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Comparative Analysis of EFL Writing Instruction: Insights from South Korea and Kazakhstan

Su Jin Lee¹ , Yekaterina Rudenko¹ , Sok-Hun Kim^{2*} 

¹ College of Human Sciences and Education, KIMEP University, Almaty 050010, Republic of Kazakhstan

² Center for Creative Convergence Education, Hanyang University, Ansan Gyeonggi-do 15588, Republic of Korea

ABSTRACT

This study compares the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) academic writing instruction in South Korea and Kazakhstan, aiming to identify statistically significant differences in grammatical error frequency and types among university students. Through case studies at two private universities, the research combines descriptive data (academic catalogs, program guides) with a detailed grammatical error analysis. Semester-long data collection involved categorizing prevalent grammatical error types among university students in each country using the grammatical system, followed by an assessment of their pedagogical implications. Findings reveal distinct programmatic emphases: while Kazakhstani programs provide separate writing courses, Korean programs integrate writing components into broader English communication courses. Error analysis indicated that Korean students exhibited significantly higher error rates in areas such as article usage, preposition choice, punctuation, verb formation, and word choice. These differences potentially reflect the impact of varying curriculum structure, writing instructional methodologies, and the differential integration of technology-enhanced learning. Acknowledging a time gap between data collection in Korea (2015) and Kazakhstan (2021), the study carefully considers potential influences such as evolving educational contexts and the increased integration of

*CORRESPONDING AUTHOR:

Sok-Hun Kim, Center for Creative Convergence Education, Hanyang University, Ansan Gyeonggi-do 15588, Republic of Korea;
Email: praxis94@hanyang.ac.kr

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 5 July 2025 | Revised: 10 August 2025 | Accepted: 17 August 2025 | Published Online: 10 September 2025
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i9.10893>

CITATION

Lee, S.J., Rudenko, Y., Kim, S.H., 2025. Comparative Analysis of EFL Writing Instruction: Insights from South Korea and Kazakhstan. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*. 7(9): 536–552. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30564/fls.v7i9.10893>

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digital writing tools. The results suggest that universities in EFL contexts should adopt a process-based approach with contextualized corrective feedback to enhance academic writing proficiency within their EAP programs.

Keywords: University English Curriculum; EFL Writing; Writing Feedback; Teaching Writing Approach; Process-Based Approach

1. Introduction

Academic writing instruction in EFL contexts continues to face challenges that hinder students from acquiring the essential writing skills expected by universities in different regions^[1-3]. Recent studies highlight the linguistic difficulties encountered by university students in EFL contexts. Research in Japan, Oman, and Kazakhstan indicates that targeted support is essential for the development of academic language competencies internationally^[4-6]. In language instruction, curriculum is crucial because of its practical role in guiding both teachers and students in teaching and learning^[7]. Comparative studies on how writing instruction is implemented across different national contexts remain scarce. To address this gap, the present study compares EFL academic writing instruction in South Korea and Kazakhstan, with a particular focus on the frequency and types of grammatical errors made by university students. By analyzing both curriculum documents and student writing, this research aims to reveal instructional patterns and their implications for improving academic writing pedagogy in EFL settings.

In Korea, the education system prioritizes a systematic, exam-focused approach to learning with little flexibility or deviation. As such, many students have few chances to express themselves in written English. The academic literature confirms that this approach is common in South Korea^[8,9]. However, scholars believe that Korea's exam-obsessed educational culture is stagnant and repetitive. Park (2024) offers evidence that while English instruction in Korea often prioritizes speaking and listening skills, the relative emphasis on writing may be less pronounced compared to other language skills^[10].

The education system in Kazakhstan is highly centralized and closely monitored by the government^[11]. Kazakhstan has recently introduced some significant educational initiatives. For example, the use of three languages has been

promoted in Kazakhstan since 2007: Kazakh as the state language, Russian as the language of international communication, and English as the language signaling successful integration into the global economy^[12,13]. Kazakhstan's Ministry of Education adopted the Bologna process in 2010, which motivated many universities to offer courses and programs in English. However, the quality of education in Kazakhstan still needs improvement at all levels of instruction^[11]. In recent studies on academic writing in universities implementing English Mediated Instruction (EMI) in Kazakhstan, students at both undergraduate and graduate levels reported major challenges with academic reading and writing skills due to insufficient previous learning experience^[14,15].

The current article seeks to evaluate and compare the effectiveness of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programs in South Korea and Kazakhstan, focusing specifically on academic writing instruction. The authors look at the different ways universities teach by analyzing documents and finding statistically significant differences in the number and types of grammatical mistakes college students in each country make. They also want to find out what kinds of mistakes students usually make in their academic writing and provide recommendations accordingly. The authors' extensive teaching experiences serve as the foundation for this research, which also accounts for the unique educational and cultural contexts of these two nations. The following questions will be the basis for the study:

- 1) What approaches to writing instruction does each university implement?
- 2) Are there statistically significant differences in the frequency and types of grammatical errors made by Korean and Kazakhstani university students in their academic writing?
- 3) Which types of grammatical errors are most prevalent in the academic writing of Korean and Kazakhstani university students?

2. Literature Review

We first turn our attention to common characteristics of L2 writers and then to popular approaches to teaching writing. Next, we will review previous studies discussing important issues of university English education in South Korea and Kazakhstan. We then review studies on writing feedback styles in the contexts of EFL and ESL (English as a second language). Finally, we identify gaps in the research to signify the importance of the current study.

