pre-University Education (Ministria e Arsimit dhe Sporteve, 2014/2025), and Law No. 69/2012 “On the Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania” the mother tongue is emphasized as a fundamental means for developing knowledge, critical thinking, and cultural identity. It is presented not only as a subject of study but as a means of constructing relationships with social and cultural reality.

Within this framework, the CEFR (Council of Europe, 2020) highlights linguistic competence as central to civic and intercultural development. It promotes a functional and communicative approach, wherein syntax and orthography are learned in meaningful, contextualized settings.

### 1.2. Active Learning and Reflective Language Use

The active learning model, as articulated by Larsen-Freeman (2000) and Lightbown and Spada (2020), emphasizes engagement through exploration, discussion, and reflection. In the field of mother tongue education, it encourages the transformation of syntactic and orthographic rules into functional competencies.

This orientation is reflected in the work of Dodbiba and Spasse (1995), who stress the value of error analysis and guided practice over mechanical rule memorization. Similarly, Jubani (2011) connects the acquisition of linguistic rules to real-life exposure and natural language use.

Interactive activities that focus on linguistic form within meaningful contexts have been shown to be effective for teaching spelling, especially when combined with student-centered tasks (Lightbown & Spada, 2020; Jubani, 2011).

### 1.3. Contemporary Perspectives in Albanian Language Didactics

According to Likaj (2011), the Albanian language is a dynamic and evolving system, reflecting social and cultural change. Therefore, its instruction must shift from static to functional models. This aligns with Larsen-Freeman (2000), who argues that syntax and orthography must be taught through authentic language use, not as abstract rules.

A notable model is Task-Based Language Teaching, proposed by Willis and Willis (2007), where grammatical elements serve as tools for completing meaningful tasks. This idea is expanded by Tahiri (2021), who supports language games as a means to integrate grammar, orthography, and analytical thinking in a motivating way.

Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) further supports collaborative learning environments, where peer interaction and teacher support help students progress from assisted to independent use of linguistic skills.

#### **1.4. Integration of Active and Creative Methods in Teaching**

Hadaj and Tahiri (2023) advocate for a holistic approach, where rules, forms, and communicative resources are integrated to support linguistic fluency in diverse contexts.

This is reinforced by studies such as Tahiri and Hadaj (2022) and Tahiri, Kuliçi, and Hasani (2023), which highlight the role of extracurricular activities and language projects in cultivating critical, creative, and collaborative thinking. These methods rely on text analysis, discussions, and student-led projects.

Further contributions by Tahiri (2021) and Hadaj and Tahiri (2023; see also 2023b) emphasize the sustainability and learner-centered nature of integrating grammar into practical classroom activities. In addition, Tahiri and Hadaj (2022) connect language education to well-being and inclusive practices.

Finally, Tahiri (2025) and the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (United Nations, n.d.) emphasize the role of language teaching and educational policy in building cultural identity and fostering inclusive, high-quality education.

#### **1.5. Language Education in a Changing Society**

In line with UNESCO's guidelines for competency-based and inclusive education (UNESCO, 2015), language instruction should prioritize understanding, interaction, and identity building in a multilingual world. Through active and reflective methodologies, students connect personal experience to language, transforming grammar, syntax, and orthography into practical tools for expression and social integration.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

This study follows a mixed-methods research design, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to test the hypothesis that embedding

linguistic components specifically syntax and orthography—into functional writing contexts enhances students' acquisition and application of these skills. The study further argues that such integration supports critical thinking and structured expression, thereby reinforcing students' overall competence in their mother tongue.

The research is grounded in national strategic documents from the Ministry of Education and the National Strategy for Pre-University Education (Ministria e Arsimit dhe Sporteve, 2014/2018; 2025), as well as in international literature promoting the functional learning of native language skills through writing (Council of Europe, 2020; UNESCO, 2015).

#### **2.1. Study Population and Sampling Strategy**

The study population consists of 684 basic education students and 70 Albanian language teachers from two public schools in Tirana and Elbasan: "1 Maji" School (urban) and "Peqin" School (semi-rural).

Purposive sampling was applied, based on criteria including geographic representation (urban vs. rural), teacher experience, and grade-level diversity (Grades V-IX). This approach was selected to enable an in-depth exploration of pedagogical practices in varied educational contexts. Although purposive sampling may introduce selection bias, steps were taken to ensure diversity and transparency in sample composition.

##### **Student sample composition:**

- "1 Maji" School, Tirana – 583 students (Grade 5: 93; Grade 6: 102; Grade 7: 98; Grade 8: 130; Grade 9: 160)
- "Peqin" School, Peqin – 101 students (Grade 5: 18; Grade 6: 20; Grade 7: 21; Grade 8: 19; Grade 9: 23)

Teacher sample: 70 teachers participated through semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires.

#### **2.2. Data Collection Methods and Techniques**

A combination of qualitative and quantitative tools was employed to ensure data triangulation and credibility.

##### **Qualitative methods:**

- Semi-structured interviews with teachers, focusing on strategies for teaching syntax and orthography through writing tasks;
- Document analysis of instructional plans and curriculum documents;
- Focus groups with students, organized by grade level, exploring perceptions and

challenges related to writing tasks.

