



## Research Article

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Received: 8 September 2023 / Accepted: 24 December 2023 / Published: 5 January 2024

# Some Language Problems in the Spelling of Primary School Students

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/jesr-2024-0016>

## Abstract

*This paper addresses language problems among primary school students, particularly focusing on spelling. The research encompasses a broad spectrum of linguistic aspects, including the pronunciation of phonemes and morphemes, the utilization of grammatical forms, as well as spelling and language use. A thorough study was conducted in two primary schools involving fourth and fifth-grade students, to identify language delays, particularly in spelling and pronunciation. The comparison between these schools indicates more frequent delays in the linguistic skills of students at this age. The rules governing spelling and pronunciation play a crucial role in enhancing the linguistic culture of students. Nevertheless, the primary influence on a student's language originates from their family and cultural background, expanding and evolving further through social interactions and the educational process. The paper conducts a comprehensive analysis of students' language, encompassing oral expression, various tasks, literary works, phonetics, and grammar. It emphasizes that linguistic mistakes made by students in their family environment can persist and impact their primary education. The discussion also delves into possibilities for avoiding these language mistakes.*

**Keywords:** spelling, phonetics, grammar, students, school

## 1. Introduction

The standard language represents the pinnacle of a nation's linguistic culture, characterized by linguistic, grammatical, lexical, and word-forming norms. It holds a pivotal role in the education system, directly influencing the entire learning process and serving as a communication tool across practical, social, economic, and cultural domains. Organized influences on language culture, particularly in language learning, commence early in life within the family and school environments. The family idiom, forming the foundation during the lower elementary cycle, marks the child's initiation into communication through the first words. This linguistic progression continues in preschool and kindergarten, where the initial encounters with spelling take place. The standard language is the most refined manifestation of a nation's linguistic culture. Its defining features

include linguistic, grammatical, lexical, and word-forming norms. Positioned prominently in the learning and education system, it plays a vital role in the entire educational process. As a communication medium, it finds applications across practical, social, economic, and cultural spheres. Certainly, language acquisition and development are influenced by various factors, starting with the family environment where a child learns the basics, and extending to formal education at school. The family idiom lays the foundation, while preschool and kindergarten introduce spelling and further linguistic skills. The educational system reinforces language learning, emphasizing spelling from the age of six throughout the lower and upper school cycles. From all that was said above, teaching plays a key role as one of the central components in the learning process. Therefore, teachers must exert a significant influence on beginner students in terms of reading and writing. This influence should be researched, understood, and taken into consideration when planning and organizing the instruction of letters, reading, and initial writing. This requires the didactic-methodical and other professional readiness of the teacher for the diverse nature of learning letters, reading, and writing. In line with this, it is evident that more effort is needed in the basic education of students since many face language problems, struggle to read and write correctly, and make numerous mistakes in writing. Additionally, there are variations in the intellectual and socio-emotional maturity of beginner elementary school students regarding their preparedness and prior knowledge for learning letters, reading, and initial writing. The question arises: what will happen to these students? Can these difficulties be improved? Should we persist with the same method, or should we alter the approach with these students? Various reasons contribute to the challenges some primary school students encounter in writing and reading. Despite their attempts to read, some students experience minimal progress or none at all. Frequently, these students feel anxious before reading, and, fearing mistakes and potential ridicule, they avoid reading aloud. Addressing these challenges involves conducting a diagnostic test to identify the specific problems and difficulties of the student or students. Subsequently, a comprehensive work plan is developed, requiring collaboration with the family to maximize the student's motivation and achieve positive results. The focus includes: Enhancing reading skills; Improving comprehension; Boosting the student's confidence; Cultivating motivation for reading; The intervention with these students progresses through multiple stages. In the initial phases, establishing a positive emotional atmosphere is crucial to spark interest in books and, specifically, reading. Motivation, in the form of non-material gifts, can serve as an incentive. The primary objective during this stage is to enhance reading accuracy. To achieve this, the student is encouraged to read aloud a segment of up to 10 lines repeatedly until they can do so without errors (Krasniqi, 2002: 34).