2.1. Characteristics of L2 Writers

The design of effective academic writing courses should consider several distinctive characteristics of second language (L2) writers. First of all, some L2 students have learned to read and write in a language that is different in terms of writing systems. For example, Chinese has a logographic writing system in which characters represent words, while English has an alphabetic system in which letters represent sounds rather than entire words or phrases^[16]. This difference may create additional challenges for students. In addition, students often use L1 in their L2 writing, which can affect their L2 writing skills both positively, such as when using L1 for brainstorming ideas (Wang and Wen, 2002)^[17], and negatively, such as by writing whole texts in L1 and then translating them into L2^[18]. For example, while South Korea is a predominantly monolingual society, Kazakhstani citizens are often multilingual and regularly switch between two or more languages^[19]. Another characteristic of L2 writers is their varied educational experiences and cultural backgrounds, which may lead to both depth and complexity in L2 writing classes, but also extra difficulty for L2 students^[20]. Finally, L2 students often do not possess the same level of L2 proficiency as their L1 peers, have less-developed linguistic repertoires, and are less willing to use complex syntax and transitional language^[21,22]. They are typically still in the process of acquiring the L2 and need to focus on gaining advanced control of grammar, vocabulary, syntax, punctuation, and capitalization.

2.2. Approaches to Teaching Academic Writing

There are three well-established approaches to teaching writing: product-based, process-based, and genre-based. In

the traditional product-based approach, teachers explain a model of writing and its features and then expect students to compose using a similar writing structure^[23,24]. A typical product-based writing class consists of four stages. First, instructors provide students with a model text, such as a letter of complaint, and ask them to analyze some features of its genre, such as the text's structure, specific grammatical and lexical items, or functional language items commonly used in this type of writing. Second, students practice using those language items in a "controlled" way, in isolation. Then, students organize their ideas and use them in the final stage to write their own texts individually. There is one draft of writing, and students are supposed to imitate the model text^[23,25].

The process approach emphasizes the value of writing behaviors by focusing on the composition process^[26]. Flower and Hayes (1981, as cited in Kim and Kim, 2005) further explained the model of writing processes as planning, writing, and reviewing^[27,28]. Before the creation of any text, these processes are dynamic and interactive. Kroll (1990) describes the process approach as a cyclical rather than a single-shot process, which involves constant revision and rewriting of students' drafts based on feedback from an instructor or peer, and the final version of the assignment is not submitted after the first draft^[29]. This approach calls for focusing on the writer as a center of attention by providing a supportive "collaborative workshop" environment (pp. 15–16). The process approach encourages seeing language learners as writers and emphasizes content over form^[30]. It prioritizes how language learners brainstorm their ideas and develop them in writing. In addition, a collaborative revision process between teachers and peers helps language learners become independent writers. Students write several drafts, working collaboratively and focusing on the ideas and meaning of writing rather than language accuracy. Instead of producing an error-free text as a final product, students develop their writing skills throughout the process^[31].

In contrast to the process approach, which centers on the writer, the genre approach aims for the reader to understand the author's writing^[32]. A genre-based approach views writing as a social activity and focuses on the final product and features of a particular text type by drawing students' attention to the purpose, structure, and audience of a written text^[33]. According to Hyland (2007), the lesson framework

of a genre-based approach typically involves five stages: 1) setting the context: students discuss the purpose and context typical for a particular genre; 2) modeling: learners analyze some features of a sample text representing the genre; 3) joint construction: teacher-guided activities to practice the features or structure of the genre; 4) independent construction: students write their texts individually; and 5) comparing: students reflect on what has been learned and discuss particular social purposes of the genre^[34].

Writing instructors can enhance students' English writing abilities by combining complementary product-, process-, and genre-based approaches, which encompass context and language knowledge and skills. Newton et al. (2018) state that process- and genre-focused instruction, reflective writing tasks, collaborative writing activities, and the use of technology in both online and blended courses are the most common ways that second language writing is taught in academic settings^[20].

The development of specific sub-skills and strategies needed by L2 writers has received a lot of attention. Similar to Grabe and Stoller (2011), who introduced the idea of developing strategic readers, Newton et al. (2018) extended this construct to developing strategic writers, which they describe as an intentional and individualized process of developing autonomous learners who are able to extend their language skills beyond the classroom^[20,35]. They recommend introducing and practicing the following strategies to help students of any language origin: process strategies, rhetorical and genre awareness strategies, language development strategies, and interactive and collaborative strategies.

Lastly, recent technological developments have significantly affected writing instruction at universities worldwide. For example, collaborative online tools such as Google Docs have transformed how writing is taught and practiced in academic settings. Costley et al. (2023) examined how technology-mediated peer interaction affected the academic writing quality of L2 English learners^[36]. The findings revealed that specific peer editing behaviors can have both positive and negative effects on writing outcomes, highlighting the need for pedagogically guided integration of digital tools into writing instruction. Building on this, artificial intelligence has emerged as another powerful force reshaping writing instruction. Although some ethical concerns remain, some scholars, such as Giray, Sevnarayan, and

Madiseh (2025), advocate for integrating AI tools into writing courses^[37]. They argue that rather than ignoring AI or penalizing students for using it, instructors should be trained to prioritize process over product and teach students how to engage with AI-powered tools ethically and strategically to support their development as academic writers.

2.3. Feedback Styles for Teaching EFL and ESL Writing

Constructive feedback is an important factor in accomplishing the educational goals of teaching EFL writing^[38]. In a study of English language teachers in Hong Kong secondary schools, Lee (2008) found that the primary focus of teacher feedback was on highlighting errors in line with the local curriculum and exam culture^[39]. Lee concluded that institutional and cultural norms, such as national curricula and social conventions, highly influence feedback, which should be specific to each individual case. Schulz (2001) also discovered cultural conditioning in grammar instruction and error correction among Colombian EFL teachers^[40]. For instance, due to their familiarity with it, Colombian students and teachers favored explicit grammar instruction and error correction.

