Translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogic strategy for South African universities

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Abstract

This article explores the persistent challenges posed by colonial pedagogies in South African universities, with a specific focus on the University of Cape Town (UCT). The imposition of colonial languages such as English and Afrikaans in South African universities has perpetuated a linguistic hierarchy wherein these two languages dominate, sidelining the indigenous African languages. Despite democratic changes in 1994, the continued dominance of the two colonial languages in teaching and learning reinforces a coloniality of language, knowledge, and power. In response to this, the article advocates for translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogy to disrupt existing power dynamics and promote linguistic inclusivity and justice in teaching and learning. The concept of translanguaging is introduced, and its potential as a transformative pedagogy for leveraging multilingual competence among students is explored. The article contends that translanguaging introduces a decolonial framework for learning and teaching for multilingual and multicultural students. An example from the University of Cape Town (UCT) is provided to demonstrate how translanguaging pedagogy can serve as a decolonial pedagogic strategy in the classroom. Methodologically, the study employed linguistic ethnography techniques to gather data. The data analysis illustrates the strategies employed by multilingual students to challenge and navigate the dominance of English academic language through the practice of translanguaging.

Keywords: Translanguaging, decolonial pedagogic strategy, linguistic repertoires, coloniality of language, language ideologies

Introduction

This article explores the persistent challenges posed by pedagogies based on colonial languages in South African universities, particularly focusing on the coloniality of language and the need for decolonial pedagogic approaches (Bhat et al., 2022) The challenge of the coloniality of language in South African universities is intricately connected to the broader framework of coloniality with its enduring impact on societies and cultures (Mbembe, 2016). Coloniality encompasses the enduring social, economic, political, and cultural structures and power dynamics persisting even after the cessation of colonial rule (Skuttnabb-Kanga et al., 2009).

Within the university context, the coloniality of language specifically refers to how colonial powers imposed their languages on higher education and the ongoing repercussions of this linguistic dominance (Veronelli, 2018). During the colonial era, European powers often compelled universities to adopt their languages, leading to the suppression and devaluation of the indigenous languages spoken by native populations (Alexander, 1989; Phillipson, 2001). This linguistic imposition functioned as a tool of cultural control, reinforcing the power differentials between colonisers and the colonised (Bhat et al., 2022).

In the context of South African universities, English and Afrikaans were imposed as dominant and superior languages during the colonial and apartheid eras, contributing to the marginalisation and stigmatisation of indigenous languages. Despite the democratic changes of 1994, South African universities persist in prioritising the use of colonial languages, such as English and Afrikaans (Madiba, 2010, 2018). This

perpetuates a linguistic hierarchy where the languages of the colonisers are regarded as superior, while indigenous languages are relegated to an inferior status.

This article aims to demonstrate how translanguaging can be used as a decolonial pedagogic strategy in South African universities. The article explores translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogic strategy, unravelling its multifaceted nature and transformative potential for challenging colonial legacies within linguistic structures and practices. It contends that translanguaging introduces a decolonial approach for learning and teaching, particularly for multilingual and multicultural students. The article explores the key aspects of translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogy and its potential for transforming teaching and learning in South African universities, with a special focus on the University of Cape Town (UCT). The empirical foundation for this study is rooted in the four-year multilingual project titled "Overcoming Barriers in University Education in South Africa (OBUESA)", which piloted the use of translanguaging in selected programmes (Madiba, 2018). Methodologically, the study employed linguistic ethnography techniques to gather data. The data analysis illustrates the strategies employed by multilingual students to challenge and navigate the dominance of English academic language through the practice of translanguaging.

Translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogy

The term 'translanguaging' was coined in the 1980s by Cen Williams, a Welsh educator, and was defined as "the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson" (Lewis et al., 2012: 643). According to Cen Williams, one language could be used in teaching and learning situations to reinforce another to increase learners' deep understanding and participation in learning and teaching activities (Lewis et al., 2012). Since its emergence, translanguaging has been the focus of many studies on multilingual education, e.g., García (2009), Creese and Blackledge (2010, 2011), Baker (2011), Canagarajah (2011) and Hornberger and Link (2012), and the number of academic

articles and books have grown exponentially to the extent that a general acceptance now exists among scholars that a translanguaging 'turn' has been reached (García & Li, 2014). Various scholars in many ways have contributed to the development of a translanguaging theoretical framework and its practical implementation.