#### Quantitative methods:

- Structured questionnaires administered to all participating students and teachers, assessing attitudes and practices;
- Descriptive statistics (percentages, frequency tables, graphical illustrations) were used to analyze the quantitative data.

### 2.3. Research Instruments

#### The instruments included:

- *Structured questionnaires* for students and teachers, designed to capture experiences with functional writing and orthographic awareness;
- *Interview protocols* for teachers, with open-ended questions encouraging reflection on practice;
- *Focus group discussion guides*, tailored for student participants;
- *Document analysis checklists*, used to evaluate curriculum documents.

#### To ensure instrument reliability and validity:

- Questionnaires were piloted with a sample of 50 teacher training students to test clarity and structure;
- Interviews and focus groups were recorded and transcribed verbatim;
- A thematic coding framework was developed and applied manually by two researchers to ensure consistency of qualitative interpretation.

### 2.4. Data Collection and Analysis Process

Data collection was conducted in January–February 2024 in classroom settings, with institutional approval and voluntary informed consent obtained from all participants.

- Qualitative data were analyzed through thematic analysis, including initial coding, categorization of emergent themes, and comparison across data sources.
- Quantitative data were processed using Excel to generate descriptive statistics and visual summaries.

### 2.5. Study Limitations

While the study offers valuable insights, certain limitations must be acknowledged:

- The sample is restricted to two educational institutions, limiting generalizability;
- Self-reported data from teachers and students may carry subjective biases;
- Logistical constraints and time limitations

affected the possibility of including a broader geographic scope.

## 3. FINDINGS: ANALYSIS OF WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS IN SYNTAX AND ORTHOGRAPHY

This section presents the analysis of written assignments as completed by students in the subjects of syntax and orthography, with a focus on assessing their linguistic competence and functional use of language structures.

**The analysis is based on data collected through structured questionnaires and focus group interviews, as presented in the tables and graphs below.**

### 3.1. Performance In Syntactic Analysis

**According to Table 1 and Graph 1.1 (Tirana), the data reveal that:**

- Over 90% of students across grades 5 to 9 are able to distinguish simple from compound sentences, indicating a strong foundation in basic sentence structure.
- 88% of students successfully identify and analyze the main sentence components (subject and verb), with a notable progression across grade levels.
- The ability to distinguish sentence complements such as objects, adverbials, and attributes stands at 80% overall, though difficulties increase with sentence complexity.

Interview and focus group data confirm that students feel more confident with noun and verb groups in simple sentences, while approximately 50% struggle with compound sentences, particularly in distinguishing coordinated predicates.

#### Example challenges include:

- “Shqiptar unë jam.”
- “Vetëm tani ai e quante studimin e tij të përfunduar.”
- A narrative sentence with multiple clauses: “Kur arriti autobusi në qytet, hëna kishte dalë dhe qyteti kishte rënë në qetësi.”

These examples demonstrate ongoing difficulties in interpreting syntactic structures, especially in multi-clause environments.

### 3.1.1. Understanding Compound and Subordinate Clauses

Around 78% of students demonstrate the ability to differentiate between coordinating and subordinating clauses. However, deeper analysis shows that only 20% of students can fully describe

the structural patterns within compound sentences. Most are able to identify linking words, but lack the analytical vocabulary to explain clause relationships.

### 3.1.2. Sentence Construction and Syntax Variety

While 67% of students are able to construct basic sentence structures, only a minority exhibit advanced syntactic variety. Notably, students predominantly use declarative sentences, with low presence of interrogative, imperative, or desiderative forms. This suggests that targeted instruction is needed to expand students' syntactic repertoire.

### 3.1.3. Application of Syntactic Knowledge in Text Types

Only 61% of students effectively apply their syntactic knowledge in written genres such as essays, letters, advertisements, or biographies. Teachers report that, with consistent practice, this rate could improve significantly. The use of short, simple sentences to express complex ideas points to a gap

between theory and practice.