In a wide-ranging study in China, Hu (2003) carried out a comparison among 439 Chinese EFL students throughout the country and found clear regional differences in the level of English proficiency, classroom behavior, and language learning use and strategies^[41]. One finding that remained constant throughout, however, was that the teaching method predominantly focused on the accuracy of language production and had an intense focus on correcting mistakes. Chen et al. (2016) provided additional insight into EFL education in mainland China, specifically the feedback preferences of students. Drawing on quantitative and qualitative data from a major public university, they found that Chinese students preferred written corrective feedback to other forms^[42]. Chen et al. explained that the large class sizes and widespread application of English proficiency tests in the country contribute to this preference. In the exam-oriented cultures of East Asia, corrective feedback inevitably plays a summative role above all else, particularly when school performance has such a significant impact on final exam grades^[39].

In their study of the roles of direct and indirect feedback in teaching English as a foreign language (EFL) writing,

Bitchener et al. (2005) stated that direct correction is the practice of crossing out words and phrases that aren't needed or are wrong and replacing them with better ones^[43]. Indirect feedback, on the other hand, indicates errors by underlining or circling them. Pham (2021) examined the attitudes of Vietnamese EFL students toward feedback and found that they preferred indirect feedback due to its ability to reduce errors, particularly in the simple past tense^[44]. Other researchers have noted that Vietnamese students' preference for a more indirect approach stems from their somewhat reticent personalities, which have been influenced by Confucianism^[45,46].

Liu (2008) carried out a quasi-experimental classroom study to evaluate the ability of university ESL students to self-edit and correct their writing through direct correction following comprehensive feedback from their teacher and indirect correction, which did not provide correct forms or explanations. The results showed that merely providing corrective feedback was not sufficient to improve the standard of the students' writing accuracy^[47]. Liu recommended incorporating mini-lessons or workshops into the coursework to enhance the overall quality and outcomes.

When looking at writing feedback styles through the lens of different teaching methods, the process-based method stresses the importance of giving formative feedback at different stages, such as writing the first draft and revising it. This approach prioritizes the development of ideas and organization, fostering ongoing dialogue between instructor and student^[26,48]. The product-based approach, on the other hand, is focused on the final product and uses summative feedback, such as rubrics, to make sure that grammar is correct and standards are followed. Some educators advocate for a hybrid model, blending both methods to address diverse student needs and enhance writing skills holistically^[49,50]. These studies collectively highlight how tailored feedback mechanisms can effectively support varying instructional goals in writing education.

Montgomery and Baker (2007) surveyed both teachers and students in an intensive ESL program to discover their perceptions of teacher-written feedback on compositions^[51]. Comparing the responses, the most striking finding was that the teachers' emphasis on local issues of grammar and mechanics over more global issues like content and organization contrasted with the results of the teachers' self-assessments. In other words, the teachers did not think they focused more

on local issues than global issues. Montgomery and Baker speculated that the apparent disconnect in teachers' perception could be explained by their desire to provide students with an all-encompassing feedback style that was both local and global.

In the context of online university writing classes, German and Mahmud (2021) found that Indonesian students preferred receiving corrective feedback focused on grammar. Furthermore, indicating the types of errors in their writing was the most desirable feedback technique for these students^[52].

In another ESL setting, this time in Canada, Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) found that students preferred intense and comprehensive feedback, with as many corrections as possible. Students in their study welcomed written corrective feedback that focused on grammatical errors, punctuation, spelling, and word choice. However, they were skeptical of the utility of written feedback that addressed content^[53]. Based on their findings, Amrhein and Nassaji determined that students typically have their own expectations about writing feedback and are dubious of any correction that might seek to change the content of their work. In contrast to the views of the students, Amrhein and Nassaji found that the teachers retained a strong belief that written corrective feedback should strike a balance between grammar, punctuation, form, and content.

Investigating three technical universities in Kazakhstan through surveys and class observations, Abdygapparova and Smirnova (2018) found that both students and teachers put a lot of weight on grammar and vocabulary in writing^[54]. However, teachers were not qualified enough to provide appropriate corrections, resulting in students' dissatisfaction.

The reviewed studies clearly demonstrate that the specific types of feedback that are preferred in teaching writing closely align with the teaching principles and approaches that guide it. However, while numerous previous studies have investigated university English education in the context of EFL, it is rare to compare academic writing methodologies from two different universities in distinct nations. This type of comparison study is challenging because it requires an in-depth understanding. This study focuses on approaches to teaching academic English and educational aspects in both countries. This study is unique because one of the authors has taught English at universities in both countries. This per-

spective, in addition to the other authors' experiences, will enable a comparative analysis of Korean and Kazakhstani university English curricula in writing courses.

2.4. Error Analysis in EFL Academic Writing

Error analysis has been a cornerstone of second language acquisition (SLA) research, providing critical insights into the linguistic challenges learners face and the developmental processes they undergo. Rooted in the seminal works of Corder (1975) and Selinker (1972), error analysis treats deviations from standard language norms not as mere failures but as evidence of interlanguage development—a transitional stage between a learner's native language and the target language^[55,56].