It is important to provide texts with larger-than-average letters. Guidance should emphasize reading slowly, unhurriedly, and accurately. The student is assigned the task of immediately correcting any incorrectly read words. While the student reads, the teacher (or parent) closely monitors and notes mistakes. Post-reading, the student revisits and re-reads the challenging words accurately. Positive reinforcement and encouragement are essential for every effort. The emphasis then turns to improving reading speed. The student reads a 10-line segment twice, with reading time measured. The goal is for the second reading to be faster, and this achievement is acknowledged. This process contributes to heightened self-confidence. In this phase, collaborative work with pairs of students is introduced. Students with similar reading levels are typically grouped together. Students read and correct each other. Students should be attentive to catch other's mistakes. In these stages, readings are done in groups while developing games (Kolndreu, 2017).

They engage in joint reading and correction, with a focus on being attentive to catch each other's mistakes. In these stages, readings are done in groups while developing games. For example: read only the words that contain the letter A, read the words that show things, find a word and say the word with the opposite or similar meaning, etc. At this stage, students should answer questions about the content or the characters. This deepens the understanding of the piece. At these stages, the learner can record himself reading a passage several times to improve his reading after listening to himself. During all phases, the teacher should keep in touch with the parents, report the progress, or

cooperate with the tasks and goals of each one. During the last phase, the student is allowed to choose a book outside the class and read it to show the class some of its content. One of the most important benefits of the child in childhood is the mastery of spelling and spelling words in the correct form. Complete mastery of spelling in early childhood is much easier so that students do not have such language problems at school. Indeed, initiating the learning of spelling at an early age facilitates its fluid integration into a student's future language use. The development of literate speech in children holds significance for several reasons. Competent speech mastery and the ability to articulate thoughts are essential skills for successful learning, forming the foundation for their academic journey. Understanding the general patterns of language development is crucial for correcting speech deficiencies and early detection of developmental issues in children. The preschool age is particularly important in this context, as it marks the acquisition of the grammatical structure of the mother tongue, encompassing morphology, word formation, and syntax (Ushakova, 2004: 57). And, according to Chukovsky notes that young children are "excellent linguists." They attentively observe adult speech, extracting information about the structure of the language mechanism and learning to form and use words. In the process of language acquisition, children also grasp the rules governing the construction of language units, namely grammar. However, the language children learn from the speech of adults around them often differs significantly from the normative language of adults. The creation of new words is a developmental stage that every child undergoes in acquiring their mother tongue. This reflects the child's effort to grasp principles of word formation and forms that are not yet known. Children's "new" words are not entirely original; they are constructed based on models existing in the child's vocabulary. There is a significant concern that these children struggle to learn the language correctly at a young age, leading to potential language mistakes even in primary school. Numerous observations and remarks can be submitted and published, providing an opportunity to enhance speaking and writing according to grammatical rules. By dedicating considerable effort to reading in various ways, we can not only acquire language more effectively but also enrich it with natural words. In today's context, written discourse has become essential for everyone. Students regularly complete daily and weekly written assignments. While verbalizing thoughts is generally easy, expressing these ideas in writing poses several difficulties. Questions arise about how to write difficult spelling words and how to punctuate the text. Many studies have pointed out the shortcomings of adhering to orthographic norms in both spoken and written language. This reworked and expanded definition of active learning is adopted in the present study and is intended to provide a cogent and comprehensive description of the term, consistent with the definitions of active learning in various fields and based on a systematic literature review of the relevant empirical studies and bodies of work of existing conceptual foundations and research (Shroff et al., 2021).

Teaching quality is regarded a co-constructive and context-specific process, which is influenced by the interactions of teachers, their students, and the learning content. In German-speaking countries a well-established and frequently used model to conceptualize teaching quality is the Three Basic Dimensions (TBD) model which comprises the following dimensions (Stewart et al. 1988). Classroom management focuses on maximizing time on task by preventing and dealing effectively with disruptions and disciplinary conflicts during teaching. Cognitive activation aims to foster students' higher-order thinking by, for example, using complex problem-solving tasks. Student support aims to promote the quality of social interactions and to address students' basic needs and interests, by, for example, using constructive teacher feedback and a positive approach toward students' errors. Most studies on the three basic dimensions have used either observer or student ratings of teaching quality as teacher judgments are usually seen as less reliable (in terms of inter-rater reliability) and valid than observer or student judgments (Thommen et al., 2021).

