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## Developing Academic Writing Skills of Secondary School Level ESL Learners Through Translanguaging Pedagogy

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### Abstract

The present study examines the effectiveness of translanguaging pedagogy in developing academic writing skills among secondary school-level English as a Second Language (ESL) learners in Telangana, India. Despite increasing recognition of multilingualism in education, empirical research on structured translanguaging practices at the secondary level, particularly in the Indian ESL context, remains limited. Grounded in sociolinguistic, sociocultural, and language interdependence theories, this mixed-methods study investigates how the strategic use of learners' home languages (Telugu and Hindi) alongside English supports academic writing development. A four-month instructional intervention was implemented with 70 ESL learners, employing bilingual brainstorming, peer translation, and code-meshing activities. Data were collected through pre- and post-writing tests, classroom observations, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews with students and teachers. Quantitative analysis revealed statistically significant improvement across all components of academic writing—organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics ( $p < .01$ ). Pearson's correlation analysis indicated a strong positive relationship between translanguaging-based instruction and writing performance. Qualitative findings further demonstrated reduced writing anxiety, improved idea organization, and increased learner confidence. The study provides empirical evidence that translanguaging functions as a cognitive and pedagogical scaffold, contributing to equitable and effective ESL writing instruction in multilingual secondary classrooms.

**Keywords:** translanguaging, academic writing, ESL learners, secondary education, multilingual pedagogy.

## **Introduction**

Academic writing remains one of the most demanding skills for ESL learners, particularly in multilingual contexts such as India, where English is often taught through monolingual instructional practices. Secondary school learners from rural and semi-urban backgrounds frequently experience difficulties in organizing ideas, developing arguments, and using appropriate academic language due to limited exposure to English outside the classroom. English-only pedagogies often marginalize learners' existing linguistic resources, resulting in reduced participation and writing anxiety.

Translanguaging, initially conceptualized by García (2009) and further theorized by Wei (2018), challenges monolingual ideologies by legitimizing the use of learners' full linguistic repertoires for meaning-making and learning. While previous studies have established the benefits of translanguaging in primary education and higher education contexts, there is a noticeable lack of empirical, mixed-methods research focusing on secondary-level ESL learners in India, particularly in relation to academic writing development.

Addressing this gap, the present study investigates the impact of a structured translanguaging pedagogy on the academic writing skills of secondary school ESL learners in Telangana. The study seeks to answer the following objectives: (i) to examine whether translanguaging-based instruction improves academic writing performance, and (ii) to explore learners' and teachers' perceptions of translanguaging practices in the ESL writing classroom.

## **Theoretical Framework**

This study is informed by three complementary theoretical perspectives that collectively explain the pedagogical value of translanguaging in ESL writing instruction.

### **Sociolinguistic Theory** (García, 2009)

views language as a dynamic and socially situated practice rather than a set of discrete, bounded systems. From this perspective, translanguaging enables learners to flexibly mobilize their linguistic resources to construct meaning, thereby supporting complex cognitive processes involved in academic writing.

### **Sociocultural Theory** (Vygotsky, 1978)

emphasizes learning as a socially mediated process. Translanguaging practices such as bilingual peer interaction and collaborative drafting function as mediational tools within learners' Zones of Proximal Development, allowing them to internalize higher-order writing skills through scaffolding.

### **Language Interdependence Theory**

(Cummins, 2001) posits that cognitive and academic skills developed in the first language can transfer to the second language. In the present study, activities such as L1 brainstorming and planning enabled learners to generate and organize ideas effectively before producing texts in English, resulting in improved coherence and structure.

## **Literature Review**

Existing research consistently highlights the pedagogical benefits of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms. Canagarajah (2011) demonstrates that codemeshing and translanguaging allow learners to negotiate academic meaning without suppressing linguistic identity. García and Wei (2014) conceptualize translanguaging as a transformative pedagogy that bridges home and school languages, fostering deeper engagement.

Baker and Wright (2017) argue that translanguaging-oriented bilingual education enhances linguistic proficiency and cognitive flexibility. Empirical studies by Velasco and García (2014) and Bauer et al. (2017) reveal that bilingual writers employ translanguaging strategies to organize ideas, translate concepts, and develop academic vocabulary.

Within the Indian context, scholars such as Mohanty (2019) and Mishra (2020) emphasize the need for multilingual pedagogies to address educational inequities among rural and marginalized learners. However, most Indian studies remain descriptive or policy-oriented, underscoring the need for empirical classroom-based research at the secondary level. The present study addresses this gap by providing systematic quantitative and qualitative evidence on translanguaging and academic writing development.

### Methodology

A mixed-methods research design was adopted to capture both measurable learning outcomes and participant perceptions. The sample comprised 70 secondary-level ESL learners from Telangana Tribal Welfare Gurukula Junior College, Narsapur, Medak District. Ethical consent was obtained from institutional authorities and participants.