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing, error analysis serves as a diagnostic tool, identifying patterns of linguistic difficulties and informing targeted pedagogical interventions. Polio (1997) emphasized the importance of systematic error analysis for evaluating learners' writing proficiency, noting that errors offer a window into the developmental stages of language learning^[2]. Ferris (1999) argued that analyzing recurrent errors can enhance the efficacy of corrective feedback, allowing instructors to tailor their approaches to address specific learner needs^[57].

Empirical studies have documented recurring error patterns in EFL academic writing, shedding light on areas where learners struggle most. Alawi (2014) identified verb usage, punctuation, and capitalization as the most frequent error types among university students, reflecting systemic challenges in mastering these aspects of English grammar^[58]. Similarly, Amoakohene (2017) highlighted issues with subject-verb agreement, tense, and article usage, linking these errors to insufficient grammatical mastery despite formal instruction^[59]. Giri (2010) found that EFL learners in Nepal often struggle with conditionals, auxiliary/modal usage, and sentence structure, showing that these problems are common in different places^[60]. In a study conducted in Sudan, Ibrahim and Ibrahim (2020) analyzed the grammatical errors in the academic writing of Sudanese EFL undergraduates^[61]. They found that the most frequent errors were related to spelling, subject-verb agreement, singular/plural form, and article usage, which points to the importance of targeted instruction in these areas.

Error analysis highlights the interplay of cultural and in-

structional factors in shaping learner performance. Hu (2003) observed that grammar-focused instruction in East Asia often prioritizes linguistic form over content and coherence, which may influence the types of errors learners produce^[41]. Montgomery and Baker (2007) revealed discrepancies between teachers' and students' perceptions of error correction, with students tending to prioritize surface-level issues such as grammar and vocabulary, while teachers emphasize global aspects like argumentation and organization^[51]. These findings demonstrate the importance of balanced instructional approaches that address both linguistic accuracy and rhetorical competence.

Building on these foundational studies, the current research analyzes grammatical errors in academic essays written by Korean and Kazakhstani university students. Comparing error patterns across two distinct educational contexts will help to identify instructional methodologies that promote grammatical accuracy and minimize errors. This comparative analysis contributes to the broader discourse on effective EFL writing pedagogy, offering insights into how contextual factors and teaching practices influence learner outcomes.

2.5. Issues of University English Education in South Korea and Kazakhstan

As a result of ongoing research and development in university English education in South Korea, the country has witnessed dramatic improvements since 2000^[62,63]. For example, reading- and grammar-focused English courses consisting of listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English have been developed in university English programs. To further improve the landscape, two major issues should be addressed.

First, Lee (2012) explains that many similar studies have been undertaken and repeated in the fields of teaching methods, teacher training, and material development, to the detriment of progress^[62]. This trend is understandable, as it is necessary to continually develop and train teachers. However, a new direction is required. To this end, it is crucial to understand university English education from a broader perspective and to recalibrate its goals towards a more balanced approach that emphasizes both the process of teaching and the product of students' writing.

Second, English language instruction in South Korea frequently marginalizes English writing education^[63,64]. As

a result, Korean students often lack basic writing skills, and instructors must spend more time and energy providing feedback than would otherwise be the case. This is a serious problem, as writing is a significant method of communication that is integral to developing critical thinking skills and making logical arguments. For a long time, South Korea has poorly managed English writing at the university level. Since the introduction of the speaking-focused Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) program in the 1970s, students have had few chances to develop their writing skills^[64]. The marginalization of English writing is a twofold problem: the lack of opportunity creates a deficit of skill and ability, and this deficit in turn leaves students unmotivated to investigate writing further.

English instruction in Kazakhstani higher education has also experienced dramatic changes due to the state policy on the tri-unity of the Kazakh, Russian, and English languages^[54]. To implement this policy, the Ministry of Education and Science devised new action plans in 2015 to implement a trilingual language program into the education system. For example, high schools are expected to teach natural science courses in English, Kazakhstan History and Geography courses in Kazakh, and World History in Russian^[65]. However, the government has accelerated English instruction without enough preparation, causing many challenges due to a weak curriculum, insufficient teaching resources, and a lack of qualified teachers. The teaching method is very teacher-centered and emphasizes grammar and rote learning. Students at the universities implementing English-mediated instruction (EMI) in Kazakhstan often experience major challenges in academic writing courses due to their low development of L1 reading and writing skills at school. A recent study among undergraduate students in Kazakhstan argues that students' lack of literacy skills in their first language negatively affects their performance in English writing courses. Students often report that they first learn about academic text structure, genre, and reading strategies at university^[14]. This is supported by the latest OECD Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) results in 2022, where 15-year-old students in Kazakhstan scored 386 points on average, compared to a much higher result of 515 points in Korea^[66]. This finding indicates that many Kazakhstani students lack basic reading skills in their first language. Similarly, a study focusing on academic writing

instruction in EMI universities in Kazakhstan reports that students at a graduate level experience challenges with academic writing related to their previous learning background, lack of vocabulary, poor academic literacy skills, and lack of awareness of academic English writing style and culture^[15].

In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), specifically in South Korea and Kazakhstan, language learners have limited exposure to the necessary levels of English teaching required to produce structural knowledge of a foreign language^[67]. This lack of exposure hampers their writing ability, with many students unable to choose suitable vocabulary, manage sentence structure, express ideas, or develop paragraphs on any given topic^[28]. The problems arise from the instructional methods presented to them by their teachers. English writing education in Korea and Kazakhstan is often teacher-centric: teachers assume an authoritative role, focusing on grammar to the detriment of other aspects. This prevents students from reaching their academic potential, which subsequently causes poor workplace performance^[68,69].