Therefore, the research outlined in this chapter is centered on examining the implementation of the spelling norm in schools. Utilizing concrete tests, the study aims to assess the state of spelling norm execution in educational institutions, the inclusion of relevant topics in teaching programs, and the thematic treatment in contemporary texts. The goal is to identify problematic cases, analyze them, and address issues related to normative usage. The research also explores the situation

presented in the dictionary of the Albanian language and delves into controversial cases among linguists. The spelling tests were conducted based on written tasks from students, specifically focusing on fourth and fifth-grade students from “Faik Konica” School in Prishtina and “Rilindja” School in Dobroshec.

## 2. Literature Review

In the literature review, Kryeziu (2007: 100) challenges the notion that literary language learning begins solely in the first grade with reading and writing instruction. Instead, Kryeziu argues that organized influences on language culture start at an even earlier age, within the family or nursery environment. The author emphasizes the crucial role of language experts, psychologists, and pedagogues, not solely doctors as currently practiced in the country, in providing comprehensive care for children, particularly those in daycare. Kryeziu asserts that early childhood, especially during daycare, is a critical period for the cultivation of speech and various psychological aspects of children. Undoubtedly, the education of educators is seen as pivotal in supporting this form of early education. Kindergartens and preschool education, according to Kryeziu, play a fundamental role in creating the initial conditions for the proper development of speech and speech culture. This responsibility is then continued by primary schools, where the foundations for both spoken and written language are established.

The cultivation of language in primary school unfolds in two distinct periods, differing in both methodology and objectives. In grades I-V, students are guided by a single teacher who, following the curriculum, endeavors to teach reading and writing and instill basic knowledge of grammar and spelling. Transitioning to grades VI-IX marks a shift toward subject-specific learning. During this phase, the cultivation of the mother tongue is influenced by teachers and professors from other subjects, potentially introducing non-normative forms into speech. The language teacher often finds themselves isolated in ensuring the correct teaching of spoken and written language. In both the initial and later stages of the lower cycle, the primary figure responsible for cultivating precise, clear, and error-free language is the class teacher, specifically the mother tongue teacher. They must fulfill several conditions, including possessing solid general knowledge of linguistics, and a thorough understanding of standard Albanian language, its grammar, history, and current state. Additionally, having fair and informed perspectives on global affairs, social relations among diverse communities, and language issues is crucial. A broad linguistic culture, shaped by literature and general cultural sources, is also deemed essential. Islamaj (2007: 77) asserts that the language culture of teachers in both secondary and primary education in our schools is less than desirable, bordering on being bad, particularly concerning linguistic expression in the teaching process and public presentation within this intellectual layer. According to Munishi (2006: 116), language planning, viewed as a conscious effort by a social community to establish a standard language, commences with the standardization of spelling. Essentially, any standardization of a language typically starts by defining the orthographic norm. As highlighted by Memushaj (2011: 45), a key characteristic of the standard language is its normative nature. This implies that, among several words or forms of words with the same meaning, one is selected as the norm and becomes obligatory for use by all speakers.

According to Mhemeti (2014: 5), language and humanistic literature play a crucial role in the educational and aesthetic development of children in our schools. The role of language in school is dual. First, it is taught as a distinct subject, and second, it serves for the interpretation of other subjects by respective subject teachers. Therefore, it is imperative to understand, acquire, and master language within the broader educational framework. The school, with its formative objectives and the cultivation of various competencies, including language competence, should instill self-confidence. Simultaneously, it must establish effective means for the natural mastery of legitimate linguistic variations, addressing questions regarding the place and standard language within the school environment and its relationship with other language varieties/variants (Ismajli, 2005).

### 3. Methodology

In executing this paper and aiming to comprehensively handle and analyze the current issue of spelling among primary school students, several methods were employed. The statistical and comparative method facilitated the collection of factual data, their organization, and subsequent comparison to derive analyses, studies, and concrete conclusions. Literature collection and archiving supported various facts, data, and conclusions, providing a solid foundation for the paper. Each grammatical category issue or judgment is exemplified with examples drawn from practical tests. The analytical method, employed to present a detailed step-by-step analysis of phenomena related to the discussed issues, ensured a thorough examination. Behind every data or fact, there lies a complete and detailed analysis grounded in authentic linguistic studies. Surveys, specifically tests given to students and teachers, provided valuable information to address the study's issues. The combination of these methods, along with research in relevant literature, contributed to making the paper as comprehensive as possible. In this paper, a concise analysis of spelling problems among students has been conducted. To ensure a more precise outcome, a total of 100 students from "Faik Konica" Primary School in Pristina and 100 students from "Rilindja" Dritan School were included. Through tasks, tests, and presentations of students' work in reading and writing, language deviations were observed primarily in the areas of phonetics and morphology.

