

# Investigating the English Sentence Types in Albanian Middle School EFL Students' Essays: Syntactic Perspective

Teuta AGAJ AVDIU<sup>1</sup>, Flora MALIQI<sup>1</sup>, & Venera Totaj<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public University "Kadri Zeka", Kosova

<sup>2</sup> Public University "Ukshin Hoti", Kosova

Correspondence: Flora MALIQI, Public University "Kadri Zeka", Kosova.

Received: January 5, 2025

Accepted: November 24, 2025

Online Published: March 2, 2026

doi:10.5430/wjel.v16n3p391

URL: <https://doi.org/10.5430/wjel.v16n3p391>

## Abstract

This study investigates the types of English sentences used in the essays of Albanian middle school students in Kosova learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), with a particular focus on syntactic structures. The topic was chosen due to the crucial role sentence variety plays in developing students' writing proficiency and enhancing clarity, engagement, and coherence in written communication. The primary objectives of the study are to identify the types of sentence structures and functions used by EFL learners and to highlight the importance of syntactic variety in academic writing. The research is grounded in syntactic theory, emphasizing the role of sentence structure in language development and written expression. A qualitative study with quantitative elements was conducted, using content analysis of student essays alongside numerical analysis of sentence types based on structure and function. Sixteen Albanian middle school students participated in the study, each submitting one essay on a topic of their own choice. Analysis of 164 sentences revealed that the most frequently used sentence structure was the simple sentence (97 occurrences), while declarative sentences were the most commonly used sentence function (143 instances). These findings indicate a strong preference among students for simple and declarative forms, suggesting limited syntactic range. The study concludes that relying heavily on a single sentence type may hinder the effectiveness of student writing, making it monotonous and harder to follow. Therefore, the ability to use a variety of sentence structures is essential for effective written communication. Mastery of syntax and grammar is fundamental, and language educators must prioritize teaching sentence diversity and grammatical accuracy to support students' writing development.

**Keywords:** types of sentences, middle school, students, essays, structure, function.

## Introduction

Language is a fundamental tool through which people communicate, understand, and interact with the world. In everyday contexts, whether reading, writing, speaking, or listening, individuals operate within the structure of their native or acquired languages, such as English, Arabic, or Russian. The ease and fluency with which native speakers use their language have long intrigued philosophers and linguists alike. This interest has led to the conceptualization of language as an abstract system governed by syntactic and semantic rules that can be studied and described through theoretical frameworks. One central question arises: to what extent do language users comprehend the underlying conceptual structures that govern their speech and writing?

Stitch (1971) identifies three possible explanations for speakers' understanding of syntactic principles. First, speakers may possess intuitive knowledge of specific sentence forms in their language. For instance, English speakers might recognize the ambiguity in a sentence like "I saw the man with the telescope," or understand the transformation between active and passive voice in the pair "Jenna likes Tom" and "Tom is liked by Jenna." Second, in a broader sense, speakers might have an implicit familiarity with the syntactic or semantic system of their language. Third, some may even develop explicit knowledge of these systems through formal study, as in the case of linguists and language educators.

Despite this implicit understanding, the study of language, especially for educational purposes, remains complex. The English language, in particular, comprises multiple interrelated levels, including morphology, syntax, semantics, phonetics, phonology, and pragmatics. These elements are often studied systematically in language education. Among them, syntax plays a crucial role. Derived from the Ancient Greek word *syntaxis*, meaning "arrangement" or "organization," syntax concerns the rules and principles that govern the structure of sentences and the relationship between words (Matthews, 1981). Understanding sentence structure is essential not only for linguists but also for learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially when developing effective writing skills.

This study addresses the problem that many middle school EFL students, particularly in Kosova, rely heavily on a limited range of sentence types in their writing, which can hinder clarity, engagement, and syntactic maturity. The central claim of this paper is that exposure to and mastery of various sentence types is essential for improving the writing quality of Albanian EFL learners at the middle school level. Grounded in syntactic theory and informed by second language acquisition research, the study investigates how Albanian middle school

students use English sentence types in their essays and how this reflects their syntactic competence.

