

5

From Local to Global: Navigating the Complexities of International Publishing for Uzbek Academics

Saida Radjabzade and Liliya Makovskaya
WESTMINSTER INTERNATIONAL UNIVERSITY IN TASHKENT

Abstract / Annotatsiya

Research is a multifaceted process that involves several stages. Writing and publishing a scholarly paper are an integral part of this process which enables researchers to share their findings with interested audiences and contribute to advancing their fields. This chapter aims to investigate Uzbek academics' views on publishing papers in international journals, making suggestions to improve the current reality of publishing internationally. Employing a mixed-method research approach, 109 responses to a questionnaire were collected, and 15 semi-structured group interviews were organized with academics at state-owned and internationally affiliated universities. The findings are interpreted based on Ginsberg and Visconti's (2022) Domains of Language for Peer Review (DoLPR) framework which promotes clarity, inclusivity and fairness for scholars in the peer review process. The study provides valuable insights into Uzbek academics' publication experiences, with implications for journal policies and writing help systems, such as university-based hubs and more uniform and helpful review processes aimed at making global scholarship more inclusive.

Tadqiqot bir necha bosqichlarni o'z ichiga olgan ko'p qirrali jarayondir. Ilmiy maqola yozish va nashr etish ushbu jarayonning ajralmas qismi bo'lib, tadqiqotchilarga o'z topilmalarini qiziquvchi auditoriya bilan baham ko'rish va o'z sohasi rivojiga hissa qo'shish imkoniyatini beradi. Ushbu maqola o'zbek akademiklarining xalqaro jurnallarda maqola nashr etishga bo'lgan qarashlarini o'rganishni va xalqaro nashrlar bilan bog'liq hozirgi holatni yaxshilash bo'yicha takliflarni ilgari surishni maqsad qiladi. Ushbu tadqiqot aralash uslubiy yondashuvdan foydalanган holda olib borildi. So'rovnomaga orqali 109 ta javob to'plandi,

shuningdek, davlatga qarashli va xalqaro hamkorlikdagi universitetlarning akademiklari bilan 15 ta yarim strukturalangan guruh suhbatlari tashkil etildi. Tadqiqot natijalari Ginsberg va Visconti (2022) tomonidan ilgari surilgan “Taqriz bo‘yicha til domenlari tizimi” doirasida tahlil qilinadi. Ushbu yondashuv tadqiqotchilar uchun ko‘rib chiqish jarayonining aniqligi, inklyuzivligi va adolatli bo‘lishini ta‘minlashga xizmat qiladi. Tadqiqot natijalari o‘zbek akademiklarining nashr etish tajribasi bo‘yicha qimmatli tushunchalarni taqdim etib, jurnal siyosati va ilmiy yozishni qo‘llab-quvvatlash tizimlarini global ilmiy tadqiqotlarni yanada inklyuziv qilishga qaratilgan holda rivojlantirish uchun muhim tavsiyalarni beradi.

Publishing plays an essential role in advancing academic knowledge and ensuring that scholars remain engaged in the global exchange of ideas. For academics in non-English-speaking countries, the journey to publication is often fraught with difficulties. Writing for international audiences demands not only fluency in English but also mastery of academic conventions, stylistic expectations, and rhetorical structures that are shaped by Anglo-American traditions (Koyalán & Mumford, 2011; Habibie & Burgess, 2022). In particular, scholars from the Global South face additional systemic barriers, including limited research funding, lack of institutional writing support, and exclusion from well-established academic networks (Ondari-Okemwa, 2007; Sahakyan & Sivasubramaniam, 2008; Santos, Pereira & Lopes, 2021; Amutuhaire, 2022; Lor, 2023). These disparities slow their progress in publishing and hinder their contributions to international discourse.

Within this broader global context, Uzbek academics as Global South scholars encounter specific challenges in pursuing international publications, which are required for career advancement and institutional ranking. Many scholars in Uzbekistan struggle with language barriers, insufficient institutional support, and the “publish or perish” culture (Eshchanov et al., 2021). As a result, some opt for predatory journals which provide a quick and less demanding path to publication but lack rigorous peer review, thereby diminishing the credibility of Uzbek research on the global stage (Dadabaev & Azizov, 2024). The reliance on such journals reflects the systemic pressures scholars face rather than an intentional disregard for research integrity.

This research explores Uzbek academics’ perspectives on international publishing, identifying the significant barriers they encounter and offering practical solutions to improve their experience. The data analysis is based on 109 survey responses and 15 semi-structured group interviews, providing an in-depth look at how Uzbek scholars navigate the complexities of

international publishing. Using Ginsberg and Visconti's (2022) Domains of Language for Peer Review (DoLPR) framework, this study then interprets and discusses key findings against the DoLPR domains: content, format and use. Furthermore, this study highlights the role of mentorship programs, research writing centers, and more transparent journal selection criteria in supporting scholars whose L1 is not English (Hyland, 2015; Uysal & Selvi, 2021). By addressing these issues, this research contributes to ongoing debates on academic publishing inequalities (e.g., Lillis & Curry, 2010; Hyland, 2016) and proposes strategies to make publishing more accessible for scholars from developing academic systems. Ultimately, the findings advocate for a scholarly environment prioritizing equity, inclusivity, and global diversity in research dissemination.