The research adopts a quantitative approach to address the prevalence of learning difficulties among primary school students. An analytical and comparative perspective was employed to explore the factors influencing students' reading and writing difficulties, utilizing questionnaires for data collection. The insights and opinions of teachers played a decisive role in the analysis and conclusions. This method was chosen for its suitability in providing a comprehensive view of both positive and negative aspects, offering opportunities for tangible results.

### 4. Some Mistakes in Pronunciation and Writing of Students in the Field of Phonetics

It should be kept in mind that most children need to reach the age of 6 to 8 years to be able to pronounce all the sounds correctly. Consonant sounds: l, r, j, s, and z, as well as compound consonants such as: sh, zh, th, dh are those that are mastered last. According to Musai (2003: 316), dialectal differences in pronunciation do not constitute problems of articulation. A child from the North of the country in the classroom may pronounce: qekiq for çekiç (hammer), but this does not cause speech impairment. In the spoken or written language, names such as kuvënd-assembly, vend-place, mendja-mind, and qenie-being, are often used we find them written or pronounced with ë: kuvënd-assembly, vënd-place, etc. These are dialect pronunciations in some southern parts of Albania, but instead, the literary language has accepted that those words are pronounced -ë and written with -e: e.g. assembly, place, mind, inside (Asllani, 1983).

In the realm of phonetics, whether in writing or reading, several common errors are often observed:

Failure to pronounce the unstressed -ë in various positions (apheresis, syncope, apocope). Incorrect emphasis and pronunciation of words, syllables, and long, medium, and short vowels, e.g., véri instead of verí (north); njéri instead of njerí (man); etc. Substituting the nasal -a for the accented -ë in different word positions, like nana instead of nëna (mother), baj instead of bëj (do), çashtje instead of çështje

(about), nxanës instead of nxënës (student), etc. Incorrect usage of vowels i, y, u, resulting in words like krymb instead of krimb (worm); hypi instead of hipi (ride); krypë instead of kripë (salt); byfe instead of bufe (cupbord); duqan instead of dyqan (shop); musafir instead of mysafir (guest); etc. Incorrect spelling of vowel groups like ua, ue, ye, je, ie, leading to words such as: duer instead of duar (hands); lexis instead of lexues (reader); msus instead of mësuës (teacher); dyr instead of dyer (doors); fyll instead of fyell (shank); etc. In some instances, the preservation of the group of synonyms between "n" and "nd" is not maintained, resulting in words like mramja for mbrëmja (evening);

marojn for mbarojnë (finish); nejtur for ndejtur (stayed), etc. Common mistakes in students' written expression involve the inappropriate use of palatals -q and -gj instead of affricates -ç and -xh, as seen in words like: qast for çast (instant); qerdhe for çerdhe (nest); vjeqare for vjeçare (years); siq for siç (as); and qelës for çelës (key). Conversely, affricate -ç is used instead of palatal -q in words like: façe (page); çen (dog); çep (onions). Additionally, consonant -gj is mistakenly used instead of -xh, for example, "gjam" for xham (glass); Negjat for Nexhat; ogjak for oxhak (fireplace). Issues arise in the pronunciation of palatals, such as: çesh for qesh (smile); çan for qan (cry); xhumë for gjumë (sleep); xhëra for gjëra (things); xhethe for gjethe (leaf). This phonetic variation is not exclusive to students but extends to teachers and intellectuals who may not consistently apply orthographic rules. Metathesis, the exchange of sounds, is present in words like këpurdhë for kërpudhë (mushroom); infrakt for infarkt; trubull for turbull (faintly), potentially due to learning errors in the lower school cycle. Some words are misspelled due to the omission of vowels, like: mirpo for mirëpo (however); komtare for kombëtare (national); buzqesh for buzëqesh (smile); pikllim for pikëllim (sorrow); and puntor for punëtor (worker). Furthermore, the consonant -f, is used instead of -h and -z, is confused with -s. For instance, *te ftoft* should be written with the pharyngeal -h as: ftohtë (cold); shëf should be shoh (see). Similarly, mëngjez and mezdite, should be written with -s, as: mëngjes (morning) and mesdite (noon). There's also confusion with -sh, marked as ni instead of ç-së, as in gjithshka for gjithçka (everything); shka for çka (what); and shliroj for çliroj (deliver), etc.