The main objective of the study is to analyze the types and frequency of English sentences used in student essays and to emphasize the importance of syntactic variety in written communication. Accordingly, this research seeks to answer the following questions: (1) What are the English sentence types used in the essays of Albanian middle school EFL students? (2) Why is it important to use a variety of sentences when writing essays?

Based on prior research and classroom observations, the study hypothesizes that Albanian middle school EFL learners predominantly use simple and declarative sentences, indicating a limited syntactic range. To explore this, the study adopts a qualitative approach with quantitative elements, analyzing essays written by 16 middle school students on self-chosen topics. The findings are presented and discussed in relation to the students' syntactic choices and their implications for EFL writing instruction.

## 2. Method

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative content analysis with quantitative data analysis to investigate the types and frequency of English sentences used in the essays of Albanian middle school EFL students. According to Palmer and Bolderston (2006), qualitative research involves the use of descriptions and categorization to gain insight into specific meanings and behaviors within a particular context. In this study, qualitative methods were used to interpret students' sentence use in relation to syntactic variety and writing development, while quantitative methods, which emphasize the collection and analysis of numerical data to identify patterns and relationships (Creswell, 2014), were applied to measure the frequency of sentence types based on structure and function observed in their essays.

The research data were derived through textual and content analysis of essays written by 16 middle school students from four different schools in the Municipality of Prizren. The essays served as the primary data source for both qualitative interpretation and quantitative classification of sentence structures and functions.

To ensure transparency in how sentence types were identified, the study employed commonly accepted syntactic definitions. A simple sentence was defined as containing one independent clause. A compound sentence consisted of two independent clauses linked by a coordinating conjunction, such as and, but, or, etc. A complex sentence included one independent clause and at least one dependent clause introduced by subordinating markers such as because, although, when, etc. A compound-complex sentence contained two or more independent clauses and at least one dependent clause. These definitions served as the basis for analyzing and coding all student essays.

The classification of sentence types was carried out by the first and third authors, who independently applied these criteria and resolved any differences in coding through discussion.

To support the theoretical framework of the study, an extensive review of literature was conducted, including books, academic papers, and unpublished articles by linguists and researchers. This helped to frame the discussion on sentence definitions, types, examples, and the pedagogical value of syntactic variety in student writing.

### 2.1 Research Questions

This research study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the English sentence types used in the essays of Albanian middle school EFL students?
2. Why is it important to use a variety of sentences when writing essays?

### 2.2 Participants

A total of 16 middle school students participated in this research study. They belonged to the following middle schools: "Motrat Qiriazhi", "Mati Logoreci", "Emin Duraku" and "Lidhja e Prizrenit" of the Municipality of Prizren. Four students were chosen from each school. The sample determination used random sampling technique namely random to middle schools in Prizren. Random sampling technique means that every middle school of Prizren had an equal opportunity of being chosen as a part of the sampling process. The sample selection procedure started from the conversation with the English teachers of middle school students who informed us about their schools and the number of classes and together we made the random student selection.

### 2.3 Data Collection Tools

The essays of Albanian middle school EFL students are the source of this research. There was a total of four (4) middle schools of the Municipality of Prizren and sixteen (16) students. Four (4) students' essays were taken from each school. The essays were then explored using content analysis. After consulting the English teacher of each group of students, students were asked to write an essay on the topic they prefer. They decided to write their essays on the following topics: "What does reading give us?"; "Hetty Green"; "Watching movies or reading books?"; "Hug"; "Friendship"; "Beauty"; "My purpose in life"; "Friend"; "Teachers"; "About my favourite singer"; "Procrastination"; "Recycle"; "Nature"; "Disadvantages of social networks"; "Unhealthy food"; and "What I dream". These students' essay sheets helped the researchers in identifying whether or not students used a variety of sentence structures in their essays and thus finding out whether or not middle school students have knowledge on sentence types in the English language. The content analysis of this research comprised of some steps such as: eliciting the students' essays, identifying the sentences, classifying the sentences into types and explaining the reason of using some types of sentences more than the others.