While the primary focus of this study is to document and analyze the experiences of Uzbek academics in international publishing, it is important to note from the start that we also draw selectively on the DoLPR framework (Ginsberg & Visconti, 2022) mentioned above as a useful conceptual/theoretical tool to illuminate aspects of the peer review process highlighted by our participants. The DoLPR domains were not used to guide data collection or coding; rather, this framework is introduced later in the discussion to help interpret the findings in relation to broader issues of feedback quality and accessibility.

Structurally, the paper first introduces the significance of writing for international publication purposes in the Uzbek context and globally, in today's world of academic publication and dissemination, followed by an explanation of the research context and research instruments used to collect data. The next sections include a thematic description of the key findings and interpretation of the results. The paper concludes by discussing limitations and proposing suggestions for areas of improvement in establishing a transparent and effective reviewing process.

The Journey of Uzbek Scholars in International Publishing

Since its independence in 1991, Uzbekistan has supported the internationalization of Higher Education (HE) by implementing several reforms, though it was not until 2016 that these reforms were implemented in all areas of higher education, including research, as Uralov (2020) reported. The presidential decree "On Approval of the Concept of Development of Higher Education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030" (2019) strengthened the concept of internationalization in higher education. One of the goals of this edict was to raise the number of state universities that could achieve

worldwide educational standards and receive an international rating. It encouraged rivalry among state universities to improve their rating by recruiting international academics and lecturers to teach, organizing master classes, collaborating on projects and publications and publishing internationally (Zufarova, 2020). It also enticed international universities to open branches across the country. According to the statistics by Foreign Language Education (2023), currently, there are 210 universities in Uzbekistan. Of these, 115 are state universities, 65 private universities, and 30 international universities (Foreign Language Education, 2023). The academics are Master's, PhD, and DSc (Doctor of Science) holders with English proficiency levels C1 for language-related faculties, and B2 for non-linguistic majors (Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2024). These qualifications are required to publish internationally in journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science databases or journals accredited by the Supreme Attestation Commission under the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

Additionally, this decree encourages universities to expand the number of English-medium courses they offer. While 832 academics from the US, Europe, and East Asia visited Uzbekistan and imparted their knowledge, 242 candidates had the chance to pursue master's and doctoral degrees, 755 took professional development courses, and 546 participated in state-sponsored internships at prestigious international universities in 2018–2019 (Uralov, 2020). Furthermore, there has been an increase in the quantity of scholarly papers published in worldwide English-language journals with various impact factors. The most common motivations for publishing in English-language journals are knowledge sharing with peers in the field, exposure to the English language, and recognition in the international arena (Khasilova & Roberts, 2021). In fact, Eshchanov et al. (2021) mention that the total number of publications by Uzbek academics increased, reaching 3536 in 2020. According to the researchers, the Uzbek government's "publish or perish" philosophy (Miller et al., 2011) has had, in fact, the opposite effect, as the top-down pressure to publish more and quickly has also significantly increased the number of articles in predatory journals by Uzbek scholars (Dadabaev & Azizov, 2024).

In light of the internationalization agenda, it then becomes essential to investigate academics' perceptions of international publishing and identify the challenges they face when writing articles in English and navigating the peer review process. These insights are vital for understanding the barriers that hinder Uzbek academics from getting published internationally and for proposing viable support schemes to facilitate successful publication in

high-quality journals. This research is also motivated by our own positionalities as Uzbek scholars who use English as a foreign language and work at an international university that demands international publications while providing minimal institutional or external support. Our deep-seated rationale is to advocate for fair global academic practices in which internationalization benefits knowledge-sharing, different perspectives, and scholarship inclusivity.

Methodology

The key research questions driving our study were as follows:

1. What are the Uzbek academics' views and experiences in publishing scholarly papers internationally?
2. What challenges do academics in Uzbekistan face in publishing their articles internationally?
3. What suggestions can Uzbek academics provide to improve their experience in peer-reviewing practices?

Research Instruments

To better capture the views of academics, the present study employed a multi-method approach combining an online opinion-based questionnaire and semi-structured group interviews. The questionnaire aimed to identify academics' views and experiences in publishing internationally. This tool was shared with the participants via email and messenger, and it contained six demographic questions regarding the participants' age, gender, first language (L1), level of education, national or international university status, and position at the HE establishment. The respondents were also asked about their proficiency level in English, as most international publications are in this language. The questionnaire asked about the number of publications the participants have, their perceptions, obstacles, reasons, and the support they need to publish internationally. The questions ranged from multiple-choice and closed to Likert-scale and short-answer. The questionnaire was voluntary and allowed participants to skip questions for which they did not wish to provide answers.

The second research tool was a semi-structured group interview conducted with 60 scholars, divided into 15 groups, who published both internationally and locally. Mostly based on open-ended questions, the interviews were conducted in English and explored their publishing experience, the challenges they face and possible solutions to overcome them. To ensure ethical consideration of the study, all the participants were provided with a consent form

explaining the purpose of the research and central areas of investigation. They were also guaranteed confidentiality and the opportunity to withdraw at any stage of the interview if they did not want to continue. No personal data was collected, and all the interview recordings were coded to ensure the anonymity of the participants.

Participants

As the main purpose of the study was to identify Uzbek academics' perceptions of publishing scholarly articles, only those who published at least one article internationally (i.e., outside the country) were considered for the analysis. Initially, 152 Uzbek scholars were surveyed; however, 43 participants reported that they had never published any paper internationally which led to them being excluded from the analysis. Therefore, the responses of only 109 informants, with at least one international publication, were analyzed in the current paper. As convenience sampling was used in the research, the views and experiences of other possible participants were not considered. In addition, the researchers relied on the respondents' self-reported data on language proficiency and the number of publications, and did not correlate them with other responses provided. The convenience sampling may have limited the generalizability of the findings, and reliance on self-reported data might have introduced potential biases. These limitations, however, do not diminish the value and credibility of the results obtained in the current study as they reflect the opinions and experiences of the study participants and contribute to the current state of knowledge on this issue in the Uzbek context.

