

Academic English in Exile: Mapping the Research Publication Challenges of Displaced Ukrainian Scholars in the UK

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Abstract. For displaced Ukrainian scholars fleeing war and continuing their research abroad, English has rapidly shifted from a foreign language to the primary medium of institutional integration, academic visibility, and professional continuity. In this context, effective research dissemination increasingly depends on advanced competence in English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP). This study investigates how displaced Ukrainian researchers, hosted in the United Kingdom through the British Academy’s Researchers at Risk programme, navigate academic writing in English, focusing on how their language proficiency, prior international exposure, and professional experience shape their ability to meet the demands of international research communication. A survey conducted in October – November 2024 with 125 RaR fellows examined participants’ self-reported CEFR-aligned proficiency levels, international mobility experience, certification profiles, and engagement with core academic writing tasks in English. Although many reported high general proficiency and held international language certificates, this did not always translate to strong ERPP skills. Even those with a strong track record of academic writing faced challenges with disciplinary genres, rhetorical structure, and literature synthesis. The findings highlight a clear distinction between general English competence and the specialised skills needed for research publishing. While participants regularly engaged in emails, abstracts, and conference presentations, many struggled with article structuring, source synthesis, and referencing. Institutional support, where available, was often limited or insufficiently targeted. These insights underscore the need for tailored, discipline-sensitive ERPP support to enable meaningful academic participation in exile.

Keywords: *Academic writing, English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP), English language proficiency (ELP), displaced scholars, Ukrainian academics.*

Торубара Оксана. Академічна англійська у вимушеній еміграції: як переміщені українські вчені у Великій Британії долають труднощі публікації наукових досліджень.

Анотація. Для українських науковців, які були змушені покинути країну через війну та продовжують дослідницьку діяльність за кордоном, англійська мова стрімко

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перетворилася з іноземної на головний засіб академічної комунікації, професійної взаємодії та інституційної інтеграції у приймаючій країні. За таких умов поширення та просування результатів наукових досліджень дедалі більше залежить від володіння навичками академічного письма англійською мовою, зокрема для наукових публікацій (English for Research Publication Purposes, ERPP).

У центрі дослідження - досвід переміщених українських вчених, які перебувають у Великій Британії в межах програми Researchers at Risk Британської академії, та намагаються адаптуватися до академічного письма англійською мовою в умовах вимушеної мобільності. Опитування, проведене у жовтні - листопаді 2024 року серед 125 учасників, охоплювало оцінку рівня володіння англійською за шкалою CEFR, досвід роботи та проживання в англomовному середовищі, наявність міжнародних сертифікатів і ступінь залученості до письмової академічної діяльності. Попри високий загальний рівень володіння англійською та наявність сертифікатів, багатьом респондентам не вистачає спеціалізованої мовної компетентності, необхідної для підготовки публікацій у міжнародних наукових виданнях.

Найбільш типовими видами письмової діяльності для учасників виявилися завдання, пов'язані з повсякденною академічною комунікацією - зокрема, листування, підготовка анотацій, презентацій та виступів. Ці навички є важливими, однак багато хто все ще відчуває брак впевненості у написанні академічних текстів вищого рівня, зокрема у формулюванні структури статті, роботі з джерелами та дотриманні вимог цитування. Наявна інституційна підтримка здебільшого неадаптована до ERPP-потреб. Отримані результати засвідчують необхідність розробки цільових форматів підтримки, адаптованих до реального контексту роботи переміщених дослідників, що сприятиме їхній успішній академічній інтеграції та розвитку компетентності у сфері ERPP.

Ключові слова: академічне письмо, англійська для наукових публікацій (ERPP), англomовна компетентність (ELP), переміщені науковці, українські вчені.

Introduction

What happens when academic expertise is uprooted overnight and transplanted into an unfamiliar linguistic and institutional landscape? This question has become deeply personal for many Ukrainian scholars, including the author of this paper, who became one of 177 researchers hosted by UK institutions under the British Academy's Researchers at Risk programme following the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022 (British Academy, n.d.). While this programme offers vital refuge and continuity for displaced academics, it also exposes the psycholinguistic and communicative challenges of sustaining scholarly identity, research productivity, and voice in a foreign language, whether it is considered second or additional, under conditions of trauma and uncertainty (Gimenez & Morgan, 2017; Khuder & Petrić, 2020, 2022a; 2022; 2023; Lillis & Curry, 2006; 2010; 2018; Tusting et al., 2019).