### 3. Theoretical Framework

Writing in a language with fluency, coherence, and length is one of the toughest things to do (Nunan, 1999). Writing is difficult to do properly, yet no matter how difficult it is, it is thought that everyone can manage and do it perfectly (Axelrod and Cooper, 1985). Writing that conforms to grammar rules must be cohesive. A piece of literature must be cohesive, which implies it must only express one main topic. It must then be coherent in order to be tightly held meaning that the transition from one sentence to the next must be seamless and coherent (Savage and Hogue, 2005).

The four main reasons why individuals communicate in writing are to inform, convey knowledge, express attitudes, and to demand.

The intonation used to pronounce a sentence defines its meaning. Latin is where the term "sentence," came from, and it means "opinion" or "feeling," (Verspoor and Sauter, 2000). To this day, we understand it to be an utterance that conveys an emotion or viewpoint (Chomsky, 2002). Complex pieces make up sentences. Sentences are classified into their categories based on whether they contain main (independent) clauses or subordinate (dependent) clauses.

Syntax is considered the ordering of words in clauses, sentences, and phrases as well as the study of how sentences are put together and how their elements interact. Word order is the main tool used in a language like English to indicate the relationship between words; for instance, in the sentence "The girl loves the cat," the subject is in the first position and the object comes after the verb. The meaning is altered by transposing them (The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica 2016).

Table 1. Examples of English Sentences with Syntactic Characteristics and Sentence Types

Sentence	Syntactic characteristics	Type of sentence
<i>How great Greta is playing!</i>	How - adjective - subject - verb	Exclamatory
<i>Greta is playing.</i>	Subject - verb	Declarative
<i>Is Greta playing?</i>	Part of verb - subject - verb	Interrogative
<i>Play!</i>	Verb	Imperative

The length, function, and structure of every sentence are all categorized. "Compound sentences," "complex sentences," "simple sentences," and "compound-complex sentences" are classifications based on sentence structure (Brandon, 2012). Exclamatory sentences, imperative sentences, interrogative sentences, and declarative sentences are the categories they fall into based on their function (Frank, 1972). They are separated into basic or main sentences, minor sentences, and word sentences or sentence words depending on their length.

#### 3.1 Simple Sentences

A simple sentence consists of a single main clause which can stand alone (Kabashi, 2000).

e.g. One of his younger sisters works at the new hospital.

There must always be a subject and a predicate in a simple sentence. Only when using non-finite clauses or imperative sentences it is known to break this criterion. A noun, a phrase, or in some circumstances, a pronoun can serve as the subject of a simple sentence. A verb is a component of the predicate. The primary clause, for instance, "Boys run," and "The girl fell" makes up a portion of the sentence.

According to Demirezen (2012), a sentence typically begins with the subject, often a noun with modifiers, followed by a verb. Simple sentences may include additional elements such as objects or complements, resulting in common structures:

Subject + Verb (S+V) – e.g., The plane crashed.

Subject + Verb + Object (S+V+O) – e.g., Joe became a doctor.

Subject + Verb + Complement (S+V+C) – e.g., They look sick.

Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Direct Object (S+V+IO+DO) – e.g., She teaches us English.

In addition to these structures, simple sentences may also contain extra information that modifies the predicate. Another type, often overlooked in grammar instruction, is the simple sentence with extended phrasal elements. These can include adjective, adverbial, prepositional, appositive, gerund, participial, or infinitive phrases, appearing before, within, or after the main clause. Because these phrases expand the sentence, such sentences are sometimes mistaken for compound or complex sentences. Phrasal modifiers can occupy initial, medial, or final positions, but the sentence still contains only one main clause (Demirezen, 2012).

