Research question and why it is important:

This action research project derives from my experience supporting postgraduate students and staff as they prepare materials for publication. Much of this support happens through a peer-review group in which participants circulate drafts, read each other's work, and then offer oral feedback in an online or in-person session. The feedback usually focuses on how the text is received by its audience – clarity, structure, argument, tone – rather than on the technical correctness of subject-specific content.

Reflecting on this practice, I became increasingly interested in how we might better support students whose first language is not English. While issues around academic writing inevitably arise – given that academic journals tend to be anchored in specific conventions – my interest is not limited to academic texts. Students share a wide range of public-facing work: conference papers, magazine articles, manifestos, performance scripts, and more. Each of these formats has its own linguistic expectations, yet all of them require confidence and fluency in English in order to fulfil specific standards.

That said, I acknowledge that writing is only one part of the publishing ecosystem. Barriers also exist outside the text: publishing norms, disciplinary gatekeeping, and structural biases that can make publication more challenging for some authors than others. Publication outcomes are not indicators of quality: rejection does not necessarily mean that a text is not good, and acceptance does not always equate to rigour.

Why focus on language? Because, despite the extensive support offered by universities, including UAL and many other UK institutions, students who work in a second language still face additional challenges when writing, editing, and presenting their work. English remains the dominant language of academic and non-academic publishing, which places native speakers at advantage. Reducing language-related barriers is in this sense a matter of fairness.

Why focus on publication? Because writing for publication demands a particularly high standard. Many journals even recommend that authors have their work proofread or edited by a native English speaker.

By undertaking this research I intend to understand what kinds of linguistic support students need, how existing tools and practices serve them, and where gaps remain within the context of writing for publication.

Some of the questions that I intend to ask in this research are:
- Where do the UAL's resources fall short in supporting materials for publication to achieve a specific standard?
- What would a more inclusive peer-review model look like for multilingual writers?

Other questions that this paper does not focus but that are tangent to the problematic exposed:
- What does 'good writing' mean in current embedded peer-review practices?
- How do students define effective linguistic support?
- Are students aware of the quality of their own writing?
- How do power, identity, and confidence intersect with language use in academic spaces?