



WORK IN PROGRESS

Working with Translanguaging and Transknowledging in EAP Academic Writing: A Work-in-Progress Report from an MA Education Module

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ABSTRACT

This Work-in-Progress paper reports on the early stages of a systematic practitioner inquiry investigating translanguaging and transknowledging within English for Academic Purposes (EAP) academic writing. Despite growing recognition of multilingual and epistemically diverse student cohorts in higher education, EAP writing pedagogy often continues to assume English-only processing and narrowly defined academic ways of knowing, limiting opportunities for both multilingual and English-dominant students to draw on their full resources during learning.

The project is being implemented across two semesters within a standalone, in-session MA Education academic writing module at the University of Reading and introduces a preliminary conceptual framework, the Multilingual Pedagogy for Academic Literacies Framework (MPALF). The project explores how the integration of a range of pedagogical activities in the classroom can mobilise students' linguistic and epistemic repertoires while maintaining English-medium output expectations. A student-partnership model supports the adaptation of pedagogical activities initially trialed in Semester 1 for delivery in Semester 2.

This paper presents descriptive baseline findings from an end-of-Semester 1 questionnaire, indicating multiple forms of engagement with translanguaging and transknowledging among both multilingual and English-dominant students. These findings point to the importance of clearly articulating process–product boundaries in assessment-adjacent EAP contexts. They establish students' starting points and inform subsequent pedagogical development, with cautious within-cohort comparison planned over time. The paper positions this contribution as a developmental step towards a fuller research article in 2026.



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KEYWORDS:

English for Academic Purposes, Translanguaging, Transknowledging, Academic Literacies, Academic writing pedagogy, In-sessional EAP

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1. Introduction

Despite sustained critique of monolingual assumptions in higher education, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) teaching and assessment often continue to operate within an implicit expectation that academic knowledge is best processed, developed, and demonstrated through English alone (Lea & Street, 1998; Wingate, 2018). This position sits uneasily alongside the linguistic and epistemic realities of contemporary university classrooms, particularly within postgraduate programmes enrolling diverse cohorts of international and home students. While translanguaging is increasingly visible within EAP research and professional discourse, its pedagogical uptake within academic writing preparation for discipline-based assessment remains cautious and uneven (Wingate, 2018). Such practices tend to be confined to preparatory or informal learning spaces rather than integrated into core academic writing instruction (Lea & Street, 1998).

While translanguaging research in higher education and EAP has expanded in recent years, much of this work has focused on interaction, reading, identity, or informal learning spaces, with comparatively less attention paid to how translanguaging and transknowledging can be systematically integrated within academic writing pedagogy linked to summative assessment contexts (e.g. García & Wei, 2014; Wingate, 2018; Palfreyman & van der Walt, 2017). In contrast, the present project seeks to make such preparatory practices explicit and pedagogically meaningful by linking them directly to genre-based academic writing processes, while maintaining clear assessment boundaries. In this paper, *writing-for-assessment* refers to discipline-based academic writing developed within the EAP classroom and submitted for summative assessment in disciplinary modules, rather than assessed within the EAP module itself (Hyland, 2004).

This work reports on the early developmental phase of a classroom-based pedagogic project exploring translanguaging and transknowledging practices within an MA Education academic writing module. Funded through a student-partnership initiative, the project examines how students can be supported to draw on their full linguistic and epistemic repertoires during the learning process while continuing to meet English-medium assessment requirements. Central to this work is the development of the Multilingual Pedagogy for Academic Literacies Framework (MPALF), a preliminary practitioner-developed framework proposed in this paper and currently being refined through classroom practice and reflection. Its conceptual foundations are outlined in Section 2, with a fuller pedagogical explanation provided in Section 4.1 (see also Figure 1).