### 3.1.4. Mastery of the Standard Language and Dialectal Distinction

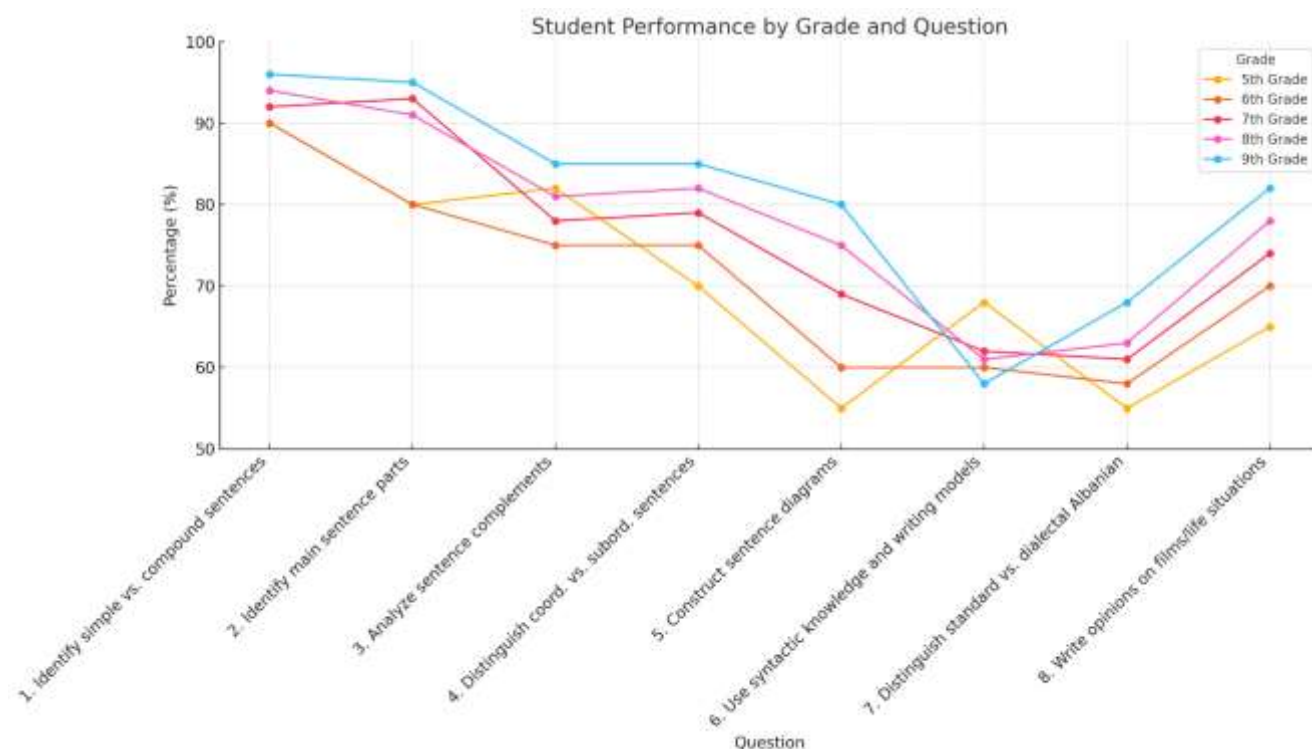
Although 60% of students can distinguish standard Albanian from dialects in reading, only 30% apply this correctly in writing. Interview data reveal that 60–70% of students make frequent mistakes when using the standard written form, especially in informal writing contexts. Dialectal influence remains strong, requiring more structured interventions in standard language instruction.

### 3.1.5. Development of Critical and Reflective Writing

On a more positive note, 82% of students in higher grades demonstrate the ability to express structured opinions about films, characters, and life situations. This suggests increased critical thinking and writing maturity as students advance, especially in grades 8 and 9.

**Table 1: Analysis of Written Works in Syntax. "1 Maji" School (Tirana).**

Question / Grade – Total Students	93 Students (5th Grade)	102 Students (6th Grade)	98 Students (7th Grade)	130 Students (8th Grade)	160 Students (9th Grade)	Total
1. What % of students identify and distinguish simple from compound sentences?	90%	90%	92%	94%	96%	91%
2. What % of students identify main sentence parts (subject, verb) and analyze them?	80%	80%	93%	91%	95%	88%
3. What % of students distinguish and analyze sentence complements (object, adverbial, modifier)?	82%	75%	78%	81%	85%	80%
4. What % of students distinguish coordinating from subordinating sentences?	70%	75%	79%	82%	85%	78%
5. What % of students correctly construct sentence structure diagrams?	55%	60%	69%	75%	80%	67%
6. What % of students use syntactic knowledge and written Albanian models (e.g., informative articles, formal/personal letters, interviews, ads, wall newspaper articles, biographies, autobiographies, crossword puzzles, essays, computer games, etc.)?	68%	60%	62%	61%	58%	61%
7. What % of students recognize and distinguish standard Albanian from its dialectal variants in writing?	55%	58%	61%	63%	68%	60%
8. What % of students express opinions in writing about movies, characters, and life situations?	65%	70%	74%	78%	82%	70%



Graph 1.1: Analysis Of Written Assignments in Syntax - Tirana.

### 3.2. Findings: Continued Analysis from Peqin School

This section expands on the study's findings by examining the syntactic performance of students at Peqin School. The analysis is based primarily on data presented in Table 2 and further supported by related tables and charts.

#### 3.2.1. Identification of Sentence Types and Parts

Data from Table 2 indicates a steady improvement in students' ability to distinguish simple from compound sentences, rising from 40% in Grade 5 to 90% in Grade 9. Likewise, the use of varied sentence types increases with grade level, suggesting gradual exposure and familiarity. Identification and analysis of core sentence elements (subject and verb) show consistent improvement (70% to 91%), confirming the consolidation of foundational syntactic understanding across grades.

#### 3.2.2. Analysis of Complements and Clause Structures

The ability to identify sentence complements also increases (77% to 96%), with minor fluctuations. However, despite this progress, younger students struggle to analyze more abstract relationships between coordinated and subordinated clauses, indicating a conceptual gap in complex syntax. Only 68% of 5th graders succeed in clause classification,

compared to 86% of 9th graders. This highlights the need for age-appropriate, scaffolded instruction using concrete examples.

#### 3.2.3. Sentence Diagramming and Functional Use of Syntax

Correct construction of compound sentence diagrams improves significantly across levels (from 40% to 91%). Students' ability to apply syntactic knowledge to various genres of writing, such as letters, articles, and biographies, also shows progress (from 50% to 86%). Despite these gains, qualitative data from teacher interviews indicate that students still face difficulties in applying grammar rules consistently in free writing.