The research was conducted among the HE lecturers at national and international universities in Uzbekistan. A national HE establishment is one in which the language of instruction is Uzbek and, in some of them, in addition to Uzbek, there is also Russian, and it does not have affiliation with any other university outside the country. An international HE institution has English as the medium of instruction and is affiliated with or has a partnership with British, American, Indian, and Korean universities. All the HE establishments under study are located in different regions of the country. Overall, 61.5 percent of the research participants work at national universities, and 38.5 percent are employees of international universities.

Most questionnaire respondents were females (75.2%), and the rest identified as males (24.8%). The age ranged from 20-29 to 60-69 years old, with the majority being 30-39 years old. Out of 109 respondents, 83 held a master's degree. The participants had different positions at their workplaces, with the majority being lecturers (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 109)

		Frequency	Percent
Age	Years		
	20–29	5	4.5%
	30–39	52	47.8%
	40–49	47	43.1%
	50–59	4	3.7%
	60–69	1	0.9%
Educational Level	Degree		
	Master's	83	76.1%
	PhD	24	22.0%
	DSc	1	0.9%
Job	Position		
	Associate Lecturer	22	20.2%
	Lecturer	48	44.1%
	Senior Lecturer	31	28.4%
	Associate Professor	8	7.3%

The interview participants were 60 lecturers (R₁–R₆₀) from national and international HE institutions who were divided into 15 groups (G₁–G₁₅). They provided their contact details and informed us about their willingness to be interviewed based on their experience in writing and publishing scholarly papers in English. Among them, 28 were males and 32 females. The ages ranged from 30 to 40 years old. All the study participants were multilingual, mainly speaking Uzbek (as their first language) and Tajik, Karakalpak, Kazakh, Russian, and Tatar. For all participants of the study, English is a foreign language that they studied at their secondary and higher education establishments.

Data Analysis

JASP 0.18.2, a free and open-source statistical analysis program, was applied to analyze the quantitative data (questionnaire results). As the primary purpose of the study was to find out the participants' views on publishing internationally, descriptive statistics were mainly used. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies and percentages, were calculated for all questionnaire items to summarise participant responses and provide an overview of the dataset. This analysis included Likert scale items (e.g., responses ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) and multiple-choice questions. The descriptive statistics were

used to highlight key findings related to preferences in publishing internationally, factors influencing publication process, barriers to publishing internationally encountered by participants, support required for publication, and so on. No inferential statistical analyses were conducted, as the primary aim of the study was to describe participants' views rather than test specific hypotheses.

For the qualitative data (interview results) analysis and categorizing the data, NVivo 14.23.0 was applied using a combined inductive–deductive approach. In the first stage, we worked inductively, allowing themes to emerge directly from participants' words through open coding. At the same time, we also drew on our research questions and previous studies on academic publishing to create some initial deductive codes that provided a useful structure for the analysis. The coding process was iterative: new ideas that surfaced in the transcripts were gradually refined, grouped, and organized into broader thematic categories. Then we compared these new themes to our deductive codes to ensure that both data-driven insights and theory-informed points of view were represented. To make the results more reliable, two researchers coded a small part of the transcripts (about 20% of the dataset) on their own and discussed the differences until they reached an agreement. The codebook that came out of those discussions was used consistently across the whole dataset.

Results

This section provides a thematic analysis of the online questionnaire results obtained from 109 Uzbek university lecturers and 15 semi-structured group interviews carried out with 60 lecturers who have experience of publishing scholarly papers internationally. The questionnaire findings are analyzed following descriptive statistical analysis, while qualitative data from the interviews are coded based on themes relevant to the corresponding findings from the questionnaire analysis. Therefore, the section merges the responses from both research tools, where relevant, to provide a more in-depth analysis; firstly, it starts with the description of language impact on the publication process and then it presents respondents' opinions about publishing academic papers internationally. Finally, it concludes with participants' responses about the challenges prevailing during the publishing process and possible ways to deal with them.

Publishing in a Foreign and First Language

Most international publications are written in English; that is why it was first essential to find out the English language proficiency level among the respondents of the study. The participants' self-reported data indicated that

the majority (64.2 %) had an advanced level (C1), while the rest had either a proficient (C2 - 19.3%) or upper intermediate (B2 - 16.5%) level.