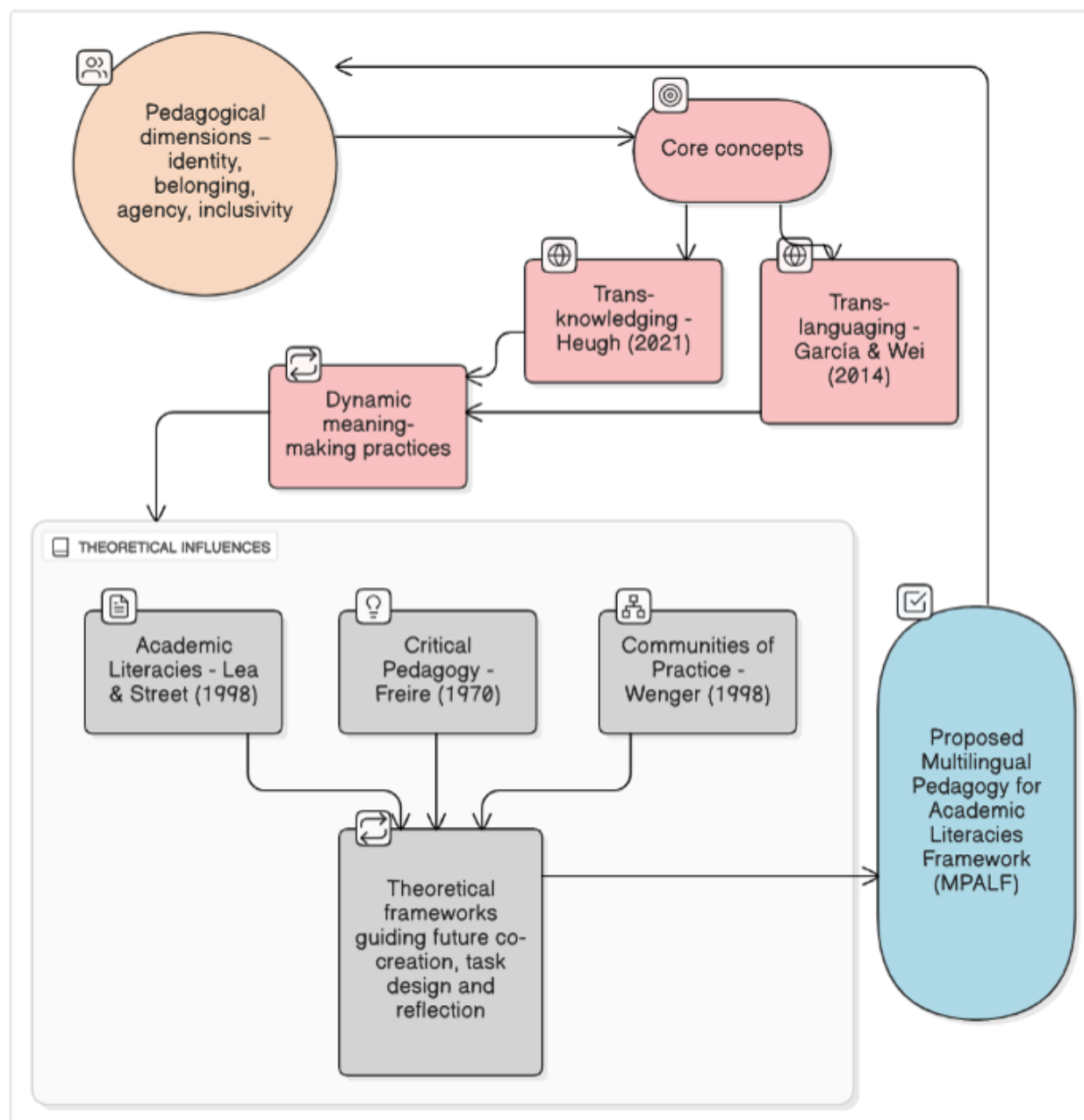


Figure 1. A provisional representation of the Multilingual Pedagogy for Academic Literacies Framework (MPALF), developed by the author and intended as a heuristic to support pedagogical reflection rather than as a tested or validated model. It is not a fixed sequence of pedagogical steps or a transferable model of practice.

As a Work-in-Progress contribution, this paper does not present completed analysis or evaluative claims. Instead, it articulates the conceptual grounding, pedagogical design, and emerging questions arising from the project's initial implementation. It offers practice-

based insight into how translanguaging and transknowledging (established but not theoretically novel concepts within the literature) are framed, negotiated, and refined within an assessment-adjacent EAP academic writing context involving both multilingual and English-dominant students. In doing so, it seeks to open a space for dialogue within the EAP community about the conditions under which such pedagogies might eventually be operationalised in genre-based academic writing instruction, without undermining institutional assessment boundaries.

