



Writing across International Borders: Translation and Transplantation



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Central & Eastern Europe before 1989: Writing in Higher Education

Central & Eastern Europe after 1989: *Some Writing Initiatives in HE*





Slovakia

- Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bratislava

Romania

- Babes Bolyai University, Cluj

Lithuania

- Lithuanian Christian College University, Klaipeda
- English Department, University of Vilnius

Ukraine

- English Department, University of Lviv

Hungary

- English Department, University of Szeged
- Central European University

Georgia

- Centre for Social Sciences, Tbilisi State University

Translation into the local language

| | Language of the program | Language of the university/ department | Reasons for choice of language of program |
|----------------------|-------------------------|--|---|
| Bratislava, Slovakia | English | Slovak | Sts need to write in English |
| Cluj, Romania | Romanian | Romanian | Inadequate st English |
| Klaipeda, Lithuania | English | English | Language of institution |
| Vilnius, Lithuania | English | English | Language of unit |
| Lviv, Ukraine | English | English | Language of unit |
| Szeged, Hungary | English | English | Language of unit |
| CEU, Hungary | English | English | Language of institution |
| Tbilisi, Georgia | Georgian | Georgian | Inadequate st English |



Who is driving the change?

| | Agents of change | Professional background | Adaptation and experimentation |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Bratislava, Slovakia | Former alumni | Social scientists | No |
| Cluj, Romania | Former alumni | Social scientists | No |
| Klaipeda, Lithuania | Foreign experts | English teachers | Yes |
| Vilnius, Lithuania | Local academic | Linguist | Yes |
| Lviv, Ukraine | Foreign experts | English teachers | Yes |
| Szeged, Hungary | Foreign experts | English teachers | Yes |
| CEU, Hungary | Foreign experts | English teachers | Yes |
| Tbilisi, Georgia | Local academic | Social scientist | No |



Translation or transplant?

Cosmin Marian, current writing teacher in the Cluj program (social scientist):

“...our department had in the past visiting or Fulbright professors that used to teach this course ... They developed a pattern and I try to stay as close with the models as possible.”





On the topic of cultural imperialism

Xhavit Rexhai, professor of English
Prishtina University (Kosovo):

“We need to import the English model of writing into Albanian and get rid of all these conservative teachers of Albanian language with their old-fashioned ideas of writing”.



More on cultural imperialism

Marine Chitashvili, Georgian psychologist, founder of the Centre for Social Sciences at Tbilisi University

“Georgian doesn’t have its own culture of academic scholarship. The way we have written until now is the Russian way, imposed upon us as part of the Russian empire in the 19th century and the Soviet in the 20th. We have the choice to keep the Russian way of writing which is not ours, or exchange it for the Anglo-Saxon way of writing, which is also not inherently Georgian.”*





Who does the teaching?

Teachers of the local language

- Have a different agenda
- Very traditional training
- Would need retraining from scratch
- Likely to retain emotional attachment to 'belletristik'
- Many don't speak English



Who does the teaching?

Teachers of English as a foreign language

- Have more up-to-date methodological training, thanks to USAID / British Council
- Are able to read literature in English on writing theory, or be trained in US/UK.

But:

- Hard to dissociate themselves from Anglophile cultural baggage: both how they are seen by others and how they see themselves.



Who does the teaching?

Teachers of discipline (social scientists)

- Know the needs of the discipline
- Not attached to any emotional/cultural features of English or their own language

But

- Often glean knowledge of writing teaching second-hand from EFL teachers (Bratislava, Cluj teachers studied at CEU, Tbilisi employed me as consultant).
- May feel teaching writing is not their area of expertise or their real business.
- May feel teaching writing is a menial task.