Recently, there has been increased attention on translanguaging pedagogy in the realm of bi- or multilingual education (García, 2009; Creese & Blackledge, 2010, 2011; Baker, 2011; Canagarajah, 2011, 2013, 2020; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Makalela, 2015). As a pedagogic strategy, translanguaging offers a decolonial strategy to confront and dismantle colonial linguistic structures and monolingual pedagogies. One crucial aspect of translanguaging pedagogy as a decolonial strategy involves its critical examination of colonial perspectives on language, multilingualism, and language policy.

Regarding language, translanguaging challenges the colonial or structuralist conception of language. It questions the construct of language as a discrete and separate entity or autonomous language that can be easily categorised or counted. This perspective, rooted in the European nation-state model of one nation, one language, assumes that successful communication relies on a shared language with standardised norms (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). Critically, this colonial view has faced substantial criticism, with scholars adopting a poststructuralist outlook that views language as fluid and porous, emphasising the dynamic movement across languages (Garcia & Li, 2014).

Within the approach of translanguaging pedagogy, languages are regarded as social constructs rather than natural phenomena (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007). While the understanding of languages as social constructs is now widely accepted, the persistence of the bounded nature of language systems in South Africa remains a challenge. Some scholars argue that these boundaries are essential for social redress and justice. However, an insistence on language boundaries

and a standard language ideology for indigenous African languages risks creating what Canagarajah (2007) terms a 'linguistic ghetto'. Many indigenous African languages in South Africa are translingual. Tshivenda, for example, is a translingual language characterised by heterogeneity, fluidity, and dynamism that predates South Africa's colonisation. This language originated in Mapungubwe as a fusion of the Shona and Sotho languages. Archaeological and ethnolinguistic studies reveal its roots in the amalgamation of Shona and Sotho, reflected in its lexicon's affinity with Sotho and grammar with Shona. The translingual nature of Tshivenda has been further shaped by geo-linguistic contacts with neighbouring speech communities (Madiba, 1994).

Furthermore, as a decolonial strategy, translanguaging challenges the colonial conception of multilingualism as repeated parallel monolingualism. It rejects the structuralist approach to multilingualism in favour of viewing it as a fluid and flexible. Research on multilingual students indicates they use language fluidly, shifting between and mixing languages in informal conversations and discussions around written texts.

Moreover, translanguaging pedagogy is decolonial as it focuses on the speakers' linguistic repertoires rather than standard languages. Translanguaging posits that bi- or multilingual students possess a linguistic repertoire from which they strategically select features to communicate effectively (García & Li, 2014). This approach challenges prevailing linguistic hierarchies imposed by colonial languages, allowing students to use language fluidly and flexibly to derive meaning beyond one or two languages (Creese & Blackledge, 2010). Canagarajah (2013, 2020) emphasises 'translingual practice', an integrated proficiency that can be creative and enabling, and offers possibilities for voice. Translanguaging pedagogy empowers multilingual students to draw from their full linguistic repertoires, maximising their learning by transcending linguistic boundaries. Such empowerment not only facilitates the intentional integration of local and English academic discourse but also serves as a form of resistance, re-appropriation, and transformation of English academic discourse (Canagarajah, 2007: 56).

Crucially, translanguaging is a decolonial strategy as it enables multilingual students to develop new discursive practices and forms while reflecting on and constructing or modifying their sociocultural identities and values. This process counters the monoglossic ideology and epistemological monocentric tendencies that often underlie the development of English academic language in South African universities.