#### 3.2.4. Standard Language Awareness

Recognition of standard Albanian versus dialectal forms remains a challenge. Although reading comprehension indicates a better understanding (up to 68%), the ability to apply standard forms in writing remains limited, particularly in earlier grades.

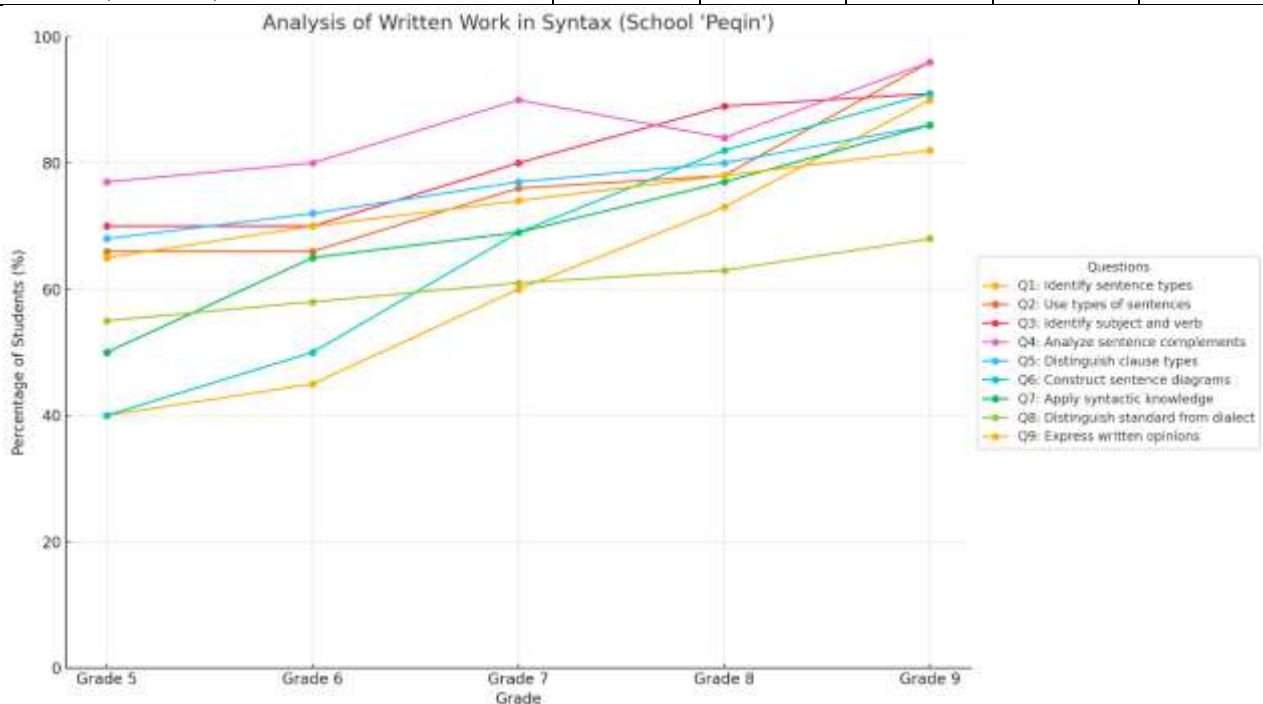
#### 3.2.5. Reflective and Creative Writing

The data from Peqin aligns with Tirana findings: a steady improvement is observed in students' ability to articulate personal opinions in writing, particularly in upper grades (65% to 82%). This suggests that reflective writing can serve as a

platform for reinforcing both syntactic accuracy and higher-order thinking skills.

**Table 2: Analysis of Written Work in Syntax (School "Peqin").**

Question / Class - Total Students	Grade 5 – 18 students	Grade 6 – 20 students	Grade 7 – 21 students	Grade 8 – 19 students	Grade 9 – 23 students
1. What % of students can identify and distinguish simple sentences from compound sentences?	40%	45%	60%	73%	90%
2. What % of students use different types of sentences in written work?	66%	66%	76%	78%	96%
3. What % of students identify the main sentence parts (subject, verb) and analyze them in sentences?	70%	70%	80%	89%	91%
4. What % of students identify and analyze the complementary parts of the sentence (object, adverbial, attribute)?	77%	80%	90%	84%	96%
5. What % of students distinguish coordinate clauses from subordinate clauses?	68%	72%	77%	80%	86%
6. What % of students accurately construct sentence structure diagrams for compound sentences?	40%	50%	69%	82%	91%
7. What % of students apply syntactic knowledge and characteristic models of written Albanian (e.g., informative articles, formal and personal letters, interviews, advertisements, wall newspaper articles, biographies, autobiographies, crosswords, essays, computer games, etc.)?	50%	65%	69%	77%	86%
8. What % of students recognize variants of standard Albanian written forms and distinguish them from dialectal forms?	55%	58%	61%	63%	68%
9. What % of students express opinions in writing about films, characters, and various life situations?	65%	70%	74%	78%	82%



**Figure**

**3.3. Findings: Orthographic Competence in Tirana**

This section presents the analysis of students' orthographic skills at "1 Maji" School, Tirana, based on Table 3.

*Use of Punctuation Marks.* Correct use of

punctuation marks shows a consistent improvement from Grade 5 (70%) to Grade 8 (80%), followed by a slight decline in Grade 9 (75%). Teachers report common errors in the use of question marks, exclamation points, and an underuse of commas. These issues suggest a limited understanding of the syntactic functions of punctuation and its role in

conveying sentence meaning and intonation.