Drawing on their own experiences teaching in Korean universities, Kim and Kim (2005) highlight the problems they faced^[28]. Teachers in Korean universities teach grammatical forms and vocabulary without considering their proper linguistic contexts. This enables students to correctly apply grammatical rules, but without the intellectual understanding of their function. Furthermore, the final results are considered more important than the learning process. Moreover, the teacher's authoritative position often leads to the neglect of effective interaction and cooperation with students.

3. Methodology

The purpose of this study is to find statistical differences between university students in Korea and Kazakhstan in the level of grammatical correctness of their work, which might have been influenced by the different approaches to teaching writing in the two countries. The study explores writing instruction methodology by analyzing university documents, such as catalogs and course syllabi, and comparing the frequency and types of grammatical errors in writing samples from students at two private universities, one in Korea and one in Kazakhstan. The findings will provide data-driven insights for improving teaching methodologies

in university English writing programs.

3.1. Participants

We conducted a semester-long observational study with two groups of university students from each country (Korea $N = 31$ and Kazakhstan $N = 34$). To ensure comparable writing skills at the outset, participants were chosen whose English writing abilities fell between the scores of 1 and 3 on the IBT TOEFL Independent Writing Rubric, on which 5 is the highest possible score. In other words, the English writing abilities of the participants ranged from elementary to intermediate.

Thirty-one Korean university students (23 females and 8 males) learning English as their L2 at H University in Korea voluntarily participated in the present study. Those students completed three General English (GE) courses of two credit hours each over three semesters. First-year students are required to complete a two-credit course in Creative Reading at one of the three proficiency levels (elementary, intermediate, or advanced) based on their English score on the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT). Sophomores are required to complete two credits each for a total of four credits in English Communication (EC) 1 and 2 courses. EC 1 is communication skills-oriented, while EC 2 focuses more on a combination of verbal and written communication skills. Two sections of these students took a two-hour class once a week for twelve consecutive weeks. The writing program was run by the native English-speaking professors who had taught the three GE English courses, and 31 students voluntarily participated in it.

Thirty-four Kazakh university students at K University also participated in this study. Those students had already completed three academic English courses before the study began: Academic Listening and Note-Taking, Academic Reading and Writing 1, and Academic Speaking. While these students were participating in this study, they were in the middle of the Academic Reading and Writing 2 course.

This study analyzed pretest scores to confirm group comparability, ensuring no significant difference in proficiency between the two groups prior to the intervention. We used SPSS version 29.0 to analyze and compare baseline data from writing samples collected during the first week and the last week of the semester.

3.2. Design of the Study and Research Instruments

This study mainly uses numbers and statistics to answer the research questions by showing how effective the program is through counting grammatical errors in academic writing. Document analysis, such as looking at academic catalogs, improves quantitative methods by giving context to the results and helping us learn more about the teaching methods and program features that are at their core. Quantitative analysis lies at the heart of this research, allowing for a clear, objective comparison between Korean and Kazakhstani university students' writing. Examining the frequency and type of grammatical errors through rigorous statistical tests ensures that the results are both reliable and replicable. This design directly addresses the research questions by identifying statistically significant differences in grammatical accuracy and error patterns.

To determine which university had the most effective writing program, we performed a statistical analysis that measured the rate of grammatical errors in students' writing. Data were collected in the spring of 2015 at H University and in the fall of 2021 at K University, respectively. We asked a total of 65 participants (Korean $N = 31$ and Kazakhstani $N = 34$) enrolled in required English courses to write a short academic paper within 50 minutes. The participants took the test at the beginning and end of their courses. The written products from both tests were compared and contrasted, and the findings were used to evaluate the grammatical standards of each university's English writing program. Regarding the ethical approval, neither of the participating universities had a fully established official Institutional Review Board (IRB) process that met international standards at the time of data collection (2015 for Korea, 2021 for Kazakhstan). To ensure ethical considerations were addressed, at the outset of data collection, one of the researchers fully explained the purpose and procedures of the study to all student participants. We then obtained informed consent from all participants, who voluntarily agreed to allow the use of their writing samples for research purposes. This process aimed to uphold ethical principles of informed consent and participant autonomy.

We primarily used SPSS version 29.0 software to compare the data between the two universities. The Shapiro-Wilk normality test was first carried out to determine the distribu-

tion of the data. A non-parametric paired *t*-test was then used for the normally distributed data, and a Wilcoxon signed rank test was carried out for the non-normally distributed data.

Bowen (2009) defined document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents, including both printed and electronic (computer-based and internet-transmitted) material^[70]. Document analysis includes reviewing various forms of documentation, like reports, meeting minutes, official publications, brochures, academic catalogues, and so on. It involves examining and interpreting data to gain understanding and develop insights. The goal of document analysis is to find useful information. This information can help support research results or give them context. Qualitative research often uses this method to corroborate evidence, track changes over time, or provide a comprehensive background for a topic. While the emphasis in this study is on quantitative methods, analysis of documents such as teaching materials, institutional documents, course syllabi, and academic catalogues offers contextual insights that help explain the numerical trends. For instance, understanding instructional approaches sheds light on why certain errors are more prevalent in one group. Such understanding prevents us from simply interpreting the numbers and makes the analysis more in-depth and useful in real life.

4. Findings

In this section, we will first describe the nature of EFL writing instruction at K and H universities based on document analysis. Next, we will present the statistical analysis of the data, which compares the writing performance of Korean and Kazakh university students.

4.1. Characteristics of EFL Academic Writing Instruction at the Two Universities

The information regarding the writing curriculum at K and H universities is derived from the standardized syllabi for English language courses, academic catalogs, and university curricula accessible through the universities' official websites. This ensures that the content is accurate and reflects the educational offerings and frameworks established by each institution.