Even when additional elements or adverbs appear before or after the subject, the sentence remains grammatically correct, and the information, logic, and meaning are preserved (Tobin, 2021). For instance:

Table 2. Reordering Sentence Elements in Simple Sentences Without Changing Meaning

<b>Who?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>Where?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>At what time?</b>
<i>You come</i>	<i>by bus</i>	<i>at the office</i>	<i>every Monday</i>	<i>at 9 o'clock</i>
<b>Who?</b>	<b>Where?</b>	<b>At what time?</b>	<b>How?</b>	<b>When?</b>
<i>You come</i>	<i>at the office</i>	<i>at 9 o'clock</i>	<i>by bus</i>	<i>every Monday.</i>
<b>At what time?</b>	<b>When?</b>	<b>Who?</b>	<b>Where?</b>	<b>How?</b>
<i>At 9 o'clock</i>	<i>every Monday</i>	<i>you come</i>	<i>at the office</i>	<i>by bus</i>

### 3.2 Compound Sentences

A compound sentence contains two or more main clauses containing closely related ideas and typically joined by a coordinating conjunction or a comma (Kabashi, 2000).

e.g. The thief stole the jewellery and hid it in an old house.

Elizabeth still lives in Boston, but Walter has been in Atlanta for years.

Compound sentences play a significant role in English, as they allow writers to combine independent clauses while maintaining precise word order and meaning (Herring, 2016). Consider the following examples:

*Example 1:*

*She was awake early. Grades were displayed on the screen.*

These two clauses share the following characteristics:

1. They are independent and equal in importance.
2. Each can express a complete thought on its own.
3. Each possesses the necessary elements of a complete clause.

However, these clauses cannot be combined to form a compound sentence because they do not logically relate to one another.

*Example 2:*

*I wanted to watch movies. My brother liked to play games more.*

Here, the two clauses also share the characteristics described above. In this case, the clauses can be joined to create a compound sentence using a coordinating conjunction or other devices, for example:

*I wanted to watch movies, **but** my brother liked to play games more.*

*I wanted to watch movies; **but** my brother liked to play games more.*

Coordinating conjunctions, semicolons, and conjunctive adverbs are the primary devices used to form compound sentences. A comma is always placed before a coordinating conjunction when joining two independent clauses. It is important to use these conjunctions in a way that accurately reflects the relationship between the clauses. For example:

*They learnt a new subject, **and** the entire class was excited.*

*We could learn about it, **or** we could respond appropriately.*

Students must exercise care when constructing compound sentences, particularly to avoid errors such as run-on sentences and comma splices. A comma splice occurs when two independent clauses are joined using only a comma, which is considered grammatically weak. Writers should ensure that independent clauses are joined correctly, using appropriate punctuation or conjunctions (Murray, n.d.).

### 3.3 Complex Sentences

A complex sentence contains an independent clause (called the main clause) and one or more subordinate clauses which begin with a subordinating conjunction (Kabashi, 2000).

e.g. George likes to go fishing when he has time.

In case it rains, we'll call off our match since the field may be too muddy for the players.

The author makes use of this form of sentence structure-complex sentence-to suggest a selected relation for two thoughts and clarifies which kind of thoughts is large and which one is much less large. So, two or more predicators are included (Brandon, 2012). The independent sentence may be rephrased as a dependent one, whilst used with a conjunction referred to as subordinating. Now that one sentence is connected to another, it no longer functions independently. The first clause, sometimes referred to as the major or independent clause, is therefore given priority. As an illustration (main/independent clauses will now be underlined to help them stand out from dependent ones): She had cooked the lunch **because** her guests were about to come.

The relationship between the sentences is determined by the conjunction the author chooses; thus, this choice must be properly considered. For instance:

- *Even though you don't want me to, I will open the door.* (Despite a hypothetical action, a particular result occurs)
- *I'll finish the job as long as you give me the go-ahead.* (A result that takes place under particular circumstances)

### 3.4 Compound-Complex Sentences

According to Kabashi (2000), a compound-complex sentence contains at least two main clauses and at least one subordinate clause. Examples with the subordinate clauses in italics:

1. I can't play for the team on Sunday, *because my father is in bed* and there is no one else to look after him.

2. *Since I could see the footprints in the house, I knew of the intruder's presence, but I made no move in case he had a gun.*

Although it will take some work to write sentences like these properly, compound-complex sentences can add significant meaning to the piece of writing and are common place in academic writing (A research guide for students, n.d.).