Translanguaging pedagogy, at its core, promotes language use for knowledge acquisition, sense-making, articulating thoughts, and communication. It proves beneficial for both monolingual and multilingual learners, fostering ongoing interactive meaning-making. Multilingual students engaging in translanguaging experience enhanced cognitive processes, including creativity and criticality.

Lastly, translanguaging pedagogy as a decolonial strategy places significant emphasis on the agency of multilingual learners. By drawing from diverse linguistic features, students can actively engage with, or challenge socially constructed linguistic norms and standards. As a transformative pedagogy, translanguaging has the potential to harness the multilingual competence of bilingual students, reshaping educational practices to become more inclusive and reflective of the linguistic realities of diverse student populations (Garcia & Li, 2014).

UCT case study on the use of translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogy

Description of the Study

This section provides a study of the application of translanguaging pedagogy as a decolonial strategy at the University of Cape Town (UCT). UCT's historical context, marked by a policy of English as the exclusive medium of instruction since its establishment in

1829, makes it an interesting case for exploring translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogic strategy. While the policy has evolved to English-plus, aligning with the Language Policy for Higher Education (Department of Higher Education, 2002), UCT's language policy emphasises language as autonomous systems. It acknowledges the personal, social, and educational significance of multilingualism, emphasising the preparation of students for active participation in a multilingual society, where proficiency and awareness in multiple languages are essential (University of Cape Town, 2013: 1).

The study on translanguaging pedagogy formed part of a broader research project titled "Overcoming Barriers in University Education in South Africa" (2016-2017) (OBUESA). This project was a collaborative effort aimed at investigating the use of translanguaging in selected South African universities and building capacity among university lecturers in South Africa. Spearheaded by distinguished scholars from the University of Birmingham and the University of Cape Town, alongside the invaluable support of Universities South Africa (USAf), this project aimed to harness the potential of multilingualism as a resource in teaching and learning.

The focus of the project was mainly on translanguaging pedagogy in higher education. A translanguaging pedagogy provides enhanced access to success because students can learn through languages in which they are proficient and confident. Translanguaging pedagogy offers "the opportunity to learn and grow while enjoying the intellectual and emotional benefits of learners' linguistic resources" (Otheguy, García and Reid, 2015). This project was aimed at enabling the implementation of language policy in universities in South Africa through: a collaborative ethnographic research project to evaluate training in translanguaging as pedagogy; presentation of outcomes of the evaluation in workshops across four regions of South Africa; partnership with Universities South Africa (USAf) to plan the implementation of multilingual teaching strategies in universities, including teacher education programmes; production of a film which will be a durable resource to exemplify practice in translanguaging as pedagogy in higher education.

The research project was built on 15 years of research in multilingual education contexts which has contributed to the development of translanguaging as pedagogy (Blackledge & Creese 2010, 2014; Creese & Blackledge 2010, 2011). It also extended the "Translation and Translanguaging: Investigating Linguistic and Cultural Transformations in Superdiverse Wards in Four UK Cities' (TLANG)", a research project funded as a Large Grant in the AHRC Translating Cultures theme. The four-year TLANG research project was a collaboration between six UK universities and was directed by Angela Creese at University of Birmingham. The interdisciplinary research programme developed new understandings of translanguaging in cities in the UK and communicating these to policymakers and communities locally, nationally, and internationally. The research demonstrated that multilingual speakers do not keep languages separate but deploy diverse communicative repertoires in everyday interaction. Findings identify the creative and transformative potential of translanguaging and provide evidence that translanguaging is a normative practice in the lives of multilingual speakers.

The main aim of the OBUESA project was to inform the implementation of language policy to provide wider access to, and extended success in, higher education in South Africa for currently under-represented sections of society

Objectives: This aim was achieved by meeting the following objectives:

1. To enhance knowledge and understanding of translanguaging as pedagogy in higher education in South Africa.

2. To extend lecturers' and tutors' knowledge and expertise in

implementing translanguaging as pedagogy in higher education in South Africa.

3. To develop policy makers' knowledge and expertise in the development of translanguaging as pedagogy in higher education in South Africa.

4. To develop the research capacity and international networks of ten early-career South African researchers on translanguaging.