Since the participants informed us that they spoke and wrote in English as a foreign language without major difficulties due to learning the language and obtaining a proficiency level certificate, a set of agreement/disagreement statements was connected to their confidence in publishing in a foreign language or L1. The purpose of these statements was to identify in which language they were more comfortable to publish. The results revealed that the most significant number of respondents considered English a language they felt comfortable publishing in, as more than 82 percent agreed and more than 15 percent slightly agreed with the statement (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2. Publishing in English

I am comfortable publishing in English.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	39	35.78
Agree	51	46.79
Partially Agree	17	15.60
Disagree	2	1.84
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	109	100

Regarding L1 used for publishing, it was found that a little more than half (52.29%) of the respondents did not feel comfortable publishing in L1, which shows that although English is considered to be a foreign language, for some scholars, it is still a preferable language for paper publication (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3. Publishing in L1

I feel comfortable publishing in L1	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	5	4.59
Agree	24	22.02
Partially Agree	23	21.10
Disagree	29	26.61
Partially Disagree	11	10.09
Strongly Disagree	17	15.60
Total	109	100

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews align with the questionnaire results. Several interviewees shared that they preferred publishing in English as it allowed them to reach a broader audience and gain greater academic recognition. However, some also highlighted the difficulties they encountered, particularly in organizing their arguments to meet the expectations of international academic writing standards. One participant explained:

Although I feel comfortable writing in English, I frequently receive feedback on structural and stylistic aspects that are unfamiliar in Uzbek academic writing. (R10, G3)

Due to the requirements to publish in English, it was also important to identify the frequency of international publications among Uzbek scholars. The questionnaire findings demonstrated that the smallest number of papers written in English for the last five years was one, which was mentioned by 12 respondents of the study, and the most significant number was fifteen, which was reported by two participants. Most informants published two to three scholarly articles (20 and 17 participants, respectively), and some produced five to seven articles (6 participants each) in English. The types of papers ranged from book chapters (8.3%) and book reviews (13.8%) to practice-based (67.9%) and research-based articles (80.7%). Thus, the self-reported data revealed that the majority of academics were quite actively involved in the international publication of papers of different genres.

As the participants were aware of and had experience publishing different types of papers, exploring effective ways of learning to write and publish an article in international journals was crucial. The questionnaire results showed that, for more than half of the study participants, the most efficient way was to collaborate with a colleague, as 55.04 percent of respondents indicated this for both purposes (see Table 5.4). The second most important method identified in the research was self-study because almost half of the respondents chose it for the article-writing process (44.95%) and publishing (44.04%). Interestingly, the workshops for article writing provided by international organizations and university research departments were found to be of similar value (27.52% and 26.61%, respectively).

Thus, the analysis of the questionnaire results revealed that Uzbek scholars find it comfortable to publish in English and use different ways of learning how to write an academic paper and publish it in peer-reviewed international journals.

Table 5.4. Ways of Learning about Article Writing and Publishing

Ways of Learning	Article Writing Process		Publishing Internationally	
	%	N=	%	N=
Workshops by international organizations	27.52	30	30.28	33
University research department workshops	26.61	29	28.44	31
A collaboration with a colleague	55.04	60	55.04	60
During my education/studies at the university	48.62	53	40.37	44
Studying on my own / self-study	44.95	49	44.04	48
Through mentorship program	0.92	1	0.92	1

Preference and Funding for Publishing Internationally

Publishing papers locally and internationally is one of the requirements for all the lecturers at Uzbek universities, which is why the respondents were asked to provide their views on publishing articles internationally by expressing their agreement or disagreement with the statements on preferences and obligation ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”. The questionnaire findings demonstrated that most informants were eager to publish in international journals, as more than 72 percent agreed with this statement (see Table 5.5).

Table 5.5. Preference for Publishing Internationally

I prefer publishing internationally.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	40	36.70
Agree	39	35.78
Partially Agree	27	24.77
Partially Disagree	2	1.84
Disagree	1	0.92
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	109	100

However, a greater number of study participants stated they had to publish; almost 89 percent reported agreement with the statement regarding obligation to publish their papers in international journals (see Table 5.6). Although more respondents reported having to publish internationally than preferring to do so, respondents’ views on the importance of publication seem quite positive. This might be explained by the fact that being tasked to publish

internationally can be challenging for many Uzbek scholars, yet at the same time rewarding both for the academics and the university recognition in the international arena. Hence, obligation might further lead to preference to have academic papers published in peer-reviewed journals.

Table 5.6. Obligation to Publish Internationally

I must publish internationally.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	69	63.30
Agree	28	25.70
Partially Agree	9	8.26
Partially Disagree	1	0.91
Disagree	2	1.83
Strongly Disagree	0	0
Total	109	100

Publishing in journals indexed in Scopus or Web of Science or any peer-reviewed journals indexed in other databases is usually free of charge. However, some reputable open-access journals might require a specific fee for publication or editing purposes. Such journals that publish for a fee are generally quicker in the publication turnaround so that they can be of interest to potential article writers. That is why the participants of the current study were asked to express their views on their willingness to fund the publication process and explain what kind of funding they used in case an international journal requires any fee. The questionnaire results demonstrated that the majority (81.66%) admitted they published at their own expense, i.e., using their own money (see Table 5.7). Thus, the research revealed that although publishing internationally might be costly to Uzbek academics, they find contributing to their professional development essential.

Table 5.7. Using Personal Funds for Publishing Internationally

I publish internationally using my funds.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	52	47.71
Agree	37	33.95
Partially Agree	11	10.09
Disagree	6	5.51
Partially Disagree	2	1.84
Strongly Disagree	1	0.92
Total	109	100

In comparison to self-funding, the number of respondents who used external funding to publish internationally was relatively small (at 29.36 percent) and the majority reported not using external funds (see Table 5.8). Such a low percentage is likely explained by the fact that no great number of publishing opportunities are provided to Uzbek scholars, as they can sometimes be funded to conduct research studies outside the institution's premises or present at international conferences.

Table 5.8. Using external funds to publish internationally

I publish internationally using external funding.	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	6	5.51
Agree	26	23.85
Partially Agree	18	16.51
Disagree	32	29.36
Partially Disagree	10	9.17
Strongly Disagree	17	15.60
Total	109	100

Overall, the questionnaire results demonstrate a positive attitude of Uzbek academics toward publishing their scholarly papers in the international journals and their willingness to fund this process when required.