### 3.5 Declarative Sentences

Declarative sentences are those that express a prediction or assertion about what will happen, what is happening, or what the situation was. Therefore, it discusses a topic that is widely believed to be accurate. They are the type of English words most widely used. The subject and verb are written in the expected word order. They often end with a full stop in written English, and the final syllables have a descending pitch. The person, method, characteristic, and context of the event being spoken about are all mentioned in a declarative sentence. The subject of the sentence is the participant, and there may be more than one of them (Gerot and Wignell, 1994).

Simple sentence - *He walked his cat yesterday.*

Compound sentence - *I will go for a walk today; my sister is coming too.*

Complex sentence - *She will not go today, because she is busy.*

Compound complex sentence - *I will visit our aunt today; you can come with me, even though I know you don't like her.*

Some declarative sentences do not state facts in an affirmative or positive manner. They convey different types of information while still maintaining a declarative form. Examples include indirect questions, declarative questions, declarative requests and commands, expressions of certainty, and negative declarative sentences. Negative declarative sentences express negation using words such as *never* or *not*. Any declarative sentence can be phrased to function as a request or command. In this way, they are similar in function to interrogative or imperative sentences but remain distinct in form. The declarative sentences can serve a combination of request and demand functions (Gerot and Wignell, 1994).

### 3.6 Interrogative Sentences

Subject-verb inversion, auxiliary verbs, and question words such as who, why, what, where, when, and how are all used in interrogative sentences. While writing them off, the writer must include a question mark, and when speaking, they must conclude with a raise in intonation (Quirk and Greenbaum, 1990). For instance:

**When** will the school start?

**What** is your name?

**Are** you happy?

There are four main categories of interrogative sentences: alternative questions, tag questions, yes/no questions, and wh-questions. What, who, why, when, where, and how are examples of Wh-questions, which are terms used to ask for information (Iftitah, 2011). When these types of questions are asked, the respondent is free to provide an open-ended response that may be long or short, straightforward or complex. For instance:

**What** is your greatest accomplishment?

**Why** haven't you finished the job yet?

Yes-or-no questions are contrasted with declarative sentences. They require only a simple "yes" or "no" response. Rather than using interrogative words, they are formed by inverting the auxiliary verb and the subject (Frank, 1972). For example: "*Have you done your homework?*"

### 3.7 Imperative Sentences

Imperative sentences are used to express commands, requests, invitations, or offers. Imperative sentences often don't include a subject and employ the verb without a prefix. Writers use the verb, remove the prefix to, and leave out the subject when creating imperative sentences. The usage of an exclamatory mark strengthens this sort of sentence. For emphasis, the subject "you" is added (Hornby, 1976). For instance:

*You don't accept it!*

When optional, unconnected to the other contents, and separated by a comma, nouns are used. They serve as the nouns of address even though they are not the subject in this situation. Example:

*Get up, Mike!*

*Lady, keep quiet!*

### 3.8 Exclamatory Sentences

Strong emotions are expressed in exclamatory sentences, which are marked with an exclamation point. They frequently go with how or what, as in:

*How cold is today!*

*What a blessed man!*

*How things have changed!*

Short exclamatory sentences are typically regarded as exclamation statements (Crystal, 1995). The voice should have a rise or fall in intonation while uttering these brief exclamatory sentences as well as other larger exclamatory sentences. For instance:

*"Oh no!"*

*Start!*

*Gorgeous!*

### 3.9 The Importance of Using a Variety of Sentence Types When Writing Essays

An essay made up of only one type of sentence is monotonous, confusing and boring for readers. Using a variety of sentence types makes an essay more interesting, inviting and engaging to read. A high-quality essay is considered the one written by using a variety of sentence structures in order to achieve readability and a unique writing style (Savage and Mayer, 2012).