The Project research activities encompassed three distinct yet interconnected case studies, each shedding light on the multifaceted nature of translanguaging in educational settings. The first one was a concept literacy project for selected disciplines. The second one was the fourth fourth-year support tutorials in the occupational therapy degree, and lastly the Foundation Phase Literacy Teacher Education.

The focus of this article is on the first one, that is, concept literacy. The term 'concept literacy' is new in South Africa and it means "the ability to "read, understand, and use learning area-specific words, terms, and related language forms integral to knowledge in learning areas" (Young et al., 2005). The study explored the use of translanguaging to teach economics concepts such as deficit, capital, opportunity cost and so forth.

The study employed an ethnolinguistic methodology for data collection, aligning with the principles of Linguistic Ethnography outlined by Copland and Creese (2015) and Rampton, Maybin and Roberts (2014). Ethical clearance and informed consent were obtained, and the collected data, including video footage, were transcribed and translated where necessary. The analysis aimed to identify instances of translanguaging used to challenge English hegemony in academic contexts and foster new dimensions of academic language.

The project involved two groups of first-year students from the Extended Academic Development Programme in the Faculty of Commerce, focusing on isiXhosa and Tshivenda. This article concentrates on the isiXhosa tutorials. Two one-hour tutorials were conducted for each group, with a designated tutor supporting the principal investigator in facilitating discussions. Students were encouraged to use both English and their home language (isiXhosa) during the tutorial discussions. A multilingual glossary of economics terms was created and uploaded on *Vula* online for the students' reference. Before the tutorials, students were asked to read the definition and translations of the deficit concept on *Vula*, comment, and write down their understanding of the term and its translations in their home language. Subsequently, discussions unfolded in both English and isiXhosa. The following excerpts offer insights into the outcomes of the project:

EXCERPT 1: English/isiXhosa tutorial on "What is the meaning of 'deficit'?"

1. S1: I can describe it as when you have less of something and refer to it as a loss.

2. S2: It can also be described as when your inputs are less than your outputs, but all in all, it can be described as a shortage.

3. Facilitator: It is interesting because you seem to be a *(sic)* disagreeing here.

4. [Laughs…] Okay let's hear it in Xhosa or isiXhosa now.

5. [Some laughs about pronunciations…]

6. S1: It's like *mhhh ngesiXhosa ithetha intoba na ukusebenzisa imali ude ugqithisele kule mali ubuyibekile. Masithi uthathe imali ubuzoyisebenzisa kwinto ethile, uze usebenzise ngaphezu kwalo mali ubuyibekile. Uzixelele ukuba uza kusebenzisa mhlawumbi ikhulu, uze ngoku usebenzise ikhulu* plus *neshumi.* <It is like mhh in isiXhosa if you use money until you also use the saving. Let's say you took

money that you would use for something else, and then use[d] the money over and above what you have saved. You told yourself you will *(sic)* use one hundred, and then use one hundred and ten.>

7. S3: *Ukutsho ke nam ndithe yilahleko*. <I also said it is a loss.>

8. Facilitator: *Uthetha ukuthi yilahleko?* <You mean it is a loss?>

8. S1 and S2: *Sithetha ukuthi yiloss*. <We are saying it is a loss.>

9. S2: *Sithetha ngelahleko kwishishini, masithi umzekelo ishishini lithengisa impahla, incwadi zalo ziye zibe nenani elikhulu kuneli liseluvalelweni. Lo nto ithetha ukuba liyalahlekelwa.*<We talk about loss in a business, when we say the business sells goods, its expenditure became more than the savings. This means the business is incurring a loss.>