In this context, English could more accurately be described as an Additional Language (EAL) rather than a Second Language (ESL) (Kubota & Lin, 2009), as it

acknowledges both scholars' multilingual repertoires and their evolving academic identities. Adopting an EAL perspective allows for a more equitable framing of displaced researchers: not as deficient learners but as experienced professionals negotiating complex linguistic and institutional demands (Lillis & Curry, 2010; Canagarajah, 2002; Khuder & Petrić, 2022a).

This paper emerges from both professional commitment and a personal journey. As a Ukrainian TESOL specialist and one of the displaced scholars, I have been navigating unfamiliar academic territory - not only geographically and institutionally, but also linguistically and emotionally. Being an English teacher, yet in exile I found myself unexpectedly struggling to sustain my own academic voice in that very language. If someone trained in and deeply immersed in English like me could feel such linguistic disorientation, one can only imagine the amplified challenges faced by scholars in other fields, for whom English has always been peripheral. Alongside over a hundred fellow scholars from Ukraine, I have had to re-establish my academic voice in a language that, while being taught as a foreign language in Ukraine, now functions for us as the primary medium for research, teaching, and publication in exile (Elnathan, 2021; Gimenez & Morgan, 2017; Khuder & Petrić, 2023). The urgency of this transition, compounded by trauma, uncertainty, and cultural dislocation, foregrounds the intricate interplay between language, identity, and academic survival.

These personal and professional tensions are intensified by the cognitive and emotional demands of academic writing in a non-native language, as highlighted in psycholinguistic research. Writing involves constant mental coordination for planning, translating, and reviewing that places high demands on attention, memory, and linguistic control (Flower & Hayes, 1981). This load increases when scholars engage with complex content in unfamiliar contexts (Kellogg, 2023). For displaced academics, it is further complicated by emotional exhaustion, trauma (Hron, 2018), and the pressure to maintain scholarly credibility in an additional language. Anxiety and shaken confidence can significantly hinder fluency, given the close link between cognition and emotional self-regulation (Dörnyei, 2005). In this light, academic writing in exile is not merely a technical task, but a complex psycholinguistic act shaped by cognitive strain, emotional endurance, and disrupted identity.

Despite their resilience and academic expertise, many displaced Ukrainian researchers face significant challenges in adapting to English-dominant research environments (Jaroszewicz et al., 2025; Lutsenko et al., 2023; Meryl et al., 2022). Such core components of scholarly activity as academic writing and publishing, require not only advanced English proficiency but also familiarity with disciplinary conventions, rhetorical structures, and international publication standards (Shykhnenko & Sbruieva, 2024; Strochenko et al., 2025). These

demands are often increased by the emotional strain of exile and the need to re-establish professional credibility in a new context (Khuder & Petrić, 2023). While Ukraine has introduced national policies promoting English in academia, such as the B2 language requirement for academic titles (Abramo et al., 2023) and increased encouragement of English-medium instruction (Bolitho & West, 2017), these initiatives often overlook the actual levels of English language proficiency among academics and the nuanced English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Research Publication Purposes (ERPP) demands. Meanwhile, UK host institutions, though offering institutional refuge and support, may lack the disciplinary or cultural sensitivity needed to provide displaced researchers with effective, tailored academic writing support. As a result, displaced scholars must often pursue research publication with limited scaffolding and inconsistent access to mentoring or training opportunities.

This situation reveals a significant gap in both research and practice. So far, little is known about the actual English language proficiency levels, academic writing experiences, and perceived ERPP support needs of Ukrainian academics working in exile. Most existing support frameworks rely on assumptions, either institutional or policy-driven, about scholars' capabilities and challenges. To design effective interventions, it is essential to understand how displaced researchers assess their own EAL competence, how they apply English writing skills in academic settings, and what forms of support they find meaningful and necessary. English Language Proficiency (ELP) in this study refers to an individual's ability to use English effectively across listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is described according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2001), which classifies proficiency from A1 (basic user) to C2 (proficient user), including academic and professional domains.

This study aims to investigate the EAP and ERPP needs of displaced Ukrainian researchers currently based in the UK. It is grounded in survey data collected within the British Academy's Researchers at Risk programme. The research explores participants' prior international exposure, their self-assessed ELP levels, and the diverse pathways through which they have developed their language competence. It also examines their academic writing practices to explore key barriers to research communication and to identify the types of instructional and institutional support that might be most useful. Situated within the evolving realities of Ukrainian academia and the UK host context, this study contributes to broader discussions on multilingualism in academia, scholarly displacement, and linguistic equity in global research communication while remaining grounded in the specific needs of a Ukrainian academic community in transition.