When writing, it is important to vary both sentence length and structure. Research shows that combining short, medium, and long sentences improves readability, prevents monotony, and highlights key ideas (Charpentier-Jiménez, 2020; Deveci, 2019).

Writers who use only short sentences may produce writing that feels disconnected and simple, while sentences that are too long can overwhelm readers and hide the main point. For example:

Short, simple sentences:

I went to the store. I bought apples. I saw my friend. We talked.

These sentences are correct but feel disconnected and do not flow smoothly. The writing is not very engaging.

Excessively long sentence:

Yesterday, I went to the store to buy some apples, and while I was there, I ran into my friend who I hadn't seen in months, and we talked about everything from school to family to our weekend plans, which was so long and detailed that I almost forgot why I had gone to the store in the first place.

This sentence is correct but hard to follow. The main point that is buying apples is lost in the many details.

Therefore, combining sentences of different lengths and structures helps writing flow naturally. This approach creates rhythm and clarity, guides readers through the text, and emphasizes important points.

## 4. Results

The essays of Albanian middle school EFL students from "Motrat Qiriazhi", "Mati Logoreci", "Emin Duraku" and "Lidhja e Prizrenit" schools in the Municipality of Prizren, Kosova provide valuable insights into writing practices in a real classroom setting. Similar to Nunan (1999) and Axelrod and Cooper (1985), who emphasized the challenges of writing fluently and coherently, the analysis of these essays demonstrates that achieving variety in sentence structures is an ongoing challenge for EFL learners. By examining 16 essays, this study contributes to the body of knowledge on EFL writing, confirming that students often rely on simpler forms of expression but struggle to integrate complex and compound-complex sentences effectively.

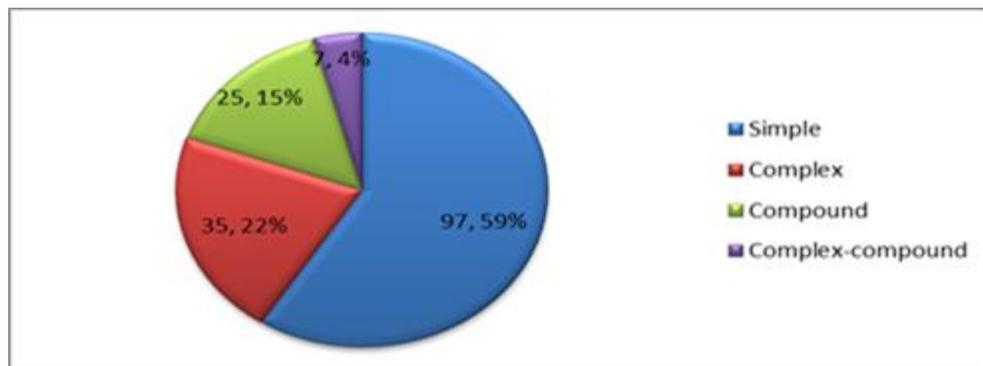


Figure 1. Types of sentences based on their structure

The analysis of sentence structure (Figure 1) shows that simple sentences are most commonly used, with 97 instances (59%). Complex sentences follow with 35 instances (22%), compound sentences appear 25 times (15%), and compound-complex sentences are least frequent, with 7 instances (4%). These results align with previous findings (Savage and Mayer, 2012; Charpentier-Jiménez, 2020; Deveci, 2019) suggesting that novice writers tend to rely on simple sentences to maintain clarity, yet this can make essays monotonous and limit expressiveness. Conversely, the low frequency of compound-complex sentences indicates that students struggle to combine multiple ideas

cohesively, which is important for more advanced writing (Savage and Hogue, 2005).