**Spelling of Vowels Within Words.** A gradual increase in correct vowel spelling within words is observed, rising from 60% in Grade 5 to 72% in Grade 9. However, teacher interviews reveal frequent confusion between standard Albanian spellings and dialectal variants, exemplified by misspellings such as *kangë* instead of *këngë*, or *dhamb* instead of *dhëmb*. This highlights the need for targeted phonetic and orthographic awareness exercises that address regional linguistic influences.

**Correct Use of the Vowel “ë” at Word Endings.** The correct application of the vowel “ë” at the end of words, both before and after stressed syllables, improves moderately from 60% to 72% across grades. Persistent errors include both omission and incorrect insertion of this vowel, especially in feminine nouns ending in unstressed *-e* and in words with suffixes. These errors are often influenced by dialectal speech patterns, indicating a limited morphological and phonological awareness of this orthographic feature. Addressing this requires enhanced phonetic training and conscious practice emphasizing the function and placement of “ë” in standard Albanian.

**Formation of Singular and Plural Nouns.** A declining trend is noted in the correct formation and application of singular and plural forms of masculine and feminine nouns, dropping from 90% accuracy in Grade 5 to 70% in Grade 9. While theoretical understanding appears satisfactory in lower grades, students face increasing difficulties in applying this knowledge in creative and spontaneous language production. The frequent failure to contextualize number distinctions, particularly in the absence of explicit quantifiers like *një* (one) or *ca* (some), suggests reliance on rote patterns rather than contextual meaning construction. This gap underscores the necessity of integrating morphological instruction with functional and creative language exercises.

**Division of Words into Syllables and Line Breaks.** This skill is among the strongest, with performance improving from 80% in Grade 5 to 90% in Grade 9. Teachers attribute this success to early and continuous instruction beginning in Grade 1, emphasizing proper syllabification and line division. Remaining errors are primarily due to carelessness rather than conceptual misunderstanding, highlighting the need for ongoing practice to foster linguistic precision and responsibility.

**Use of Capital Letters.** High levels of achievement are evident in the correct use of capital letters, increasing from 90% in Grade 5 to 95% in Grade 9. This reflects effective and sustained didactic

practices. It is recommended that capitalization rules continue to be reinforced within functional writing contexts, such as proper nouns, titles, and sentence-initial positions, to consolidate students' understanding.

### 3.4. Findings: Orthographic Competence in Peqin

This section presents the findings related to students' orthographic skills at Peqin School, based on the data summarized in Table 4 and Chart 4.1.

**Use of Punctuation Marks.** Only 54% of student's overall use punctuation marks correctly, with significant variation across grades. The lowest accuracy is observed in Grade 6 (30%), while Grade 9 students reach 80%. This indicates gradual improvement with grade progression, yet younger students continue to face considerable challenges in punctuation mastery.

**Correct Spelling of Vowels Within Words.** There is a noticeable upward trend in vowel spelling accuracy within words, increasing from 60% in Grade 6 to 78% in Grade 9. This suggests that as students advance, their understanding of the phonetic structure of words improves.

**Use of the Vowel “ë” at Word Endings.** The correct application of the vowel “ë” at the end of words shows inconsistency, particularly in lower grades. While only 40% of Grade 6 students use it correctly, accuracy peaks at 90% in Grade 7 but subsequently declines in higher grades. This fluctuation highlights the need for targeted interventions to reinforce mastery of this orthographic feature.

**Formation and Application of Singular and Plural Nouns.** The ability to recognize and apply singular and plural forms of masculine and feminine nouns is weak in early grades (40% in Grade 6 and 30% in Grade 7) but improves markedly in higher grades, reaching 80% in Grade 8 and 90% in Grade 9. These results indicate a progressive, yet partial, acquisition of grammatical number, suggesting that full mastery is still developing.

**Division of Words into Syllables and Line Breaks.** Syllabification and proper word division at line breaks rank among the strongest orthographic skills, with all grades scoring above 70%, except for Grade 6 (60%). This consistency reflects early and sustained instructional emphasis on this skill, leading to relative mastery across all grade levels.

**Use of Uppercase Letters.** Use of capital letters is the weakest orthographic skill overall. Only 35% of Grade 6 students and 60% of Grade 7 students apply capitalization correctly, while Grade 9 students reach

69%. This indicates a pervasive lack of attention to capitalization rules even in upper grades, highlighting an area requiring focused didactic support.