This paper addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the English language proficiency levels of displaced Ukrainian researchers in the UK?
2. How do these researchers apply English writing skills in academic settings?
3. What ERPP-related challenges and support needs do they experience?

The paper is structured as follows. First, the Research Design and Methods section details the survey structure, a participant profile, and analytical approach. The Results section presents findings in two parts: (1) contextualising participants' English proficiency backgrounds, including self-assessed English proficiency levels, previous international exposure, and certification profiles, (2) examining their application of English academic writing skills. The Discussion interprets these findings in relation to broader challenges faced by displaced researchers, and the Conclusion reflects on the study's implications for targeted academic writing support and future research directions.

Method

Research Design and Tools

This study employed a mixed-methods, exploratory research design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. The primary instrument was an online survey targeting displaced Ukrainian academics based in the UK and supported by the British Academy's Researchers at Risk (RAR) programme, launched in response to the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Complementing the survey, the researcher's dual role as a TESOL specialist and a RAR fellow allowed for reflexive insights, drawing on informal conversations and autoethnographic observations, though these were used only to support interpretation of the survey results, not as formal data sources.

The survey formed the first phase of a broader research programme titled "SURE Project: Writing for Research: Supporting Ukrainian Researchers in Exile in Developing Their Academic Writing". The programme includes multiple stages: (1) conducting the survey to identify language skills gaps in general and academic writing skills in particular which hinder the publication process, (2) conducting semi-structured interviews to deepen understanding of the issues identified, (3) developing a set of instructional materials for a targeted ERPP course, based on the findings from the survey and interviews, (5) piloting the group training course/individual coaching/mentoring programme, and (6) offering it to a wider cohort of displaced academics. This paper reports specifically

on the findings from Part 2 of the survey, which focused on English language proficiency and academic writing practices.

The survey was administered online via Microsoft Forms during October – November 2024. Participants were recruited through the British Academy Early Career Researchers Network (ECRN), personal contacts, and snowball sampling. A total of 125 responses were collected from a pool of 177 researchers (response rate: 70.6%). The survey contained four main sections: (1) Personal Information, (2) Academic and Writing Proficiency in English, (3) Writing for Research as a Process, and (4) Language Support. The sections featured a diverse range of question types, including multiple-choice, Likert scale, ranking, yes/no, and open-ended questions, allowing for both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This paper draws on data from Section 2 only, analysing six targeted questions using both descriptive statistics and thematic analysis of open-ended responses.

Quantitative data were analysed using basic descriptive statistics to identify frequency distributions, ranking patterns, and response trends. Qualitative data from open-ended questions were subjected to thematic analysis to extract emerging patterns related to language confidence, academic writing practices, and perceived skill gaps. No external software was used beyond Microsoft Excel for quantitative summaries; qualitative coding was carried out manually by the researcher.

Ethical approval for the study was obtained from the Lancaster University Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection (Reference: FASSLUMS-2024-4573-RECR-2). Participants were fully informed about the voluntary and anonymous nature of the survey and could withdraw at any stage. Given the trauma and vulnerability associated with forced academic displacement, additional care was taken to design the survey in a supportive and empathetic manner, highlighting the shared experience between the researcher and the participants. Many respondents welcomed the opportunity to contribute, viewing the study as a way to enhance international academic support structures.

The following section presents findings related to participants' English proficiency, their engagement with English-medium academic writing, and the challenges they face in meeting ERPP demands.

Results

Contextualising English Language Proficiency Among Ukrainian Researchers at Risk

The participants were first asked whether they had any prior experience living or working in English-speaking countries before joining the British Academy's

Researchers at Risk (RAR) fellowship. A significant majority of respondents, 78% or 97 individuals, reported no prior experience of residential fellowships or professional stays in English-speaking countries. Only 22% or 28 respondents indicated they had such experience (Fig. 1). This finding highlights that for most participants, the RAR fellowship represented their first sustained exposure to an English-speaking academic environment, which likely intensified both the linguistic and cultural adjustments they faced.

Figure 1

Proportion of BA RAR Fellows with Previous Experience in Residential Fellowships or English-Speaking Contexts

11. Do you have any experience of residential fellowships or living/working in English-speaking countries prior to this BA RAR fellowship?