Examples of sentence types from student essays, based on their structure, include:

1. Simple Sentences:

- a). *I threw a basket.*
- b). *Reading can change us in a positive way.*
- c). *Friendship requires responsibility.*

2. Compound Sentences:

- a). *We all have hundreds of friends, but the number of our friends does not exceed the fingers of one hand.*
- b). *Children are purer; they don't know evil, and their thoughts are always positive.*

3. Complex Sentences:

- a). *Although he died, he is still remembered.*
- b). *I like people who have a sense of individuality.*

4. Compound-Complex Sentences:

- a). *I'm not sure, but when I was 7 or 8 years old, I saw some people playing basketball in the schoolyard.*
- b). *Usually, people go on picnics or visit places during the holidays, but urbanization has grown so much that it wouldn't be surprising to see a construction site there one day.*

While students can construct grammatically correct sentences, their essays show limited variety and complexity, a finding that supports the literature emphasizing that a combination of sentence types is essential for readability, emphasis, and flow (Savage and Mayer, 2012; Charpentier-Jiménez, 2020; Deveci, 2019).

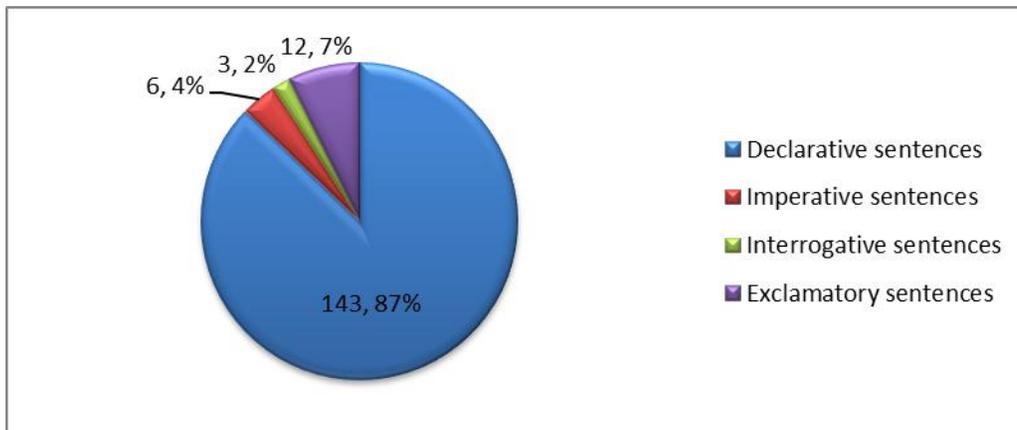


Figure 2. Types of sentences based on their function

Figure 2 shows the distribution of sentences based on their function. Declarative sentences dominate with 143 instances (87%), followed by exclamatory sentences with 12 (7%), imperative sentences with 6 (4%), and interrogative sentences with 3 (2%). These results indicate that students primarily focus on stating facts and opinions, while using less varied functions such as asking questions or giving commands, which limits engagement and stylistic diversity. This finding supports Nunan's (1999) argument that writing fluently and coherently involves not only correct grammar but also functional variety to enhance meaning and reader engagement.

Overall, the results show that students tend to rely on simple, declarative sentences, which aligns with findings in previous research. The study highlights the need to teach sentence variety more explicitly, helping students write more coherent, engaging, and well-developed essays. By situating the analysis within this real-world context, the study offers meaningful evidence about EFL writing practices and strengthens the existing literature.

**4. Discussion**

This paper must also consider the relation of the findings to the two research questions posed at the beginning of the study:

*Question 1. What are the English sentence types used in the essays of Albanian middle school EFL students?*

According to the results presented above, simple sentences are the most obvious in 16 essays. There are 97 simple sentences (59%), and 35 (22%) complex sentences used in all essays. Whereas 25 of sentences were compound (15%) and the rest of them (7 or 4%) were complex-compound sentences. It is thought that students used simple sentences because it is the basic and easiest way to express a thought.

The results also showed the amount of four types of sentences classified based on their function that middle school students used. According to the chart presented above, the highest score belongs to declarative sentences (143 or 87%), followed by exclamatory sentences (12 or 7%) and imperative sentences (6 or 4%). The lowest scores are for interrogative sentences (3 or 2%). Thus, the most used types of sentences based on their function are declarative sentences. It is thought that students used the declarative sentences because this type of sentence is widely used in everyday life to convey information so that the students used it to inform the audience on the topic they chose to write about.