**Analysis of Written Work by Percentage - Table 3**

**Table 3: Analysis of Written Work on Language Knowledge - Focus on Orthography (Tirana City).**

Question / Grade - Total Students	Grade 5 (93 students)	Grade 6 (102 students)	Grade 7 (98 students)	Grade 8 (130 students)	Grade 9 (160 students)
1. What % of students use punctuation marks correctly?	70%	73%	79%	80%	75%
2. What % of students spell vowels correctly within words?	60%	62%	65%	70%	72%
3. What % of students use the vowel "ë" correctly at the end of words, both before and after stress?	60%	62%	65%	70%	72%
4. What % of students recognize and apply the formation of singular and plural of masculine and feminine nouns?	90%	82%	75%	78%	70%
5. What % of students divide words correctly into syllables and at the end of a line?	80%	72%	79%	84%	90%
6. What % of students use capital letters correctly?	90%	82%	85%	90%	95%

Table 3. Analysis of Written Work on Language Knowledge - Focus on Orthography (Tirana City)

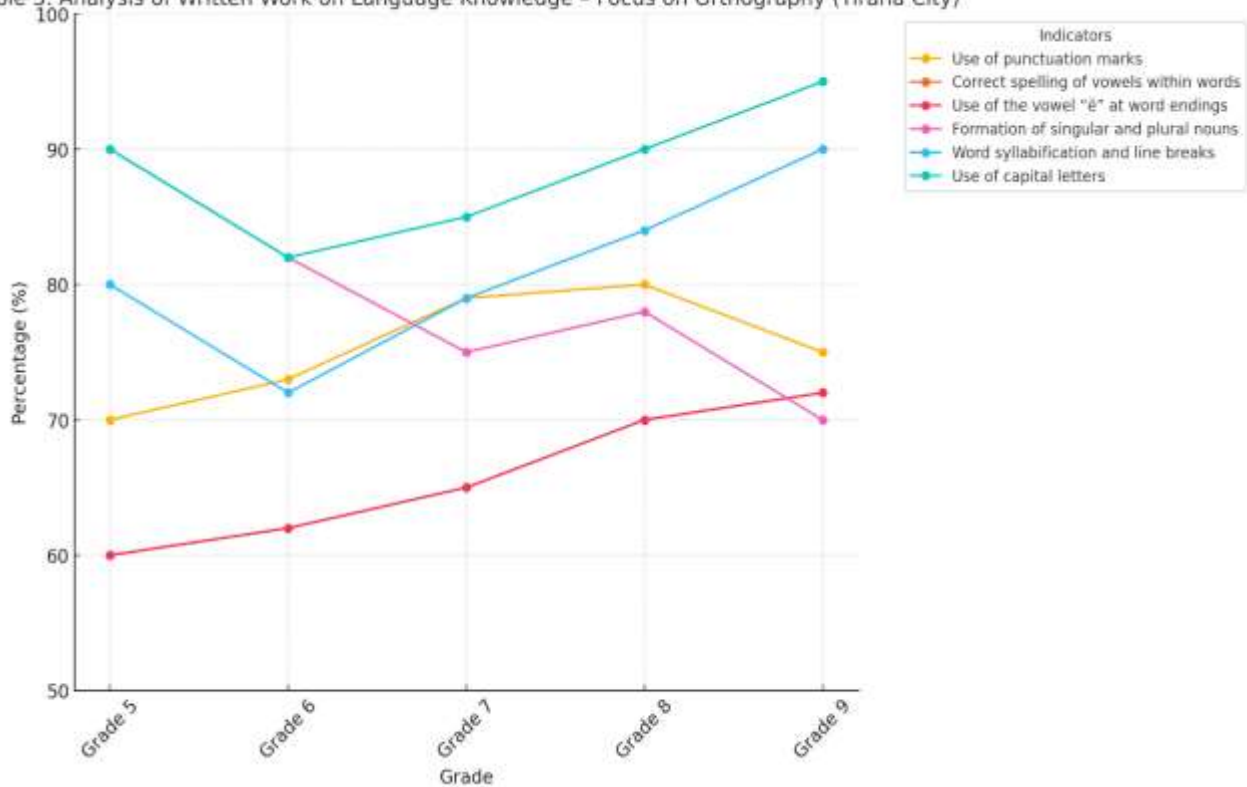


Figure:

**Table 4: Analysis of Written Works in Spelling (Peqin).**

Spelling	Questions / Classes / Total Students	K15-te	K16-te	K17-te	K18-te	K19-te
1. What % of students use punctuation marks correctly?	30%	42%	50%	68%	80%	54%
2. What % of students write vowels correctly in the body of the word?	60%	90%	71%	73%	78%	54%
3. What % of students use the correct vowel at the end of words, both before and after the stress?	40%	66%	90%	68%	56%	74%
4. What % of students recognize and apply the formation of singular and plural forms for masculine and feminine nouns?	40%	65%	80%	90%	63%	-

5. What % of students divide words correctly into syllables and at the end of the line?	60%	90%	71%	73%	78%	74%
6. What % of students use uppercase letters correctly?	35%	60%	57%	57%	69%	55%