**Table 1.** The use of some words incorrectly by the students

Spelling norm	School "Faik Konica" KI- IV	School "Rilindja" KI-V	Incorrect use	School "Faik Konica" KI- IV	School "Rilindja" KI-V
verí (north)	43 %	41%	véri (north)	57 %	59 %
nxënës (student)	42 %	40 %	nxanës (student)	58 %	60 %
krimb (worm)	40 %	41 %	krymb (worm)	60%	59 %
kripë (salt)	44 %	42 %	krypë (salt)	56 %	58 %
bufe (cupbord)	43 %	43 %	byfe (cupboard)	57 %	57 %
dyqan (shop)	45 %	41 %	duqan (shop)	55 %	59 %
mysafir (guest)	43 %	42 %	musafir (guest)	57 %	58 %

## 5. Linguistic Avoidances of Students in the Field of Morphology

Large fluctuations and deviations are evident in the morphology field, highlighting significant linguistic avoidances among our students. We provide characteristic examples demonstrating spelling errors, such as "fush" instead of "fushë" (field) in their writings. According to Grammar (2002: 32), it emphasizes the expression of words in different grammatical forms during their use in a sentence.

In students' compositions, names like "dit" for "ditë" (day) lack the -ë suffix, forming a consistent pattern. Test results reveal that, while the plural form often adheres to the norm with the -ë suffix, there are numerous instances of transitions and inflections, especially with -a and -e suffixes. Linguistic developments introduce a complex situation, characterized by instances of unrest, avoidance, and deviation from general rules. Fidler (2010) metaphorically describes the formation of the Albanian plural as "a battlefield extremely complicated," where traditions, principles of semantics, the sound of the last syllable, and the unification of words with the same word-forming suffix are in contention. The observation reveals a distinction between non-spiritual and spiritual nouns in the formation of plurals. Non-spiritual nouns exhibit a tendency toward unification using the suffix -ë, seen in consistent cases like: piruna for pirunë (forks); dollape for dollapë (cupboards). Test results also indicate a preference for using -j instead of -nj in plural forms, as seen in examples like: florij for florinj (gold); kushëri for kushërinj (cousin). Several linguistic patterns are noted,



including the use of some nouns exclusively in the prominent form, such as: ni guri instead of një gur (a stone); nji kali instead of një kalë (a horse); respectively. Additionally, second-declension nouns ending in -k, -g, -h transform to -i when pronounced, as: miki for miku (friend); zogi for zogu (bird). Errors are identified in the prominent plural forms of certain masculine nouns, as seen in zogjët for zogjtë (birds) and barinjët for barinjtë (shepherds). Furthermore, there is incorrect usage of the prominent plural for feminine nouns in the nominative case, where an accented -i is mistakenly applied, as in shtëpijat for shtëpitë (houses) and qershijat for qershitë (cherries).

Several errors in verb usage have been identified:

- Incorrect use of relative forms for both singular forms, such as: të shkojsh for të shkosh (to go), and të shkon for të shkojë (to go).
- In the present tense of the indicative mood in the second and third person singular, there is the use of the final -ë, as: shkonë for shkon (they go); mbaronë for mbaron (finish); fillonë for fillon (start); lironë for liron (release); kërkonë for kërkon (search), etc.
- Wrong use of the verb in the third person in the simple perfect tense instead of the present indicative in the first person singular, like: këndoj for këndoi (sang); zbukuroj for zbukuroi (looked); lavdoj for lavdoi (praised); shkoj for shkoi (went); etc.
- Mistakes in selecting verbs in the first person plural of the present tense of the demonstrative mood, for instance; shomi instead of shohim (see); marrmi instead of marrim (take); dalmi instead of dalim (out); etc.
- The omission of the -e sound in the body of some verbs in the first person plural, like lami for lahem (washed); knaqmi for kënaqemi (enjoy); qeshmi for qeshemi (laugh), etc.
- Mistaken use of imperfect forms of the present tense in the subject, such as: shkojke for shkonte (went); punojke for punonte (worked); msojke for mësonte (learned); shkrujke for shkruante (wrote); etc.
- Incorrect use of the present subjunctive of the first person singular instead of the third person, like: të bëj for të bëjë (to do); të lejoj for të lejojë (to allow); të shikoj for të shikojë (to watch); të bashkoj for të bashkojë (to join); të punoj for të punojë (to work); etc.