### *Question 2. Why is it important to use a variety of sentences when writing essays?*

The results show that there is a lack of sentence variability in students' essays. It is essential to use varied sentence structures for the effectiveness of the ideas conveyed. Sentence variety highlights crucial passages in the text and cuts down clutter, repetition and duplication in a writing task. By opening a sentence with an adverb, a prepositional phrase, or by switching the subject and verb, learners can add sentence diversity to the beginning of a sentence. To create this type of diversity in sentences, they combine concepts through modifiers, relative clauses, or appositives. Thus, it is very important to have knowledge on English grammar and sentences. To organize sentences into coherent paragraphs when constructing written content is a fundamental requirement. Being proficient in writing helps in avoiding grammar errors and creating more powerful, coherent, and reader-friendly sentences. The well-structured texts are easier for readers to comprehend and engage with. Knowing, combining and mixing all types of sentences help in producing a good writing style.

This study has some limitations. The sample size was small and included students from only a single city and a limited number of schools, which may affect the generalizability of the results to other contexts or regions. In addition, students chose their own essay topics, which could have influenced the variety and complexity of sentences they produced, as some topics may naturally encourage more complex or diverse sentence structures than others.

### **5. Conclusion**

Through this research, Albanian middle school EFL students' syntactical composition on the use of English sentence types in their essays was investigated qualitatively. It describes and justifies the type of English sentences that dominated in students' essays. The research findings show that the simple sentence in terms of structure and the declarative sentence in terms of function are the most common sentence types used by EFL students. It can be said that Albanian middle school EFL students encounter challenges in sentence construction. However, it is argued that the sentences produced by EFL students in their essays do not necessarily reflect a deficiency in English proficiency, but rather relate to how frequently the students engage in writing practice. English language teachers need to find ways to help EFL students construct a better writing style since the speech becomes more academic, writing becomes more sophisticated, and in a way, knowledge becomes richer when different types of sentences are used.

To sum up, it is very important to note that main types of sentences are frequently used and that students should continue to do so, because they have a significant impact and are crucial to grammar. Grammar rules are and will always be necessary. They are irreplaceable because of the function they have in sentences. Students should be taught about the use of different types of sentences when writing paragraph essays as it is important for the further development of the learning process of writing.

### **6. Implications and Suggestions**

The results show that middle school EFL students mostly use simple (59%) and declarative (87%) sentences. This may be influenced by the general English textbook, which introduces a wide range of everyday vocabulary. Although students are exposed to many words, the textbook seems to provide few opportunities for repeated or structured practice, which could explain why students rely mainly on simple and declarative sentences.

Classroom instruction was not observed in this study, but the results suggest that teaching may focus more on interaction than on guided writing, giving students limited chances to practice more complex sentences. These factors together likely contribute to the predominance of simple and declarative sentences in their essays.

To improve writing outcomes, curricula should include systematic vocabulary reinforcement and guided writing activities that encourage a variety of sentence structures. Future research including classroom observation would help clarify how teaching methods and materials affect vocabulary use and sentence variety, which could support students in writing more coherent and engaging essays.

### **Acknowledgments**

We sincerely thank the English teachers who kindly allowed us to conduct this research with their students. We are also grateful to the students who agreed to participate and took the time to write the essays.

### **Authors' contributions**

All authors contributed equally to the work and to the final manuscript. The first author led the study, including the design, data collection, analysis, and writing of the manuscript. The second author provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis, and manuscript. The third author played an essential role in recruiting and coordinating the research participants, facilitating the implementation of the study, addressing challenges during data collection, and contributing to the interpretation of the results. All authors reviewed and approved the final manuscript.

### **Funding**

No funding was received for this research.

### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

### **Informed consent**

Obtained.

**Ethics approval**

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Sciedu Press.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

**Provenance and peer review**

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

**Data availability statement**

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

**Data sharing statement**

No additional data are available.

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