Factors and Barriers Influencing Writing and Publishing in English

Since most Uzbek scholars are required to publish in English, it was also crucial to explore their views on the factors that positively influence the writing process as well as the barriers that prevent them from publishing internationally. The questionnaire findings showed various factors the study participants considered when writing in English. One of the most deciding factors was the topic they wrote about, which comprised 63.30 percent of all other factors (see Table 5.9). The second most important aspect was the motivation to write in English (44.04%), whereas work settings were considered the third most significant factor (34.86%). This hierarchy of responses points to the significant role of disciplinary and structural factors in shaping linguistic choices and competences in the publishing process.

Table 5.9. Factors Influencing Writing Skills in English

#	Key factors	N=	Percent
1.	Topic	69	63.30
2.	Motivation	48	44.04
3.	Work settings	38	34.86
4.	Inspiration	33	30.28
5.	Mood	28	25.69
6.	University requirements	5	4.58
7.	Knowledge of the theme	1	0.92

Regarding barriers, respondents reported different challenges that negatively influenced the writing process and publishing papers internationally (see Table 5.10). The main obstacle mentioned by the participants was the time to produce a scholarly article (74.31%), while the journal reviewers’ feedback was identified as another significant barrier (55.04%). Interestingly, motivation to publish internationally and proficiency level in English were not shown as significant obstacles (19.27% each).

Table 5.10. Barriers to Publishing Internationally

#	Barriers	N=	Percent
1.	Time	81	74.31
2.	Reviewers’ feedback	60	55.04
3.	Proficiency level in English	21	19.27
4.	Motivation	21	19.27
5.	Topic	18	16.51
6.	University requirements	2	1.83
7.	Experience	1	0.92

Views on barriers to publishing internationally were also expressed in interviews. The academics revealed several significant challenges they faced in the publication process. Firstly, the majority mentioned a tendency to choose predatory journals and pay for the publishing process from their own funds. The key reason for that was that such journals make the whole process much faster and, in most cases, have an impact factor or are indexed in international databases. Six interviewees reported a need for more expertise in applying data analysis tools and online platforms required for producing any research-based article. For example, one of them explained (R26, G7):

I think that publishing internationally requires certain competencies and skills in conducting and writing research. Without them, the researcher faces difficulties related to defining the research questions, conducting the research, analyzing it, and finally putting the results of the research into words in academic language.

The other common barriers mentioned by the participants were unclear requirements for article acceptance and vague reasons for article rejection. They highlighted that the review process might take up to a year and include several rounds of reviewing and editing the submitted manuscript. However, this might not lead to the paper's acceptance, and the editing board of the journal can provide no valid reasons. For instance, two informants exemplified:

For my last submission I got rejected but there was not any comment from the reviewers. It seemed strange the rejection without any explanation of the issues. (R₃, G₁)

The journal expects a theoretical contribution which is not just another setting for the theory application. Also, there is a real trend in qualitative research which is not properly addressed at universities and even somehow discriminated. The journals are also not welcoming it, replying that 25 respondents is nothing, meanwhile the previous research was based on 9. In the same journal. So following all the thoughts mentioned above, it seems the journal reviewers are contradicting the journals' calls for papers sometimes. (R₃₅, G₉)

The final obstacle all the interview participants reported was institutional pressure to research and publish scholarly papers every academic year.

Apart from the factors and barriers that influence writing in English, the participants were also asked about additional essential aspects they consider when publishing their papers in international journals (see Table 5.11). The questionnaire results identified a journal's impact factor as the most crucial aspect when publishing articles internationally (77.06%). The other two critical factors reported by the respondents were publication fee (55.05%) and publication process (52.30%). The reputation of the journal and the turnaround time for publication were also considered significant, as they were mentioned by 40.37 and 42.20 percent of informants, respectively.

Table 5.11. Beneficial Aspects of Publishing Internationally

#	Aspects	N=	Percent
1.	Journal impact factor	84	77.06
3.	Fee for publication	60	55.05
5.	Publication process	57	52.30
4.	Publication date	46	42.20
2.	Journal title	44	40.37
6.	Board of reviewers	17	15.60
7.	Q _i index	1	0.92

Thus, both questionnaire and interview results revealed several important factors such as topic for investigation, motivation, as well as journal impact factor and fee for publication process to be important in their writing to publish journey. The study participants also identified such obstacles as time given for publication to be officially released, feedback provided by the journal reviewers, lack of expertise in the data analysis, the length of the reviewing process, and tendency towards bias against scholars whose L1 is not English in the international publishing process.

Support Required for Uzbek Scholars in Publishing Internationally

Having identified the deciding factors and several important challenges Uzbek scholars face, it was necessary to find out what kind of support participants consider should be provided to the academics so that it could be easier for them to publish their papers internationally. The questionnaire findings demonstrated that although all the suggested options were found effective, partnership projects with international colleagues were identified by 62.39 percent of respondents as the most reliable support (see Table 5.12).

Table 5.12. Support for Publishing Internationally

#	Methods	N=	Percent
1.	Partnership projects with international colleagues	68	62.39
2.	Financial support	59	54.13
3.	Academic writing workshops	55	50.46
4.	External motivation	55	50.46
5.	More time	52	47.71

The second most important aspect was the financial incentive, as was suggested by 54.13 percent of informants. Such support as providing academic writing workshops and external motivation was mentioned by 50.46 percent of participants. More time to conduct research and publish the results was considered the fifth most efficient support the study participants reported on (47.71%).