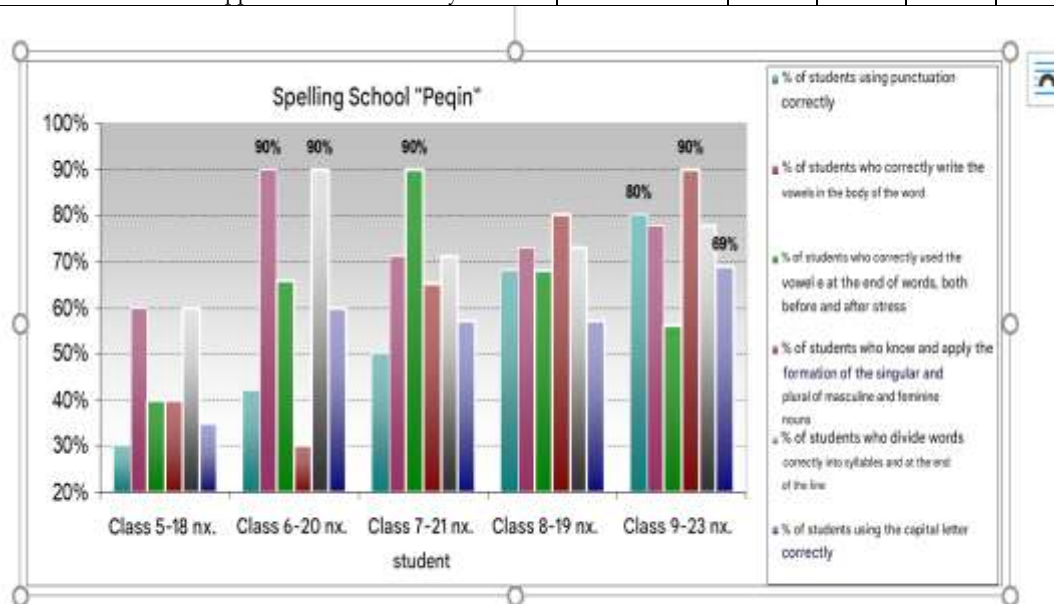


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#### 4. DISCUSSION AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

##### 4.1. Interpretation of Findings in Light of Literature and Theory

The results of this study indicate that students from grades five to nine in schools in Tirana and Peqin possess basic knowledge in distinguishing between simple and compound sentences, as well as in identifying key syntactic elements such as the subject and the verb. However, significant difficulties are encountered in mastering and applying more complex structures, particularly compound sentences with coordinating and subordinating conjunctions. These findings align with existing literature, which highlights the challenges involved in acquiring complex syntactic structures during early stages of language development (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Likaj, 2011).

The predominance of declarative sentences in students' written production, alongside the limited use of interrogative, imperative, and optative forms, suggests an instructional model largely based on isolated grammatical structures rather than functional language use. This structuralist approach does not adequately foster the development of communicative competence, as emphasized by scholars advocating for task-based and functional language learning (Dodbibā & Spasse, 1995; Jubani, 2011; Likaj, 2011).

Another important aspect is the gap between theoretical understanding of syntactic rules and their practical application. Only 61% of students successfully apply syntactic structures across various genres such as essays, biographies, and letters. This underscores the importance of bridging theory and practice through authentic tasks (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Dodbibā & Spasse, 1995; Likaj, 2011).

The influence of dialectal language on students' writing remains a persistent challenge. Only 30% of students consistently use standard language in writing, although the majority are aware of dialectal variants during reading. This finding corresponds with Likaj's (2011) position on the need for more dynamic and reflective teaching approaches that aim to enhance students' metalinguistic awareness.

Improvements observed in critical and reflective writing in higher grades indicate that exposure to texts requiring personal interpretation and thematic analysis strengthens students' analytical competence and linguistic maturity. This is consistent with the conclusions of Lightbown and Spada (2020), who emphasize the importance of meaningful interaction in the acquisition of grammatical structures.

Furthermore, innovative teaching strategies that integrate creativity, critical thinking, and technology-enhanced tasks have shown positive effects on students' syntactic and communicative development. Tahiri (2021a, 2021b, 2025) argues that learner-centered approaches, combined with

interactive and reflective activities, facilitate not only the acquisition of grammatical structures but also the development of higher-order cognitive skills, allowing students to apply language rules flexibly across contexts. These findings support the notion that combining traditional grammar instruction with functional and task-based methodologies can significantly enhance students' language competence.

Finally, linking these pedagogical approaches to the Sustainable Development Goals highlights the broader societal impact of quality education. Specifically, SDG 4 emphasizes inclusive and equitable quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all (United Nations, n.d.). By fostering critical thinking, reflective writing, and communicative competence, teacher-centered innovations and learner-centered methodologies contribute directly to achieving SDG4 objectives, ensuring that students not only master language skills but also develop competencies essential for active and informed participation in society (Tahiri, 2025; United Nations, n.d.).

#### 4.2. Pedagogical Implications

**Based on the analysis, the following pedagogical measures are recommended:**

- **Structured instruction of complex syntax:** Curriculum programs should provide clear explanations and organized exercises on compound sentences, with particular focus on coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.
- **Use of visual support techniques:** Syntax diagrams and transformational exercises enhance the understanding of relationships between linguistic units.
- **Integration of language into functional tasks:** Grammar instruction should be embedded in authentic writing contexts to encourage the practical use of syntactic knowledge.
- **Awareness of standard language usage:** Pedagogical approaches should promote the distinction between standard and dialectal variants to foster linguistic awareness and appropriate language use.
- **Stimulation of higher-order thinking through creative tasks:** Writing tasks that require personal reflection, argumentation, and analysis are essential for the development of advanced language competencies.

These recommendations are consistent with the principles outlined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (Council of Europe, 2020) and the UNESCO guidelines for

inclusive, functional, and competence-based education (UNESCO, 2015).

Furthermore, the integration of innovative teaching approaches, as proposed by Tahiri (2021a, 2021b, 2025), including interactive and reflective activities, can enhance the effectiveness of these pedagogical measures. The use of learner-centered methods and functional tasks not only improves mastery of grammatical structures but also develops higher-order cognitive skills, critical thinking, and creativity in students.