At this early stage, the project is guided by the following exploratory aims:

- I. to examine students' perceptions of the usefulness of translanguaging- and transknowledging-informed activities for reading-into-writing and synthesis development;
- II. to explore students' perceptions of the clarity, fairness, and workload associated with the pedagogy; and
- III. to investigate whether students perceive multilingual and prior-knowledge resources as supporting transfer into English-medium writing

2. Conceptual background

This project draws on two related but analytically distinct bodies of scholarship: translanguaging and transknowledging. Translanguaging is understood here as the dynamic and purposeful deployment of a speaker's full linguistic repertoire to support meaning-making and learning, rather than as alternation between bounded language systems (García & Wei, 2014). Within educational research, it has been positioned both as a descriptive lens and as a pedagogical stance, challenging deficit framings of multilingual learners and rigid hierarchies of language legitimacy (García & Wei, 2014; García, Johnson & Seltzer, 2017). This understanding of translanguaging also resonates with work on translingual academic practice and the negotiation of linguistic norms in higher education (Canagarajah, 2013).

Transknowledging extends this orientation beyond language to encompass the mobilisation of diverse epistemic resources, including prior educational experiences, disciplinary traditions, culturally situated ways of knowing, and personal histories of learning (Heugh, 2021). While translanguaging foregrounds linguistic resources, transknowledging makes visible the knowledge practices and epistemic assumptions that students bring into academic writing contexts (Heugh, 2021).

The project is further informed by an Academic Literacies perspective, which conceptualises academic writing not as a neutral or technical skill but as a socially situated practice shaped by power, identity, and institutional norms (Lea & Street, 1998). From this perspective, the pedagogical challenge is not simply to add multilingual practices into existing approaches, but to interrogate how particular forms of language and knowledge come to be legitimised within academic writing instruction (Lillis & Scott, 2007). This also aligns with concerns about the global dominance of English in academic knowledge production (Lillis & Curry, 2010).

This work is further situated within broader educational perspectives, including Communities of Practice and Critical Pedagogy. These contribute an understanding of learning as socially situated and participatory (Wenger, 1998), and foreground the role of power, access, and legitimacy in shaping students' engagement with academic practices (Freire, 1970). In this study, they function as orienting influences on pedagogical stance and interpretation rather than as primary analytical frameworks.

Taken together, these perspectives provide the conceptual foundations for the Multilingual Pedagogy for Academic Literacies Framework (MPALF). Rather than functioning as a direct synthesis of theory, MPALF draws selectively on these traditions to support the pedagogical design and interpretation of translanguaging and transknowledging practices within assessment-adjacent EAP academic writing. The framework itself is introduced in Figure 1 and further discussed in Section 4.1.

3. Project Context

The project is situated within an MA Education academic writing module that supports students in producing discipline-specific assessed writing aligned with core Education modules. The MA Education context is particularly relevant given the programme's engagement with themes such as inclusion, critical reflection, educational inequality, and diverse ways of knowing. These orientations create a productive context for exploring how students' linguistic and epistemic resources intersect with academic writing development. This focus also resonates with emerging scholarship on translanguaging within higher education teaching and learning contexts (Mazak & Carroll, 2017).

The cohort comprises a mix of international students, many of whom are multilingual, and home students who are predominantly monolingual English-dominant, with diverse educational trajectories. These students enter the programme with varied prior experiences, including classroom teaching, educational support roles, and recent

undergraduate study, as well as educational histories shaped by different national, linguistic, and institutional systems. Importantly, the project adopts a broad understanding of multilingualism that does not equate multilingualism with international status, and explicitly recognises home students' regional, disciplinary, and experiential knowledge as part of their epistemic repertoires.

It is important to note that this module is a standalone, non-credit bearing in-session EAP module delivered by the Global Academy, and is not embedded within the MA Education curriculum, which is delivered separately by the Institute of Education. The module carries no summative assessment of its own. Instead, it provides structured academic writing and language development support that runs alongside students' disciplinary study and is intended to support their engagement with assessed writing tasks on MA Education modules. In this respect, the provision shares features with in-session, adjunct, and non-credit academic literacies support models found across many higher education institutions. This assessment-adjacent positioning creates both pedagogical challenges and opportunities. While tutors must work within genre expectations, English-medium submission norms, and students' understandable concern about risk in assessed contexts, the close connection to live disciplinary assignments gives activities immediate relevance and supports meaningful transfer into students' summative writing.