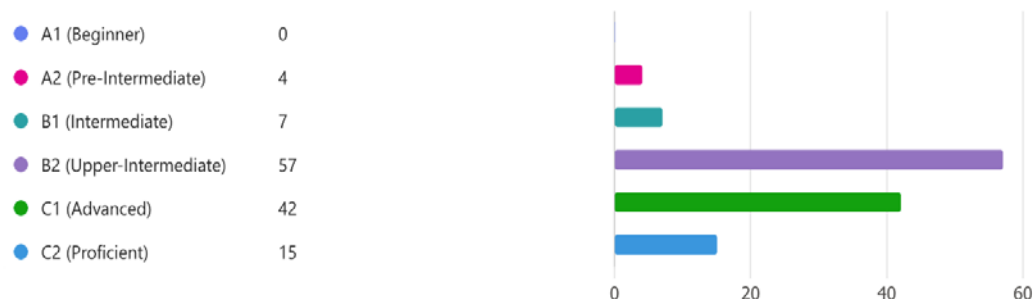
To better understand the starting point of their engagement with English-medium academia, participants were next asked to indicate their current English language proficiency level using the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which ranges from A1 (beginner) to C2 (proficient). The responses indicate a predominantly high level of English competence. Nearly half of the participants (57; 46%) reported a B2 (Upper-Intermediate) level, followed by 42 (34%) who identified as C1 (Advanced), and 15 (12%) at C2 (Proficient). Lower proficiency levels were rare: 7 participants (6%) selected B1, and only 4 (3%) chose A2. No respondents identified as A1 (Figure 2). These results show that over 90% of respondents rated themselves as upper-intermediate to proficient users of English. This suggests the survey captured individuals already equipped with substantial English skills—an important consideration when interpreting their academic writing experiences and support needs.

The survey findings highlight a notable relationship between prior exposure to English-speaking academic environments and current English language

proficiency (ELP). As shown in Figure 1, only 22 percent of respondents had previous experience of residential fellowships or professional stays in English-speaking countries before starting their BA RAR fellowship. Despite this, self-assessed ELP levels reveal a highly proficient cohort: 46 percent reported B2 (Upper-Intermediate) proficiency, 34 percent C1 (Advanced), and 12 percent C2 (Proficient). Altogether, 91 percent of participants assessed their proficiency at B2 level or higher, meeting or exceeding the minimum requirement for academic positions set by Ukrainian language policy. This pattern suggests that while international immersion may have supported language development for some, high levels of English competence were also achieved through other learning pathways. This might reflect the participants' strong motivation and sustained efforts to develop academic English skills even in the absence of extended immersion in English-speaking environments.

Figure 2
Self-Reported English Language Proficiency Levels Among BA RAR Fellows

12. What is your current English language level?



An important contextual factor is Ukraine's state-driven language policy aimed at enhancing international research engagement. Since 2016, English has been actively promoted as part of Ukraine's academic modernisation strategy. That year, the government declared the "Year of the English Language," signalling a shift towards European integration. This was followed by a series of reforms, including the introduction of mandatory B2 English proficiency requirements for the awarding of academic titles, the promotion of English-medium instruction, and the establishment of English language benchmarks for students and academic leadership. These measures contributed to a steady increase in English language awareness and competence among Ukrainian scholars. However, the uniform B2 requirement across diverse academic levels and roles does not fully account for the varying linguistic demands of complex academic communication.

Although B2 proficiency allows for general academic functioning, higher-level skills typically found at C1 and C2 are often needed for effective academic writing, presenting at conferences, and publishing in international journals.

The high proportion of RaR fellows with advanced English proficiency can therefore be seen as the outcome of multiple, intersecting factors: sustained national policy efforts, individual proactive engagement with English, and the selection dynamics of the fellowship programme itself. Many participants were likely already conscious of the importance of English for research communication, and some may have had academic connections abroad prior to the war, which facilitated their transition. Others may have significantly improved their proficiency after arriving in the UK, as the survey was conducted over two years after the programme's start. This timeframe suggests a strong commitment to developing language skills, indicating that participants are not only adapting to the demands of English-medium academia but are also likely to return home with enhanced capacities for international scholarly interaction.