The interviews yielded similar results as the participants also suggested some support that would ease their writing and publication of articles in the international arena. Ten interviewees recommended establishing writing hubs within the universities which could organize practical workshops to improve their research skills and writing articles that can be published in peer-reviewed international journals. Explanatory training in all the details of publishing written work was also highlighted by the respondents. For instance, two participants noted:

I would like to participate in workshops where facilitators will explain how to start writing an article and explain all the details of publishing a written work. (R43, G11)

There should be enough workshops and meaningful support from university or ministry side as publishing is a fairly new trend. (R47, G12)

Another type of support mentioned by four interviewees was the critical role of collaboration and mentorship in the research and publication journey. For example, some of them explained:

It will be more productive if we work with colleagues from other universities and conduct some workshops for both sides. (R7, G2)

I think finding a good mentor is the most helpful in assisting academicians in publications. (R55, G14)

I have been working with two of my colleagues on very big-scale research for the last two years, and during this journey, I have understood that publishing research-based articles requires four things: time, money, network (to carry out research) and ability to put the work done into a paper. I feel I need more training on methodology (which method is good to employ based on the research character) and writing an article. (R60, G15)

Apart from the colleagues' and mentors' support, 5 participants highlighted the importance of excellent guidance and motivating atmosphere for conducting research. This finding is similar to the one in the questionnaire, in which, apart from inspiration and motivation factors, the work settings were identified as crucial. One of the comments was as follows:

A nice guidance and motivating atmosphere, financial and promotional opportunities, training on topic area research process, abstract writing, and analysis. (R18, G5)

The final common suggestion provided by seven interviewees was language support for scholars who write in English as a foreign language in order to promote publishing among them. Although many Uzbek university lecturers speak and write in English as one of their foreign languages, the journal reviewers tend to mention certain language-related issues that can be identified only by the speakers of English as a first language. One participant explained:

Reviewers' feedback and journal editors play an important role in publishing internationally. Journals should offer language support for speakers of English as a foreign language to promote publishing among them instead of making the process hard to go through. (R30, G8)

In spite of some negative comments regarding the publishing process, one of the interviewees mentioned:

Never stop. Firstly, all things are tough but after [it's] done you learn lots of information than you think. Try to read academic books and improve critical thinking. (R39, G10)

Overall, the questionnaire and interview results revealed that despite all the challenges that Uzbek university lecturers face, they are open to receiving the support that can be provided by both the university and international organizations, and eager to learn and enhance their research and writing skills and produce scholarly articles in English that can be published in international peer-reviewed journals. A number of these patterns—especially those concerning manuscript quality, adherence to journal standards, and the clarity of reviewer feedback—correspond with the dimensions outlined in the DoLPR framework introduced at the beginning of the paper. While not utilized to organize the data collection or coding, the framework categories offer a valuable theoretical perspective for analyzing these findings in the subsequent discussion.

Discussion

Since peer reviewing plays a crucial role in the publication process, the discussion of results rests on the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings afforded by the DoLPR framework created by Ginsberg and Visconti (2022). This framing adds a significant interpretative layer to the statistical and thematic analytical organization of the questionnaire and interview data presented in the previous section.

In short, DoLPR highlights three essential aspects of this process: *content*, *format* and *use*. This framework is built on linguistic models incorporating peer feedback qualities and recommends providing constructive feedback following these three domains. The *content* domain focuses on the quality of the paper regarding meaning-making, such as the importance of the paper, research quality and sound conclusion. The *format* domain is about the formatting aspect of the article to be published. It requires reviewers to consider the manuscript's compliance according to the journal's formatting guidelines, which increases the acceptance rate for publication if they have better paragraphing, clear concepts, and accurate use of tone and grammar. The *use* domain refers to the comments provided by the reviewers, and it urges them to be mindful of the tone, clarity, feasibility, and constructiveness of their feedback. It also requires the reviewers to show their support and collegiality through their feedback, so the authors feel motivated, supported and ready to continue to work and improve their manuscript. In addition, the *use* domain includes the way academics navigate the publishing process and adhere to journal policies which influences how they access and use publication opportunities.

The paper thus employs the DoLPR framework as a holistic interpretive instrument to discuss the study results against the three overlapping domains, extending the reach of the framework and its applicability beyond its original peer feedback orientations. Using the DoLPR framework also provides an opportunity for an investigation of participants' responses not only according to linguistic factors but also in keeping with structural differences while shaping academics' similarly strategic responses to feedback in the peer reviewing process per se. Three intersecting areas thus emerge from marrying the research results with the DoLPR domains: quality of research and meaning making, understanding of and adherence to journal guidelines, tone, clarity and accessibility of reviewer feedback, all intimately connected with language and discursive proficiency.

Although many participating Uzbek scholars expressed confidence in writing in English, they encountered difficulties in the publication process

due to the rigorous standards imposed by international journals. A significant challenge was the lack of expertise in writing research papers effectively, compounded by unclear reviewer feedback on critical aspects such as literature review, methodology, data analysis, and contributions to knowledge. As Habi-bie and Burgess (2022) note about non-English researchers more generally, Uzbek scholars also frequently face greater challenges in academic publishing than the speakers of English as a first language due to the complexities of scholarly writing and high expectations in the publication process (see also, Amutuhaire, 2022). Publishing in high-impact journals requires well-developed research and strong theoretical frameworks, which many scholars from the Global South, including Uzbekistan, find challenging to achieve due to insufficient structured support (Sahakyan & Sivasubramaniam, 2008; Amutuhaire, 2022; Lor, 2023).