The project aligns with institutional priorities relating to inclusion, student partnership, and inclusive curriculum design. Ethical approval for the project was granted through the University of Reading's institutional ethics procedures, and student participation in the research components is voluntary and separate from engagement with the pedagogical activities of the module.

The project is supported through a University of Reading PLanT (Partnerships in Learning and Teaching) funded award, enabling a student-partnered approach to pedagogic inquiry and evaluation. Student partners are involved not as formal co-researchers, but as critical contributors through a staged series of analytic, co-design, validation, and evaluative workshops conducted across the project lifecycle. Across these stages, they reviewed Semester 1 feedback, identified useful or problematic pedagogical activities, contributed to the refinement of tasks and reflective prompts, confirmed the clarity and relevance of proposed adaptations, facilitated student focus group discussions, and informed the finalisation of project outputs. This partnership orientation informed both the design of the project and the interpretive lens applied to student feedback, foregrounding student perspectives while maintaining clear academic and ethical boundaries. Overall responsibility for research design, ethics, and analysis remained with the author.

An early version of the project was shared with the wider EAP community through a poster presentation at the BALEAP PIM at the University of Edinburgh during Semester 1. Informal dialogue with conference participants indicated strong interest in the practical implementation of translanguaging and transknowledging within EAP classrooms, particularly in relation to writing-for-assessment contexts. These exchanges highlighted a perceived gap between conceptual discussions of translanguaging and the availability of concrete, classroom-based pedagogical approaches that remain institutionally and assessment-safe. The interest generated through these discussions further informed the decision to disseminate the project at this early stage through a Work-in-Progress publication.

4. Pedagogical Design

4.1 The Multilingual Pedagogy for Academic Literacies Framework (MPALF)

MPALF is a practitioner-developed framework proposed by the author to support the exploration of translanguaging and transknowledging practices within EAP academic writing. At this stage, it is presented as a conceptual, unvalidated framework, developed in response to identified pedagogical tensions rather than derived from prior empirical testing. It does not claim to represent a model of effective practice. Rather, MPALF operates as a working heuristic, offering a set of guiding prompts and organising principles through which pedagogical design choices, classroom practices, and practitioner reflections can be explored and examined during the early stages of the project. In practice, MPALF supports the design, framing, and reflection of academic writing pedagogy by holding together pedagogical values, translanguaging and transknowledging concepts, EAP-safe boundaries, and process-oriented meaning-making, without positioning any individual task as inherently effective independent of context, implementation, or framing.

4.2 Translanguaging and Transknowledging Tasks

Across the module, students engage in tasks that explicitly invite the use of their full linguistic and epistemic repertoires at particular stages of the writing process. These include, for example, multilingual planning and conceptual mapping; multilingual annotation of English-language sources prior to synthesis in English; selective translation or re-expression of ideas between languages for clarification and comparison; structured reflective tasks; peer dialogue; metalinguistic noticing activities comparing informal and academic language; and explicit pedagogical framing of process-product boundaries. For

example, students may annotate an English-language source using any language(s) that support comprehension, questioning, or conceptual linking, before producing a synthesis paragraph in English. In this way, multilingual meaning-making is positioned as part of the reading and planning process, while the final written product remains aligned with English-medium expectations. Reflective prompts encourage students to consider how their prior knowledge, educational experiences, and linguistic backgrounds shape their academic writing decisions.

The pedagogical activities described here draw on established practices within EAP, Academic Literacies, and multilingual education (García & Wei, 2014; Lea & Street, 1998). They were assembled for this project with reference to relevant scholarship and pedagogical dialogue, trialed during Semester 1, and are intended to be refined in Semester 2 through student-partner collaboration and ongoing practitioner reflection. These activities are designed to support students' preparation for disciplinary assessment genres while remaining clearly separate from summative evaluation within the EAP module itself.

5. Data Collection and Analysis

The project reflects features of practitioner inquiry in that pedagogical design, implementation, reflection, and iterative refinement occur within the author's own teaching context (Burns, 2010). It adopts a staged data collection design with a short-term longitudinal element, using repeated measures within the same student cohort across two semesters. At the end of Semester 1, an optional baseline questionnaire was administered to students enrolled on the module ($n = 6$; average weekly attendance ≈ 15). The questionnaire was designed to capture students' understandings of translinguaging and transknowledging, their reported use of linguistic and epistemic resources in learning, and their perceptions of clarity, fairness, and challenge in relation to the pedagogy. Importantly, the baseline data reported in this paper do not test or validate MPALF as a framework but are used to establish contextual starting points and to inform iterative refinement of both the pedagogy and the conceptual framing in subsequent stages of the project.