To better understand how participants assessed their English proficiency, the survey also asked "How do you know your English language level? Please, specify if you have any English language proficiency certificate". Out of 125 responses, 52 participants reported having English language certificates. These included a range of qualifications, from international tests like IELTS, TOEFL, and Cambridge English exams to UK-specific ESOL and Functional Skills certificates.

40 respondents (32%) had taken international tests, with several mentioning Cambridge English exams at different levels (FCE, CAE, Business English), including both recent (2023 – 2024) and older (2015 – 2019) certificates. 10 participants (8%) had British Council certificates (APTIS test), and another 10 (8%) held UK-based ESOL/Functional Skills qualifications. While some certificates were reported as 'expired', they still provide insight into past levels of English competence, though it is possible that participants' proficiency may have changed, either improved through continued use or declined due to lack of practice, since the time of testing.

12 respondents (9.6%) reported having university degrees or diplomas in English philology, English studies, Germanic languages, or interpreting - an important factor that may help explain the generally high levels of English language competence observed in the sample. It is important to note, however, that combining language specialists with those for whom English is not a professional focus may mask meaningful differences in experience and challenges. The needs of these two groups are likely to differ, particularly in academic writing contexts. This distinction will be explored further in the next stage of the research through follow-up interviews.

Finally, fifteen participants (12 percent) reported relying on self-assessment or work-related evaluations of their English proficiency, for example: "My

subjective assessment. Have never been tested” and “My level of English was estimated by testing in an IT company several years ago. I do not have English language proficiency certificates.” Another 31 respondents (24.8 percent) said they either had no certificate or had never been formally tested. These results show that while many participants do have formal proof of their English skills, a considerable number rely on informal assessments or personal judgement. Still, the wide presence of certificates among almost half of the cohort supports the earlier self-assessment data, confirming generally high levels of proficiency (B2 - C2).

The variety of learning paths and types of evidence highlights the different ways participants have developed and used their English in academic and professional contexts. Some open-ended responses to the question about English proficiency also reveal strong personal commitment, as several participants shared that they are currently investing in their language skills through self-study or private tuition. For example, there were such responses: “Not yet, but I bought the C1 course and am studying myself” and “My English teacher notice but don't have a certificate.” The wording of the responses is reproduced as written by participants to preserve authenticity and to illustrate that not all respondents have fully achieved high levels of English proficiency. Other participants, in response to the question “How do you know your English language level?”, shared examples such as “writing articles,” “giving lectures,” and “confidently working with teaching and learning materials for C1.” These individual voices clearly demonstrate that, for many, lived experience and functional use of academic English is perceived as a more authentic and meaningful indicator of proficiency than formal certification.

Although some participants based their survey self-reports on subjective judgments or informal evaluations, the majority referred to documented proof of their English proficiency, such as IELTS, TOEFL or Cambridge certificates. This suggests that most self-assessed levels in the sample were anchored in standardised assessment, offering a semi-validated indication of their language competence.

Interestingly, a few respondents mentioned qualifications such as GCSE or SCQF. While these are valid achievements, they may reflect limited access to appropriate advice or a lack of awareness about more relevant certification options for academic professionals. Some participants also reported receiving English language certificates from their home institutions, “my Ukrainian university’s linguistic centre”, pointing to grassroots or institution-level efforts to support English development in the absence of a unified national framework. It remains uncertain how well such qualifications align with the expectations of English-medium academia, particularly in international research contexts.

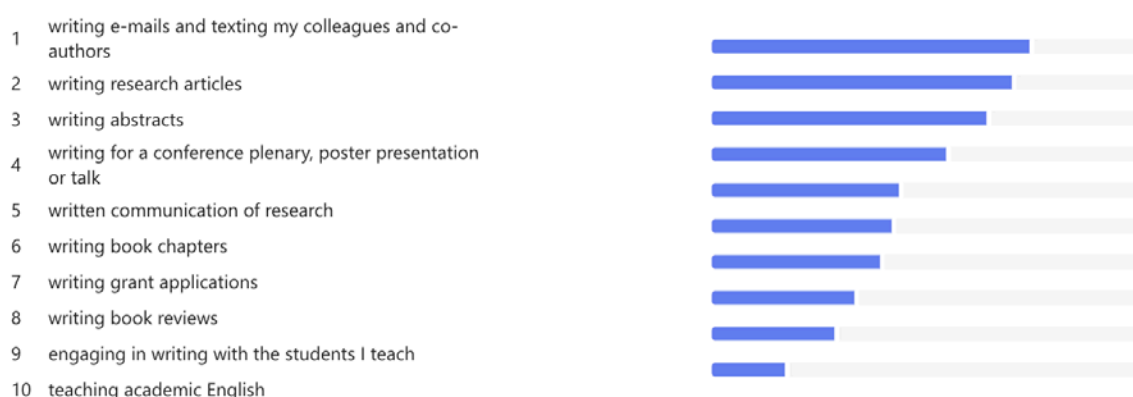
Application of English Writing Skills in Academic Settings