The four-month instructional intervention integrated translanguaging strategies into writing instruction, including bilingual brainstorming, peer translation, collaborative drafting, and code-meshed revision. Academic writing performance was

assessed through pre- and post-tests using a validated rubric measuring structure, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Tool validity was ensured through expert review, and reliability was maintained through consistent scoring procedures.

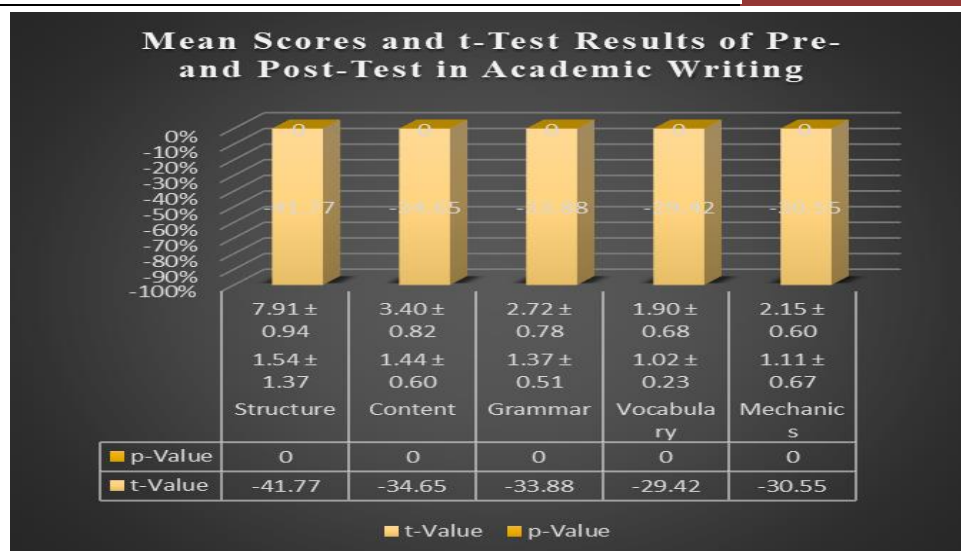
### Data analysis

Quantitative analysis using paired-sample t-tests revealed statistically significant improvement in all five components of academic writing ( $p < .01$ ). Post-test mean scores were substantially higher than pre-test scores, indicating the effectiveness of the translanguaging intervention. Pearson's correlation analysis ( $r = 0.82$ ,  $p < .01$ ) demonstrated a strong positive relationship between translanguaging-based instruction and writing improvement.

Qualitative data from interviews and classroom observations indicated reduced writing anxiety, improved idea clarity, and increased learner engagement. Teachers reported enhanced participation and more coherent student writing, while students expressed greater confidence when permitted to plan in their home languages.

**Table 1: Mean Scores and t-Test Results of Pre- and Post-Test in Academic Writing**

Component	Pre-Test Mean	Post-Test Mean	t-Value	p-Value
Structure	1.54 ± 1.37	7.91 ± 0.94	-41.77	0.000
Content	1.44 ± 0.60	3.40 ± 0.82	-34.65	0.000
Grammar	1.37 ± 0.51	2.72 ± 0.78	-33.88	0.000
Vocabulary	1.02 ± 0.23	1.90 ± 0.68	-29.42	0.000
Mechanics	1.11 ± 0.67	2.15 ± 0.60	-30.55	0.000



**Figure 1: Mean Scores and t-Test Results of Pre- and Post-Test in Academic Writing**

The figure/table above demonstrates that post-test scores were substantially higher across all writing components, indicating significant improvement after the translanguaging intervention.

Pearson's correlation analysis ( $r = 0.82$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) showed a strong positive relationship between translanguaging-based instruction and writing performance improvement, confirming that increased engagement in bilingual scaffolding led to higher writing scores.

### Qualitative Findings

Interviews with students and teachers revealed that translanguaging reduced writing anxiety and enhanced clarity of thought. Students reported feeling more confident when allowed to plan in Telugu or Hindi before writing in English. Teachers observed increased participation, organization, and creativity in student writing.

### Discussion

The findings corroborate García and Wei's (2014) assertion that translanguaging fosters equitable learning environments by legitimizing learners' linguistic resources. Rather than functioning as a compensatory strategy, translanguaging emerged as a cognitive scaffold that facilitated higher-order

writing skills. The results also align with Cummins' (2001) interdependence hypothesis, demonstrating cross-linguistic transfer in academic writing development.

### Implications

The study underscores the need for ESL teachers to integrate translanguaging practices into writing instruction. Curriculum designers and policymakers should support bilingual materials and teacher training in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP, 2020), which advocates multilingual education.

### Conclusion

The study concludes that translanguaging pedagogy significantly enhances academic writing skills among secondary-level ESL learners by leveraging their full linguistic repertoires. By validating multilingual identities and reducing linguistic barriers, translanguaging contributes to more inclusive and effective ESL pedagogy. Future research may expand the scope to diverse regions and larger samples to strengthen generalizability.

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