Since its establishment in 1992, K University has pro-

vided students in the Republic of Kazakhstan with a Western-style education. English proficiency is not required for admission, even though it is the university's language of instruction. Instead, the university admits students based on their academic merit and assigns them the responsibility of achieving the necessary English proficiency for their studies. According to the course description in the university's course catalog, the Academic English courses are designed for students who have reached at least a B2 (CEFR) level^[71]. During the admission process, all students are required to provide an international certificate (IELTS, TOEFL, Duolingo, Cambridge exams) or take the university placement test (KEPT) to determine their English language proficiency level. Those who score less than 80% on the test or provide a certificate indicating less than a B2 (CEFR) level must enroll in one of the non-credit Foundation English courses (levels A, B, or C) according to their test results. Foundation courses aim to bridge the gap between school and university by focusing on developing all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking), as well as study skills and critical thinking. They also aim to help students expand their range of grammar and vocabulary essential for the academic context. Upon completing the Foundation program with a passing grade or submitting an international certificate with the required score, students proceed to complete four Academic English courses: Academic Listening and Note-Taking, Academic Reading and Writing 1, Academic Speaking, and Academic Reading and Writing 2. Each course is worth three credits and is mandatory for all undergraduate students, regardless of their major.

Based on the activities outlined in the university syllabi for courses titled Academic Reading and Writing 1 and Academic Reading and Writing 2, we can conclude that K University employs a combination of process and genre approaches to writing instruction, allowing students to submit multiple drafts while providing ongoing feedback, but also focusing on the features of the text genre. Both Academic Writing courses at K University seem to employ this combination in their final projects. For example, students are required to choose a topic according to the interests of their peers and to think about the social purpose of their writing. They are encouraged to take into account the characteristics of the specific genre of academic text, incorporating certain strategies and linguistic forms to make their writing coherent

and effective. In addition, before submitting the final version of their writing, students receive ongoing constructive feedback from their instructors and peers on both content and language^[72,73]. Instructors provide explicit instruction on specific features of a genre but let students choose their own topics and take responsibility for their writing. Students are provided with systematic guidance during the process of writing and are encouraged to write several drafts and edit their work regularly, both individually and in collaboration with peers.

Unlike K University, H University in South Korea does not offer a Western-style education. However, to meet the demands of internationalization, the university strongly recommends that students learn English. However, H University does not offer foundational English courses to new students. Instead, students are required to take three specialized English courses during their first two years of study: Creative Reading, English Communication 1, and English Communication 2. The organization of all three courses is based on the students' English language proficiency, which can be elementary, intermediate, or advanced^[74].

The Creative Reading course affords students the opportunity to improve their reading skills before undertaking their major classes. While the focus is primarily on reading, it provides a general baseline of English knowledge in listening, speaking, and writing (H University, 2013)^[74]. English Communication 1 focuses on speaking skills by engaging students with intriguing conversation topics. Lectures also provide grammar reviews, drills, writing practice, and in-

teractive exercises. English Communication 2 emphasizes higher-level communication and writing skills (H University, 2013)^[74]. Students are required to converse and write on a selection of different topics in accordance with the framework of these General English courses. The analysis of the syllabi of the English courses offered by H University reveals a major focus on reading and grammar, a lack of emphasis on writing skills, as well as the dominance of the product-based approach in writing instruction since students submit only one version of texts.

We can conclude that the two universities have different attitudes towards EFL writing instruction. While K University offers two courses that focus primarily on academic writing and combine process and genre approaches, H University offers only one course that helps students develop their academic English writing through a product-based approach.

4.2. Effects of EFL Academic Writing Instruction in Korean and Kazakhstani Universities: Comparative Data

In order to determine whether there is a statistically significant difference between Korean and Kazakhstani university students' writing performance in terms of the percentage of errors, the total number of the six most frequent types of errors, and the total number of words were comparatively analyzed. Cha (1990), Polio (1997), and Han (2014) identified the most common grammatical errors, as indicated in **Table 1** below^[1-3].

Table 1. Common Grammatical Errors in EFL Writing.

Error Type	Explanation
A	Article
VF	Verb formation
P	Punctuation
SS	Sentence structure/lexical/phrase choice
WW	Wrong word/extraneous words
WF	Word form

4.2.1. Result of Normality Test

The results of the Shapiro-Wilk normality test are presented in **Table 2**. The frequencies and error ratios of all

types of variables were not normally distributed. Since the data were not normally distributed, the non-parametric *t*-test was the most appropriate analysis method.

Table 2. Shapiro-Wilk Normality Test.

Error Type	Frequency of Error			Number of Errors per Word		
	Statistic	Degree of Freedom	Significance*	Statistic	Degree of Freedom	Significance
A	0.892	65	0.000***	0.767	65	0.000***
VF	0.904	65	0.000***	0.794	65	0.000***
P	0.794	65	0.000***	0.701	65	0.000***
SS	0.878	65	0.000***	0.938	65	0.000***
WW	0.879	65	0.000***	0.855	65	0.000***
WF	0.799	65	0.000***	0.637	65	0.000***

* Note: Abbreviations are defined in **Table 2**. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

4.2.2. Comparison of the Number of Errors per Word (Error Ratio) between Korean and Kazakhstani Students

Table 3 shows that Korean students made significantly more Type A (article), VF (verb formation), P (punctuation), SS (Sentence structure/lexical/phrase choice), and WW (Wrong word/extraneous words) errors than Kazakhstani students. In particular, there were 2.41 article errors per essay compared to Kazakhstani students' 0.41 article errors (Wilcoxon $Z = -5.31$, $p < 0.001$). The Korean data also showed 1.43 verb formation errors, significantly more than