To further explore how participants use their English skills in practice, the survey included two closely related questions that offered complementary perspectives. Question 14 asked participants to rank the types of academic writing they most frequently engage in, while Question 15 asked them to indicate, using a five-point scale ("never," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," "very often"), how often they actually apply these writing skills in academic settings. Analysing the responses to these questions together provides a more complete understanding of both the perceived importance of different academic writing tasks and the frequency of their real-world application.

The ranking data (Fig. 3) reveal that participants prioritise English writing primarily for collaborative and research dissemination purposes. Writing e-mails and texting colleagues and co-authors was ranked as the most frequent activity, followed by writing research articles, writing abstracts, and preparing conference presentations or posters. These were perceived as the core applications of their English academic writing skills. Activities such as writing book chapters, grant applications, book reviews, engaging in written communication with students, and teaching academic English were ranked considerably lower, suggesting they are less central to participants' academic workflows or immediate professional demands.

Figure 3
Prioritised English Academic Writing Tasks Reported by BA RAR Fellows

14. In academic settings you apply your writing skills in English for ... (rank from most frequent to least):



The frequency data (Fig. 4) largely confirm these priorities but introduce important nuances. Writing e-mails and texting colleagues or co-authors is not only prioritised but also performed "often" or "very often" by the overwhelming majority of respondents, indicating a strong alignment between perceived

importance and everyday practice. Similarly, writing abstracts and communicating research within networks are reported as relatively frequent activities. However, while writing full-length research articles is considered highly important, it is undertaken less consistently, with responses distributed between "sometimes" and "often." More demanding and resource-intensive activities, such as writing book chapters, book reviews, and grant applications, show even lower engagement, with many participants reporting "rarely" or "sometimes." Teaching academic English and engaging in writing with students are the least frequent activities across the sample, mirroring their lower prioritisation in the rankings.

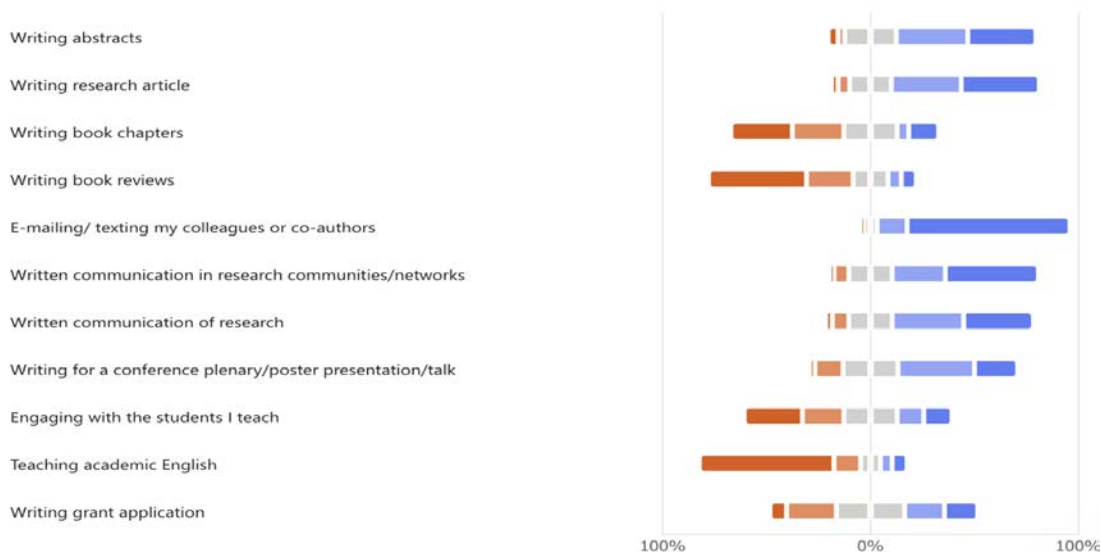
It is important to note, however, that 9.6% of the total participants sample reported holding university degrees or diplomas in English philology or interpreting. The presence of these language specialists in the sample partially explains the engagement with activities such as "teaching academic English" and "engaging in writing with the students I teach," despite these being low-frequency categories for the cohort overall. This finding must also be understood in the broader context of Ukrainian higher education, where English-medium instruction (EMI) practices, although gaining momentum due to globalisation and internationalisation pressures, remain relatively limited. Most Ukrainian universities have only recently begun to promote EMI initiatives systematically, and institutional support structures for teaching through English are still under development (Bolitho & West, 2017).