In relation to the Sustainable Development Goal SDG4, these pedagogical practices directly contribute to ensuring inclusive, equitable, and quality education, preparing students for active and informed participation in society (Tahiri, 2025; United Nations, n.d.).

#### 4.3. Progress and Challenges Across Grade Levels

Data from schools in Peqin and Tirana show steady progress in syntactic and orthographic acquisition from grade five through grade nine. Students demonstrate solid knowledge of basic syntactic structures, such as subject and predicate, but continue to face difficulties with more complex constructions. This suggests the need for differentiated instruction aligned with students' developmental stages (Dodbiba & Spasse, 1995; Likaj, 2011).

Orthographic components, such as syllabic division and punctuation, show consistent improvement, validating the effectiveness of systematic instruction provided in early education cycles. However, accurate use of the schwa vowel "ë," plural forms, and capitalization of proper nouns remains challenging. Capitalization, in particular, appears weaker in Peqin compared to Tirana, indicating a need for more targeted spelling instruction (Dodbiba & Spasse, 1995; Likaj, 2011; Willis & Willis, 2007; Hadaj & Tahiri, 2023; Tahiri & Hadaj, 2022).

The decline in mastery of morphological forms in higher grades, particularly in the correct use of plurals, signals a gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application. This reflects findings in the literature emphasizing the importance of integrating morphological knowledge into functional writing contexts (Willis & Willis, 2007; Tahiri & Hadaj, 2022).

#### 4.4. The Role of Teachers and the Impact of Current Practices

Interviews with teachers highlight the importance of continuous professional development to adopt

innovative teaching methods that promote functional language use. Traditional methods focusing on memorization and isolated grammatical analysis have proven ineffective in transferring knowledge to real-life contexts. The data reveal a gap between theoretical instruction and students' ability to apply rules in writing. This aligns with international findings on grammar instruction and underscores the need to revise current teaching methods in Albania. Recommended strategies include task-based activities, development of metalinguistic awareness, and integrated grammar-writing projects (Council of Europe, 2020; UNESCO, 2015; United Nations, n.d.; Tahiri & Zisi, 2026).

Teachers emphasize the use of interactive, student-centered activities that encourage metalinguistic reflection and conscious use of linguistic structures in functional ways (Vygotsky, 1978; Tahiri & Hadaj, 2022; Tahiri, 2021a, 2021b; Tahiri, 2025). Pedagogically, this reinforces the value of active learning. Teachers reported higher student motivation when syntax and orthography were taught through practical activities, highlighting the importance of engagement and autonomy in language acquisition.

Furthermore, integrating innovative approaches as proposed by Tahiri (2021a, 2021b, 2025) fosters critical thinking, creativity, and reflective practices, enhancing both linguistic competence and higher-order cognitive skills. These practices also align with SDG4, supporting inclusive, equitable, and quality education that prepares students for active participation in society (Tahiri, 2025; United Nations, n.d.).

## 5. SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This study highlights the critical role of analyzing written works as an effective strategy to foster active learning in the Albanian language classroom, particularly in mastering syntactic and orthographic knowledge. The integration of written work analysis promotes students' critical thinking and metalinguistic reflection, enabling them to identify, understand, and correct their errors. Furthermore, this approach supports the development of a conscious and functional relationship with the language, bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application.

Across both Tirana and Peqin schools, students demonstrated strong foundational skills in syntax and orthography; however, significant challenges remain in complex sentence construction, consistent use of standard Albanian forms, and orthographic

accuracy. The influence of dialectal variations, limited use of diverse sentence structures, and gaps in transferring grammatical knowledge to varied written genres emerged as critical issues requiring focused pedagogical attention.

### 5.1. Pedagogical Challenges

**The main challenges identified in this research include:**

- **Student motivation:** A lack of sufficient motivation impedes active participation in writing analysis and reflective activities.
- **Traditional teaching methods:** Prevailing instructional practices remain predominantly mechanical, limiting the adoption of interactive and creative approaches that stimulate deeper engagement.
- **Teacher preparedness:** There is a pressing need for ongoing professional development to equip teachers with contemporary didactic strategies and competencies in using written work analysis and digital tools effectively.

### 5.2. Practical Recommendations

**Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed to improve language teaching and learning outcomes:**

- **Continuous teacher training:** Implement sustained professional development programs focusing on innovative methodologies, including the effective integration of written work analysis as a core pedagogical tool.
- **Curriculum and practice reform:** Revise existing teaching practices to incorporate reflective activities and functional language use, moving beyond rote memorization toward meaningful language engagement.
- **Contextualized learning:** Increase the use of real-life contexts, interdisciplinary projects, and communicative tasks that actively involve students in applying their linguistic knowledge in authentic settings.
- **Focus on dialect awareness:** Develop materials and instructional approaches that raise students' awareness of dialectal influences and reinforce mastery of the standard Albanian norm.
- **Formative assessment and feedback:** Employ continuous assessment strategies with timely, constructive feedback to support students' progressive linguistic competence and self-regulation.

### 5.3. Limitations And Future Research

This study's findings are based on data from two schools, which may limit the generalizability of results across wider educational contexts in Albania. Additionally, self-reported data from students and teachers may introduce subjective biases. Future

research could expand the sample size, include longitudinal designs to track progress over time, and explore the impact of specific technological tools on written work analysis and language learning.

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