**Table 2.** The use of words errors in the field of morphology

Spelling norm	School "Faik Konica" School KI- IV	School "Rilindja" KI-V	Incorrect use	School "Faik Konica" KI-IV	School "Rilindja" KI-V
Pirunë (forks)	46 %	42%	piruna (forks)	57 %	58 %
vëllanë (brother)	42 %	40 %	vëllain (brother)	58 %	60%
miku (friend)	43 %	43 %	miki (friend)	57%	58 %
zogjtë (birds)	44 %	42 %	zogjët (birds)	56 %	58 %
shtëpitë (houses)	46 %	40 %	shtëpijat (cupboard)	54%	60 %
qershitë (cherries)	45 %	41 %	qershijat (cherries)	55 %	59 %
drunjtë (trees)	53 %	42 %	drunjët (trees)	47 %	58 %

## 6. Discussion

The use of spoken and written literary language is now a cultural hallmark. Schools, with formative goals and the development of various competencies, including linguistic competence, must instill self-confidence and provide effective tools for mastering legitimate language varieties. This addresses challenges regarding the standard language's role in schools and its relationship with other linguistic variants. Today's students, dynamic actors in modern life, seek practical solutions amid numerous global contacts and diverse communication methods. Despite achievements in recognizing the standard Albanian norm, challenges persist in both spoken and written language for students (Morina, 2021). This study, conducted in both a capital city and a village school, aims to highlight

issues surrounding the morphological norm's use and implementation, contributing to the broad standardization of Albanian. The capital's teachers, well-prepared for known circumstances, face different realities than their rural counterparts, who contend with a lack of basic components for successful implementation. The students' relatively average level, representing a diverse community with unique characteristics, justifies the study's requirements and reflects the achievements of this ongoing process. The mind harbors rich capabilities, but specific stimulating environments are crucial for these abilities to flourish. Questions arise about the stimulating environments provided by our school. Current teaching methods, curricula, qualification of native language teachers, and language policies leave much to be desired (Gillian et al., 1983).

According to Pema (2020: 87), the acquisition of grammatical knowledge, particularly in morphology, holds significant importance and is a crucial aspect of linguistic competence that begins in basic education. This educational process aims to equip students with the necessary knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes for effective communication and life. Common morphological and spelling errors, as identified by Pema, are predominantly found in the usage of verbs in the present tense, the imperfect, and the past simple tense of the demonstrative mood. Additionally, errors occur in the spelling of names. Notably, spoken and written language both exhibit mistakes in the spelling of certain geographical names of foreign origin and the country. These names may not be documented in our language dictionaries, leading to ambiguity and the emergence of incorrect linguistic forms in contemporary literary Albanian.

## 7. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident that there are significant deviations in the correct pronunciation and spelling of students in the mentioned primary schools. These linguistic challenges arise from the diverse dialectal variants that students bring into their new educational environment. Linguistic mistakes made by primary school students often stem from incorrectly formed word patterns in their upbringing environment, perpetuating these errors into their education. The research conducted in the two lower-cycle schools highlights a notable deficiency in correct sound pronunciation and frequent spelling errors among students. The inadequate language mastery and general language culture of students are exacerbated by the insufficient professional preparation of lower cycle teachers and the lack of active student participation in lessons. To address and overcome this challenging situation and to enhance language proficiency and linguistic culture, it is crucial to consider various informational resources. These include radio, television (particularly school broadcasts related to the mother tongue), the Internet, newspapers, magazines focusing on language issues, and pedagogical magazines. These resources play a vital role in improving language education and fostering a better linguistic environment for students.

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