Figure 4

Frequency of Applying English Writing Skills in Academic Settings Among BA RAR Fellows

15. How often in academic settings do you apply these writing skills in English?

● never ● rarely ● sometimes ● often ● very often



In practice, opportunities for engaging in writing with students in English are not widespread and are often confined to specific faculties, programmes, or individual initiatives. While the language specialists in the sample likely feel more confident navigating English-medium teaching and support roles, the survey data do not differentiate their responses from those of the broader group. This issue requires further exploration at later stages of the project, particularly through in-depth interviews or when designing tailored language support initiatives that can better account for the disciplinary, institutional, and language proficiency differences among displaced scholars.

To complement the analysis of English language proficiency and writing practices, participants were asked to self-evaluate a range of academic writing subskills on a five-point scale (1 = very low competence; 5 = very high competence). As illustrated in Figure 5, the results provide important insights into participants' confidence across different stages of academic text production.

The responses show a relatively high level of self-assessed competence. Skills such as planning the structure of a text, formulating the title and main idea, and writing abstracts were most frequently rated at 4 or 5, suggesting that the cohort feels relatively confident with the foundational elements of research writing. Similarly, processing collected information and analysing data for the results section received strong ratings, indicating familiarity with basic academic research procedures.

Figure 5
BA RAR Fellows' Self-Rated Proficiency in Key Academic Writing Components



However, slightly lower levels of confidence were noted for writing literature reviews, developing introductions, and writing methods and discussion sections. These stages typically require more sophisticated rhetorical organisation, critical engagement with sources, and adherence to specific genre conventions, which may explain the modest dip in self-ratings. Making the list of citations and references, and drawing conclusions, while generally well-rated, also revealed a slight spread towards mid-scale ratings, suggesting that referencing practices and synthesis skills could benefit from further strengthening.

Participants generally rated their competence highly across a range of academic writing skills. While the self-evaluations demonstrate strong confidence, they should be interpreted with some caution, given that self-assessment may not always align perfectly with external standards of academic writing quality. Overall, these findings are significant in understanding English language development within this cohort. They indicate that displaced Ukrainian researchers at risk are generally equipped with strong foundational academic writing skills, particularly in structuring, summarising, and presenting primary research. Nonetheless, the slight hesitations around more complex academic genres point to areas where additional, targeted support could further consolidate their competence. Advanced academic writing requires more than just linguistic accuracy. It also demands skills usually associated with higher proficiency levels (C1–C2) like genre awareness and rhetorical sophistication. These findings support earlier observations that a B2 level, while functional, may not fully meet the requirements of international academic publishing.

Discussion

This study explored the English language proficiency and academic writing practices of displaced Ukrainian researchers participating in the British Academy's Researchers at Risk fellowship, with particular attention to challenges related to their English for Research Publication Purposes competence and potential targeted instructional support.

The findings provide a detailed picture of a highly motivated and linguistically capable cohort. Despite the fact that 78 percent of participants had no prior experience living or working in English-speaking countries, a remarkable 91 percent assessed their English proficiency at B2 level and above. This is a striking contrast to broader national trends in Ukraine, where research shows that most academics rate their English proficiency between A2 and B2 levels. The high proficiency within this cohort can be attributed to

multiple, intersecting factors: national language policies promoting English since 2016, individual efforts to master academic English, and the selective nature of the RaR fellowship itself, which likely attracted researchers already motivated and positioned for international engagement. In addition, most participants had been living in the UK for nearly two years by the time of the survey, a period during which many likely improved their English further while actively seeking both personal and professional integration in an English-speaking academic environment. However, while overall proficiency levels appear strong, it is essential to consider how well these skills align with the specific demands of research ERPP.