Uzbek academics reported challenges in maintaining clarity and coherence throughout their manuscripts. Many struggled with organizing their ideas effectively and following the correct citation and referencing formats. These issues align with broader challenges faced by Global South scholars, who often experience difficulties in adhering to established academic writing conventions (Ondari-Okemwa, 2007; Amutuhaire, 2022; Lor, 2023). As academic writing challenges extend beyond language proficiency, scholars also need to master the structural expectations of international journals (Zheng & Guo, 2019; Sahakyan and Sivasubramaniam, 2008). Consequently, many researchers emphasize the need for institutionalized academic writing support centers to guide manuscript preparation and formatting (Zheng & Guo, 2019; Uysal & Selvi, 2021; Amutuhaire, 2022; Lor, 2023).

As these challenges tend to correlate with higher rejection rates when they are not addressed, Uzbek scholars additionally highlighted that their papers were mostly rejected without clear feedback from reviewers which was a disappointing experience for them. There were also cases with feedback provided in complex, abstract language which caused misunderstandings for the novice writers. Eventually, these novice writers gave up rewriting the article during the peer review process. This issue is linked to broader discussions on academic elitism, where reviewers may dismiss the work of non-English-speaking scholars without providing specific critiques (Hyland, 2016; Zheng & Guo, 2019; Amutuhaire, 2022; Lor, 2023). Rejections based primarily on language proficiency rather than research quality reflect an implicit bias that prioritizes English as the dominant language in academia (Zheng & Guo, 2019). Such linguistic gatekeeping has been widely criticized for reinforcing inequalities in academic publishing, as it limits the contributions of multilingual scholars (Ondari-Okemwa, 2007; Amutuhaire, 2022).

Reviewers' biases against speakers of English as a foreign or additional language not only discourage Global South scholars from pursuing international publications but also perpetuate structural disparities in knowledge production. The integration of the DoLPR framework in actual journal peer reviewing practices can help promote a more transparent and constructive review process, where reviewers offer detailed and practical feedback rather than outright rejection, fostering a more inclusive academic publishing environment. For instance, employing the content domain of the DoLPR, reviewers could better facilitate the peer review process to provide more focused feedback on each section to improve the content by highlighting each step in the improvement process (Ginsberg & Visconti, 2022). The reviewer/editorial boards of international journals could create step by step guidelines for providing content-specific feedback to assist those writers whose L1 is not English to better understand their shortcomings in their writing and enhance the quality of their academic papers. Moreover, peer reviewers could help those researchers address particular areas of improvement in language and organization by making explicit recommendations on structural and linguistic changes, assisting them in improving their articles' readability and conformance with publication standards.

Therefore, expanding on the DoLPR framework here in the discussion has offered a helpful means of contextualizing the results within a more general discussion regarding writing brokering and peer review reform. This interpretive move has provided insights that can be applied to similar challenges faced by scholars in other academic systems, especially from the Global South, and it has enhanced rather than directed our thematic analysis.

Conclusion

To conclude, the main purpose of the current research study was to investigate a group of Uzbek academics' views and experiences of publishing papers in international journals, shedding light on both their aspirations and the obstacles they encounter. Survey and interview data pointed to familiar challenges: the time needed to prepare manuscripts, pressure from institutional expectations, financial burdens, and the absence of sustained writing and methodological support. Although participants described international publishing in English as essential for career development, they also portrayed it as a process marked by uneven access and discouragement.

To place these findings in a wider perspective, we drew on the Domains of Language for Peer Review (DoLPR) framework (Ginsberg & Visconti, 2022). The model was not central to our coding, but it offered a useful interpretive

lens in the discussion stage. Read through this framework, participants' accounts suggested that difficulties go beyond linguistic ability and extend into structural and relational aspects of publishing, such as navigating formal requirements and responding to opaque or discouraging feedback. This reinforces calls for peer review to become clearer, more developmental, and more equitable, especially for scholars whose L1 is not English.

The results of this study, voiced, in this case, by Uzbek scholars, tend to be common across other Global South national contexts. Other studies also report limited institutional scaffolding, inconsistent reviewer engagement, and lack of access to professional support in different developing countries (e.g., Habibie & Burgess, 2022; Amutuhaire, 2022). Through the investigation of these lived experiences, we would like to contribute to a growing body of evidence showing how structural and linguistic factors interact to restrict scholars' participation in international research conversations. It is necessary to implement comprehensive measures to address these disparities by involving universities, journals, and support organizations. Educational institutions can establish writing hubs to help academics with editing and peer feedback and attend various training to improve and develop their publishing abilities, which, in turn, can benefit universities directly by improving their image in the academic world internationally. These hubs might function on a local and regional scale, or they could even form global networks, which would make it possible for academics to communicate with one another and share resources beyond national lines. Additionally, mentorship programs that pair early-career researchers with more experienced academics might be beneficial for young academics in the publication process. These programs would remove the mystery that is associated with the publishing process. On the other hand, journals and publishers can widen the scope of developmental reviewing procedures by putting more of a focus on recommendations rather than gatekeeping. It is possible for policymakers and funding agencies to contribute to the enhancement of these activities by using the aid of regional summer schools, joint seminars, and cross-border research networks.