Kazakhstan's 0.24 (Wilcoxon $X = -4.68$, $p < 0.001$). The number of punctuation errors in the Korean data was 1.02, which was significantly more than the 0.40 in the data from Kazakhstan (Wilcoxon $Z = -2.16$, $p < 0.05$). The number of sentence structure error types in the Korean data was 1.27, but the Kazakhstani data had significantly less: 0.75 (Wilcoxon $Z = -2.97$, $p < 0.01$). In addition, the number of wrong word errors in the Korean data was 1.93, which was significantly more than Kazakhstan's 1.04 (Wilcoxon $Z = -3.01$, $p < 0.01$). However, the wrong word form type was 0.55 in Korean data, which was significantly less than 0.9 in Kazakhstan's (Wilcoxon $Z = -2.13$, $p < 0.05$).

Table 3. Non-Parametric Paired t -test Results.

Error Type	Korean(N = 31)		Kazakhstan(N = 34)		$t(p)$	Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Significance*
	Average	SD	Average	SD		
A	2.41	1.87	0.41	0.38	5.86 (0.000)	-5.31 (0.000)***
VF	1.43	1.07	0.24	0.21	6.11 (0.000)	-4.68 (0.000)***
P	1.02	1.17	0.40	0.33	2.85 (0.004)	-2.16 (0.030)*
SS	1.27	0.74	0.75	0.45	3.37 (0.001)	-2.97 (0.003)**
WW	1.93	1.35	1.04	0.69	3.31 (0.002)	-3.01 (0.003)**
WF	0.55	0.69	0.09	0.11	3.63 (0.001)	-2.13 (0.033)*

* Note: Abbreviations are defined in **Table 3**. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

5. Discussion

The primary goal of this study was to investigate how instructional methodologies in college English courses influence grammatical accuracy in the academic writing of EFL students from Kazakhstan and Korea. This was achieved by comparing private universities in each country, examining curricular similarities and differences, and analyzing recurrent error patterns in student writing. Ultimately, the study aims to inform recommendations for enhancing student performance in both contexts.

Most of all, the study sought to determine what approaches to writing instruction each university implemented. Analysis of the data revealed contrasting curricular ap-

proaches. K University in Kazakhstan utilized a systematic, genre- and process-based approach within dedicated Academic Reading and Writing courses. Conversely, H University in South Korea integrated writing instruction into general English communication courses, emphasizing a product-based approach. These findings address the first research question, highlighting fundamentally different frameworks for writing instruction at each institution.

Next, the study examined whether there were statistically significant differences in the frequency and types of grammatical errors made by Korean and Kazakhstani university students in their academic writing. The error analysis revealed that students at K University made significantly fewer errors in article usage, verb formation, punctuation,

sentence structure, and word choice compared to those at H University. This could be affected by the differences in EAP programs and instructional methodology in the two universities, which were presented earlier.

Finally, the study aimed to determine which types of grammatical errors are most prevalent in the academic writing of Korean and Kazakhstani university students. The error analysis revealed that students in both contexts exhibited all six types of common errors. Among Kazakhstani students, the most frequent errors involved incorrect word choice, whereas Korean students most commonly struggled with article usage. This could have been affected by the differences in students' educational backgrounds and first language systems.

The findings align with those commonly found in other studies, which integrate the theoretical perspectives from Error Analysis (EA) research by analyzing specific grammatical error types. First, the number of verb-related errors in this study aligns with Alawi's (2014)^[58] findings on the challenges posed by verb usage in EFL writing. Second, problems with subject-verb agreement and verb tenses confirm what Amoakohene (2017) and Giri (2010) noted about the ongoing struggles learners have with these grammar rules^[59,60]. However, the current study presents valuable insights about the types of errors produced by students in Kazakhstan and Korea.

These results offer clues about the effectiveness of varying pedagogical approaches to writing instruction. The success of K University, which uses a genre- and process-based approach, backs up earlier studies that highlight the advantages of giving feedback and allowing students to revise their work^[30,31]. On the other hand, the problems seen at H University, which focuses on getting a perfect final product, match research showing that focusing too much on writing without mistakes can slow down student progress^[28,62].

The findings support that independent writing courses foster improved grammatical accuracy, echoing earlier work emphasizing the importance of explicit writing instruction^[64]. Furthermore, Hu (2003) notes that the influence of cultural and instructional factors in East Asian contexts provides a lens to understand the differences in error patterns between Korean and Kazakhstani students^[41].

To enhance academic writing proficiency in EFL programs, universities should consider adopting a process-based

approach with explicit grammatical instruction and contextualized corrective feedback provided at different stages of writing. By emphasizing writing as a developmental process, educators can create a supportive environment that fosters both grammatical accuracy and higher-order writing skills.

6. Implications

To improve the quality of writing instruction at both universities, we recommend implementing or fostering the process approach with ongoing corrective feedback in the academic English writing courses. Writing instruction should be collaborative and attentive to students' individual needs. Teachers are recommended to provide interactive feedback over authoritative teacher-led assessments. As grammatical errors are the most pronounced problem for new language learners, EFL teachers should compensate for such errors by providing corrective feedback integrated with the process approach^[34]. The process approach is often criticized for focusing primarily on the writer, so it is suggested to combine it with the genre approach that contextualizes writing for various audiences and purposes, takes into account language forms of the genre, and fosters language accuracy^[28].

