



Translanguaging in Uzbekistan's Higher Education: Practical Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing

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Abstract

As Uzbekistan's higher education system becomes increasingly integrated into the international academic community, the importance of English-medium instruction and academic writing skills continues to grow in universities. At the same time, many students in Uzbekistan use multiple languages—particularly Uzbek, Russian, and English—throughout their educational experiences. This situation creates certain tensions between English-based institutional requirements and students' natural multilingual practices (Curry & Lillis, 2024; Rahman & Hu, 2025). This article reviews recent research on translanguaging in academic writing and proposes practical recommendations for implementing translanguaging pedagogy in higher education in Uzbekistan. Based on studies published between 2011 and 2025, pedagogical approaches that support multilingual students while maintaining the quality of English academic writing are identified (Tang et al., 2024; Sun, 2023). Recommended strategies include multilingual brainstorming, flexible drafting, peer feedback in a shared language, cross-linguistic genre comparison, adaptation of assessment practices, and responsible use of artificial intelligence (Yang & Lin, 2025; Almashour et al., 2025).

Key words: translanguaging, academic writing, multilingualism, higher education, Uzbekistan, artificial intelligence.

Introduction

In recent years, Uzbekistan's higher education system has undergone significant reforms aimed at international integration, academic mobility, and English-medium instruction. Universities increasingly encourage students to develop English proficiency, publish in international academic journals, and participate actively in global scholarly communities. Consequently, academic writing in English has become an essential skill for university students (Li, 2024; Curry & Lillis, 2024).

However, students in Uzbekistan are inherently multilingual and regularly use multiple languages in both academic and everyday contexts. Uzbek remains the primary language of communication and instruction, while Russian continues to play an important role in many academic and professional domains. This linguistic reality presents a pedagogical challenge. Students are often expected to think, plan, and write exclusively in English, even though their conceptual understanding is frequently developed through multiple languages (Velasco & García, 2014; Zheng

& Drybrough, 2023). English-only approaches may prevent learners from fully utilizing their existing linguistic and cognitive resources (Canagarajah, 2011; Kaufhold, 2018).

Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Approach

Translanguaging is not a rigid method with predetermined rules or procedures. Rather, it is a pedagogical approach that allows multilingual learners to draw upon all of their linguistic resources when constructing knowledge, understanding concepts, and communicating ideas (Canagarajah, 2011; Velasco & García, 2014).

In academic writing, translanguaging may involve: a) generating ideas in one language and writing in another; b) discussing complex concepts in a shared language; c) comparing textual structures across different languages (Turnbull, 2019; Tastanbek, 2024).

Importantly, translanguaging does not imply abandoning English academic standards. Final written products can still be produced in English and evaluated according to academic criteria (Ngcobo et al., 2021; Zhang & Hadjioannou, 2022). Research suggests that translanguaging can reduce writing anxiety, improve idea development, and enhance students' confidence as writers (Sun, 2023; Retnowaty, 2025).

Practical Strategies for Teaching Academic Writing

Multilingual Brainstorming and Planning Students should be allowed to use Uzbek, Russian, or other familiar languages when brainstorming, planning, and annotating texts. The pre-writing stage requires higher-order thinking skills. If learners are forced to use only English at this stage, the complexity of their ideas may be reduced (Velasco & García, 2014; Retnowaty, 2025). Multilingual brainstorming promotes conceptual clarity and supports richer idea generation (Turnbull, 2019; Tastanbek, 2024).

Flexibility During Drafting Students may also use multiple languages during the drafting process by: a) writing initial notes in another language; b) translating key terminology; c) clarifying ideas before expressing them in English. Writing is often a recursive rather than linear process. Students naturally move between languages while composing texts (Zheng & Drybrough, 2023; Xie & Sun, 2024). Such flexibility can reduce cognitive load and improve writing fluency (Baty, 2022).

Peer Feedback in a Shared Language Translanguaging can also be beneficial during peer review and feedback activities. Students may struggle to discuss issues such as text coherence, argument strength, or source integration exclusively in English (Kim & Chang, 2022). Discussing texts orally in a shared language: a) reduces anxiety; b) improves comprehension; c) promotes deeper engagement with the text (Motlhaka & Makalela, 2016; Sun et al., 2023).

Cross-Linguistic Genre Comparison Academic writing instruction should go beyond grammar teaching. Students need to understand thesis development, paragraph structure, citation practices, and textual cohesion (Hiller, 2021; Zhu & Li, 2025). Comparing academic texts across different languages fosters critical language awareness and deeper understanding of academic discourse conventions (Sun, 2023; Xie & Sun, 2024).

Adapting Assessment Practices Assessment procedures should align with translanguaging pedagogy. During the drafting stage, greater emphasis should be placed on: a) quality of argumentation; b) logical organization; c) critical thinking; d) disciplinary understanding (Karabulut & Kesli Dollar, 2022; Tang et al., 2024). e) Students should not be penalized for using other languages during the writing process.

Responsible Use of Artificial Intelligence Artificial intelligence can serve as a valuable tool for supporting translanguaging practices. Students may use AI to compare concepts across languages, understand terminology, generate summaries, and improve text organization (Yang & Lin, 2025). AI-assisted translanguaging practices may enhance metalinguistic awareness (Almashour et al., 2025). For example, a student may first develop an understanding of a complex topic in Uzbek and then produce an academic explanation in English.

Challenges in Uzbekistan's Higher Education Context

Despite its advantages, implementing translanguaging presents several challenges. English-only ideologies continue to dominate many academic environments (Rahman & Hu, 2025). Assessment systems often prioritize monolingual outcomes, while many instructors lack training in multilingual pedagogical approaches (Kaufhold, 2018; Curry & Lillis, 2024). Furthermore, if poorly managed, students may become overly dependent on their first language (Kafle, 2020).

Conclusion

In multilingual educational contexts such as Uzbekistan, translanguaging offers a practical and context-sensitive approach to teaching academic writing. Rather than requiring students to abandon their existing linguistic resources, educators can strategically incorporate multilingual practices throughout different stages of the writing process (Ngcobo et al., 2021; Tastanbek, 2024). When implemented appropriately, translanguaging does not diminish academic quality. On the contrary, it can enhance comprehension, reduce writing-related anxiety, and improve the

overall quality of written texts (Sun, 2023; Zhu & Li, 2025). As English-medium education continues to expand in Uzbekistan, translanguaging can serve as an effective bridge between multilingual realities and international academic expectations.

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