If this study offers a glimpse into the difficulties faced by Uzbek academics in the international publication process, further work is needed to broaden and deepen these insights. Comparative research across a range of Global South contexts could help distinguish challenges that are widely shared from those that are specific to local conditions. Longer-term, longitudinal studies would be especially valuable for tracking how institutional initiatives—such as writing hubs, mentoring schemes, or targeted funding opportunities—shape publishing practices over time. In addition, more fine-grained investigations into the role of English writing proficiency, access to editing support, and the training of

reviewers could shed light on the conditions that make participation in global knowledge production more equitable. In short, building a publishing system that is equitable and inclusive is key in the publication process. If only universities, journals, and supporting organizations came together and established such a system, the academics of the Global South, including Uzbekistan, would effectively contribute more to the global academic landscape.

References

- Amutuhaire, T. (2022). The reality of the “publish or perish” concept, perspectives from the Global South. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, 38(2), 281–294. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12109-022-09879-0>
- Canagarajah, S. (2002). *A geopolitics of academic writing*. Pittsburgh University Press.
- Dadabaev, T., & Azizov, U. (2024). “The bones are ours, the flesh is yours”: When tradition is a constraint in academic mentorship of a contemporary Uzbekistan. *Asian Ethnicity*, 25(3), 521–551. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14631369.2024.2316150>
- Eshchanov, B., Abduraimov, K., Ibragimova, M., & Eshchanov, R. (2021). Efficiency of “publish or perish” policy: Some considerations based on the Uzbekistan experience. *Publications*, 9, 33. <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications9030033>
- Foreign Language Education. (2023). *Statistics on the number of students and universities in Uzbekistan*. <https://fledu.uz/en/statistics-of-the-number-of-students-and-universities-in-uzbekistan/>
- Ginsberg, S. M., & Visconti, C. F. (2022). A proposed framework for peer reviews. *Teaching and Learning in Communication Sciences & Disorders*, 6(2), 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.30707/TLCSD6.2.1660595992.580211>
- Habibie, P., & Burgess, S. (2022). *Scholarly publication trajectories of early-career scholars: Insider Perspectives*. Springer Nature.
- Hyland, K. (2015). *Academic publishing: Issues and challenges in the construction of knowledge*. Oxford University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2016). Academic publishing and the myth of linguistic injustice. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 31, 58–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2016.01.005>
- Koyalán, A., & Mumford, S. (2011). Changes to English as an additional language writers’ research article: From spoken to written register. *English for Specific Purposes*, 30(2), 113–123. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2010.10.001>
- Khasilova, D., & Roberts, A. (2021). English academic writing and publishing in global context: A glance into Uzbekistan higher education. *Academic Research in Educational Sciences*, 2, 14–21. <https://doi.org/10.3102/1887160>
- Lillis, T. M., & Curry, M. J. (2010). *Academic publishing in a global context: The politics and practices of publishing in English*. Routledge.
- Lee, I. (2014). Publish or perish: The myth and reality of academic publishing. *Language Teaching*, 47(2), 250–261. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444811000504>
- Lor, P. (2023). Scholarly publishing and peer review in the Global South: The role of the reviewer. *JLIS. it*, 14(1), 10–29. <https://doi.org/10.36253/jlis.it-512>

- Miller, A. N., Taylor, S. G., & Bedeian, A. G. (2011). Publish or perish: Academic life as management faculty live it. *The Career Development International, 16*(5), 422-445. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620431111167751>
- Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Innovation of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2024). *Requirements for foreign language certificates for admission to master's and doctoral programs will be eased*. <https://gov.uz/en/edu/news/view/11203>
- Ondari-Okemwa, E. (2007). Scholarly publishing in Sub-Saharan Africa in the twenty-first century: Challenges and opportunities. *First Monday, 12*(10). <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v12i10.1966>
- Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2019). *On approval of the concept of development of higher education of the Republic of Uzbekistan until 2030*. <https://lex.uz/docs/-4545884>
- Santos, C., Pereira, F., & Lopes, A. (2021). Teaching, research, and publication: The challenges of academic work. In I. Huet, T. Pessoa, & F. S. Murta (Eds.), *Excellence in teaching and learning in higher education* (pp. 199-216). Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra. <https://doi.org/10.14195/978-989-26-2134-0>
- Sahakyan, T., & Sivasubramaniam, S. (2008). The difficulties of Armenian scholars trying to publish in international journals. *ABAC Journal, 28*(2), 31-51. <http://www.assumptionjournal.au.edu/index.php/abacjournal/article/view/541/487>
- Uralov, O. S. (2020). Internationalization of higher education in Uzbekistan. *Social Sciences & Humanities Open, 2*(1), 100015. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssaoh.2020.100015>
- Uysal, H. H., & Selvi, B. (2021). Writing centers as a solution to the problems of international scholars in writing for publication. *International Online Journal of Education and Teaching, 8*(1), 288-309. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1286514.pdf>
- Zheng, Y., & Guo, X. (2019). Publishing in and about English: Challenges and opportunities of Chinese multilingual scholars' language practices in academic publishing. *Language Policy, 18*(1), 107-130. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9464-8>
- Zufarova, N. (2020). Influence of internalization to the competitiveness of higher education in The Republic of Uzbekistan. *Asian Journal of Technology & Management Research, 10*(01), 130-135. https://ajtmr.com/papers/Vol10Issue1/Vol10Iss1_P19.pdf