The baseline questionnaire data were analysed descriptively. Likert-scale items were summarised using mean scores to identify broad patterns, while open-response items were read iteratively, coded at a descriptive level, and grouped into recurring themes to capture common issues and illustrative perspectives. Given the exploratory nature of this phase and the voluntary participation model, the sample is treated as indicative rather than representative. Consistent with the use of descriptive statistics, the analysis is

therefore not intended to evidence change or impact, but to establish students' starting points and surface pedagogically relevant patterns.

A repeat version of the questionnaire is planned for the end of Semester 2 to allow for comparative analysis over time. Following completion of the module, focus groups will be conducted with volunteer participants to explore student experiences in greater depth and to contextualise questionnaire responses. Additional data sources include student reflective journals and ongoing practitioner reflection notes. Together, these data will support a more nuanced, short-term within-cohort comparison over time in subsequent stages of the project.

6. Baseline Findings from Semester 1

Analysis of the Semester 1 baseline questionnaire reveals several patterns that will shape the focus of the second semester of the project. Among multilingual students, baseline responses indicate moderate to strong reported engagement with translanguaging and transknowledging practices. Mean Likert scores suggest that students frequently used languages other than English for thinking, planning, and comprehension, particularly in early stages of academic writing tasks. Open-response data highlight the strategic use of first languages to support deeper conceptual understanding and efficiency in reading and planning, with very few challenges reported.

English-dominant students did not report substantial conceptual change in relation to translanguaging, which was expected given their linguistic repertoires. Instead, their responses indicated stronger engagement with transknowledging practices, particularly in negotiating the epistemic and register expectations of academic English and in drawing on prior educational and professional experience.

Across both groups, challenges associated with translanguaging or transknowledging practices were minimal and isolated, while several responses pointed to the value of explicit framing around language use and appropriacy, particularly in relation to how learning processes connect to English-medium assessment expectations. As the module convenor, I have had to negotiate my own assumptions about where different forms of linguistic and epistemic work are perceived to 'belong' within academic writing instruction, particularly in relation to genre expectations and assessment norms (Hyland, 2004; Palfreyman & van der Walt, 2017). Taken together, these baseline insights have informed more explicit pedagogical framing for students in Semester 2 of the distinction

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between repertoire-rich learning and planning processes and the English-medium academic outputs expected in class and for assessment.

7. Anticipated Contributions and Next Steps

The project aims to contribute a provisional, practice-informed articulation of MPALF and descriptive insight into multilingual and transknowledging practices in English-medium academic writing. It also seeks to offer pragmatic pedagogical approaches that are workable within institutionally constrained EAP contexts. Semester 2 will involve continued implementation and analysis, with the intention of developing this Work-in-Progress report into a full research article in 2026. Feedback from the EAP community will play a key role in shaping the project beyond the PLanT-funded phase, particularly in relation to how the framework and associated pedagogical practices might be refined, extended, or taken forward. Such feedback will continue to be gathered informally through conference discussion, professional dialogue, and reader response, and will be used reflexively to inform subsequent work rather than as a source of research data.

8. Conclusion

Reporting early-stage pedagogic development involves a degree of uncertainty, but it also offers transparency and invites dialogue. This Work-in-Progress paper positions translanguaging and transknowledging not as prescriptive solutions, but as exploratory pedagogical possibilities for exploration within EAP academic writing. Any reference to MPALF in this paper should therefore be read as exploratory and provisional, with its conceptual status and pedagogical usefulness remaining open to interrogation through future analysis. By sharing the project's conceptual grounding, design, and emerging questions, the paper contributes to collective thinking about how multilingual and epistemically diverse realities, including those of both multilingual and English-dominant students, can be more meaningfully engaged within English-medium higher education. Furthermore, sharing this work at an early stage responds to a growing call within the EAP community for practically grounded accounts of how translanguaging and transknowledging might be further explored in writing-focused curricula.

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