Importantly, while formal certification through international tests (IELTS, TOEFL, Cambridge exams) was present for a significant portion of the sample, many participants also relied on informal validation through academic activities or workplace-based assessments. This underscores the idea that for these scholars, lived academic experience, such as writing articles, delivering lectures, or preparing teaching materials, is often viewed as a more authentic measure of English competence than passing standardised tests. Yet standardised language certificates primarily assess general proficiency and may not fully capture the specialised academic writing abilities required for success in ERPP contexts.

Although international English proficiency tests have academically targeted versions such as IELTS Academic, TOEFL iBT, and Cambridge C1 Advanced, they are primarily designed for students entering higher education rather than for experienced researchers or faculty. Given this gap, developing a national English language certification tailored to the Ukrainian academic context could provide a more nuanced and appropriate assessment framework. Such an initiative would better reflect the diverse roles and needs of scholars, clarify qualification standards, and support further professional and scholarly development.

Accessibility also remains a significant issue, as the cost of international test sitting often represents a challenge for an average academic's monthly salary in Ukraine. Without financial support, taking an international language test risks becoming a barrier rather than a motivator. Subsidised testing opportunities, institutional funding schemes, or the creation of field-specific EAP/ERPP assessments could better align language policy goals with academic realities. Moreover, certification systems that include detailed feedback could serve not only as evaluation tools but also as drivers of individual language advance.

The analysis of academic writing practices further supports the data interpretation. Participants prioritised collaborative and research-focused writing tasks, like emailing co-authors, writing abstracts, preparing conference presentations, and drafting research articles, over less frequent activities such as book chapters, grant applications, or teaching academic English. These writing activities closely reflect the core genres associated with ERPP, where researchers must effectively communicate complex findings to international audiences. The pattern suggests that while the cohort is actively engaging with research communication tasks, deeper mastery of more complex academic genres essential for successful publishing may still require additional support.

Self-assessments of academic writing subskills generally showed high confidence in foundational writing stages, such as structuring texts, formulating main ideas, and summarising results. However, slightly lower ratings were observed for writing literature reviews, developing introductions, handling citations, and synthesising conclusions - skills that demand higher-level genre awareness and rhetorical sophistication characteristic of ERPP writing. These findings align with previous observations that while B2 proficiency supports functional academic participation, achieving the stylistic and structural expectations of international research publishing often requires the more advanced capabilities associated with C1 and C2 levels.

These patterns point to a wider need for strategic interventions aimed at strengthening academic writing competencies among displaced Ukrainian researchers and support their long-term integration into international academic networks. In Ukrainian context, supporting scholars' development of advanced ERPP competencies will be crucial for the country's reintegration into the global academic community and the long-term strengthening of its higher education and research sectors. Building institutional capacity for ERPP training, both within Ukraine and in collaboration with international partners, should be seen as a strategic priority.

In the UK context, and more broadly across host countries, these findings underscore the need for academic support frameworks that go beyond general language training. Targeted ERPP-focused initiatives, including mentoring, academic writing groups, targeted workshops, and publication support schemes, can empower displaced scholars not only to continue their research abroad but also to become active contributors to their host institutions' academic life.

Several limitations must be acknowledged. The study relied on self-assessment data, which, while valuable, may not fully align with external measures of academic writing quality, particularly in ERPP contexts. Moreover,

approximately 10 percent of participants had formal backgrounds in English philology or related fields, which may have elevated the overall language competence reported. Combining language specialists with those from non-linguistic disciplines could mask important differences in experiences and needs, a distinction that will be explored further through planned qualitative interviews. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and designing future support initiatives.

Conclusion

The findings suggest that displaced Ukrainian researchers at risk possess strong foundations for engaging in English-medium academia. However, they would benefit from targeted support in developing the advanced academic writing skills required for ERPP. Future initiatives should focus on validating academic English competence through real engagement with research communication tasks, rather than relying solely on formal certification. Tailored ERPP training, combined with discipline-sensitive language coaching, mentoring and peer-reviewing, maintaining writing retreats and communities of practice, could play a critical role in strengthening this cohort's ability to contribute to international scholarship and rebuild academic capacities within Ukraine.

More broadly, the study highlights the urgent need to develop sustainable support structures for forced academic migrants and displaced researchers in an increasingly unstable world. As conflict, political instability, and displacement continue to disrupt scholarly communities, it is essential to create academic environments that recognise and nurture the research potential of displaced scholars. Investing in their academic and linguistic integration is not only an act of solidarity but also a strategic investment in the resilience, diversity, and future innovation of the global academic landscape.

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