To balance the process- and genre-based approaches to writing instruction, there has been discussion of establishing a systematic English writing course in the curricular and extracurricular General Education program at H University. We propose a road map for writing instruction by taking the following courses in order: curricular-compulsory course, curricular-elective course, and extra-curricular writing program. In addition, instructors should encourage students' autonomous writing and provide corrective feedback.

We recommend that the University create English for Academic Purposes (EAP) Writing courses that cater to students' English proficiency and majors. EAP writing touches upon essential planning, writing, and editing skills with a customized textbook. The course also needs to include the following academic writing topics: sentence structure and types, punctuation, brainstorming, paragraph structure and types, descriptive, explanatory, process, narrative, opinion, argumentative, business, letters of application, classroom writing (exam and presentation), paraphrasing, summarizing, synthesizing, and citation styles.

After EAP Writing, an elective advanced course may

solidify writing skills, giving more importance to advanced descriptive, comparison, and cause-and-effect essays via task-based activities using various expressions and accurate sentence structure. This elective course should be offered each semester for advanced learners who complete the compulsory course and should include five or more sections to accommodate the number of students and keep the instructors' workload manageable.

While or after taking these curricular writing courses, H University students can be led to participate in various online and offline semester-long extracurricular programs run by the Writing Center that will help them with their writing by providing interactive feedback. Specifically, the English Clinic could provide students with the opportunity to have native English speakers revise their writing and presentation slides. The English Online Writing Lab (E-OWL) can be another beneficial option for students because it gives constructive feedback on various writing types, such as homework assignments, essays, presentation scripts, resumes, cover letters, statements of purpose, and abstracts. Furthermore, online or offline special lectures can also guide practical and academic writing.

Even though the methodology in the writing courses at K University proved to be quite effective, there are several practices that can be implemented to strengthen the effectiveness of instruction throughout the program. In particular, we recommend implementing teacher training activities such as workshops, peer observations, and regular team meetings to ensure that all writing instructors are trained in effective instruction practices. These workshops should focus explicitly on implementing process- and genre-based approaches to writing, promoting learner autonomy, and providing constructive feedback to language students.

7. Limitations

The study acknowledges a time gap between data collection periods (spring 2015 for Korea and fall 2021 for Kazakhstan), which necessitates careful consideration of potential impacts on the findings. Despite this gap, several factors support the study's validity. First, the core structure and instructional methodologies of the writing program at H University remained largely consistent, as confirmed by one of the authors who continues to work there. This min-

imizes the likelihood of significant programmatic changes influencing the comparability of results. Second, the longer time frame helped us adjust to the needs of the institution, making it easier to deal with practical issues like finding participants and getting support from the institution, which ensured strong data collection in both situations.

However, the potential implications of this time gap must be considered. Although the core programs stayed consistent, the two countries' broader educational contexts evolved differently, potentially influencing comparability. Additionally, Kazakhstani students post-COVID-19 may have had greater exposure to digital writing tools such as grammar checkers, potentially affecting grammatical accuracy and writing styles compared to the pre-COVID-19 Korean cohort. Generational differences in learning habits present a potential source of variability, as post-pandemic students rely more on internet-based resources. Lastly, it is crucial to recognize that other parallel EFL courses may have influenced the grammatical accuracy of K University students.

Another limitation of the study is that it focuses mainly on analyzing students' grammatical accuracy, which represents only one aspect of writing assessment and does not fully capture students' overall writing proficiency.

Acknowledging these limitations, the study also emphasizes the opportunity to consider how external forces, such as the global pandemic, can shape writing pedagogy and learner outcomes. Talking about these different contexts helps to understand the results as a mix of both the lasting and changing features of English writing teaching in various schools.

8. Conclusions

This study has evaluated the impact of instructional methodologies at two universities on students' grammatical accuracy in EFL writing. Building on prior research, it underscores the effectiveness of teaching methods such as process approach, explicit grammar instruction, contextualized feedback, and diversified writing practice. The findings suggest the adoption of balanced pedagogical approaches that address both linguistic accuracy and higher-order writing skills to improve student writing outcomes.

While error analysis alone cannot fully capture the com-

prehensive effectiveness of writing courses, it remains a critical component of students' overall communicative competence. Grammatical accuracy significantly contributes to students' ability to convey ideas accurately and effectively, thus enhancing their potential for success in academic and professional settings.

To broaden the scope of future investigations, we recommend expanding the analysis to encompass other key aspects of writing, such as lexical resources, coherence and cohesion, and the influence of sociocultural factors on writing conventions. A discourse-level analysis extending beyond grammatical errors could also reveal nuanced patterns in students' writing and offer more targeted recommendations for improvement. Furthermore, incorporating qualitative insights through methods like teacher and student interviews would provide a richer understanding of the pedagogical practices and student experiences. By incorporating these suggestions, future research can build upon the present findings to offer a more holistic and insightful perspective on EFL writing instruction and assessment.

Author Contributions

S.J.L.: conceptualization, methodology, validation, investigation, supervision, project administration, writing—original draft, and writing—review and editing; S.H.K.: software, formal analysis, data curation, validation, visualization, and writing—review and editing; Y.R.: conceptualization, resources, validation, and writing—review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding

This work received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement

At the time of data collection (Korea, 2015; Kazakhstan, 2021), the authors' institutions did not have institutional review boards and formal ethical approval therefore was not available. All procedures were conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and applicable local regulations.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The individual-level data that support the findings of this study are not publicly available and will not be shared due to privacy and ethical restrictions. Participants did not consent to public data sharing and the authors committed to preserve participant confidentiality; therefore, the dataset cannot be made available to third parties.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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