10. Facilitator: Let's look at that one first, the loss and let's discuss it first. can we say deficit is a loss.

11. S3: Because *nam ndithe yilahleko kwishishini.* <I also said it is a loss in a business.>

12. Facilitator: *Yintoni ilahleko ngesiNgesi?* Can that be a loss? <What is *ilahleko* in English?>

13. S1 and S3: Oh! Okay *ilahleko* is a loss. <Oh! Okay *ilahleko* is a loss>

14. S1: *Olu hlobo ndithetha ngalo nam, abalahlekelwanga yinto yonke, masithi balahlekelwe yinto embalwa. Asiyo* deficit *ke leyo okanye yahlukane?* <The way I am speaking now, they have not lost everything, when we say the lost certain goods. Is that not deficit or is it different?>

15. S2: *Kaloku i*deficit is the difference between the two. <This way, deficit is the difference between the two.>

16. S1: To me that is more than *i*loss because according *kwabanye abantu bathi i*deficit is when you spend more than you wanted. <To me that is more a loss because according to other people deficit is when you spend more than you wanted.>

17. S2: *Umzekelo kwezi mpahla zakho, kwi*-economics *ufune impahla ezibiza i*R100, *kwaze kwathengwa eziyi*-120 more *uzoba nantoni apho? Uzoba ne*surplus *andithi. Ngoku wena uthi*, I mean— (interruption) <An example, your goods in economics may be R100, and they are then bought at 120 more, how much will you have? You will have surplus, isn't? Then you say, I mean— (interruption)>

18. S3: *Uthi kaloku u*P........, *le mali iseluvalelweni incinci kunexabiso lezinto ozikhuphileyo. Masithi iijezi zakho ziku*cost(*e*) *malini, masithi i*R100, *wena imali oyizuzileyo yi*R50, *ngoku imali eseluvalelweni lakho yi*R50. *Yi*loss *ke leyo.*<You mean this way… the saving is smaller than the price of goods you have taken. Let's say a jersey costs R100 to produce, and the money you have gained is R50. This is [a] loss.>

19. S4: *i*loss is it like *i*difference between loss and deficit? <Is it loss, like is there a difference between loss and deficit?>

In this tutorial, students were assigned the task of providing English definitions for the concept of 'deficit'. Formulating a conceptual definition can be a challenging undertaking for students, requiring a profound understanding of the subject matter. Initial observations revealed that the students offered concise English definitions, which the tutor deemed somewhat superficial. These definitions suggested a basic and limited grasp of the concept. It is noteworthy that the English definitions lacked elaboration and did not include illustrative examples. This observation aligns with the widespread recognition at UCT that students, especially those for whom English is not their

first language, often face difficulties actively participating in class discussions.

However, a significant shift occurred when students were instructed to switch to isiXhosa. They displayed enthusiasm and provided elaborate definitions supported by practical examples. Their isiXhosa definitions demonstrated a critical engagement with the concept of deficit, showcasing a deeper understanding. In contrast to the initial surface-level understanding of deficit as 'less of something', 'shortage', and 'loss', the students' isiXhosa definitions reflected a profound comprehension of deficit as the disparity between inflows and outflows. This transformation exemplifies the primary objective of translanguaging pedagogy.

EXCERPT 2: English/isiXhosa tutorial on "What is the difference between 'loss; and 'deficit'?"

20. Facilitator: Okay, what is the difference between loss and deficit then?

21. S4: I'd say like in Xhosa, *uMzantsi Afrika uyabo…*<I would say like in Xhosa, South Africa has…>

22. All: *e-e-e i-*export *ne-*import <Export and import>

23. S4: *Masithi uMzantsi Afrika kwi-e*xport *ne-i*mport *uyabona u-i*mport (a) more than no,no,no it's like *u-*export (a) more than *ufumana,* that's a deficit *leyo.* <When we say South Africa exports and imports, import more than, no, no, no, it is like you export more than you receive, that's a deficit.>

24. S2: *Uthi a-*import(*e*) more than *a-*export. (a) <You mean you import more than you export.>

25. S4: *Yha,* that means means *u-*export(a) more than *uba ufumana.* <Yes, you export more than you receive.>

26. S1: that's the same thing

27. S2: *Ndingathi i*deficit *mna, singayicalula ngendlela ezohlukeneyo. Uba sisondela kwelicala le-*import *ne-*export. *Uyaqaphela nhe kwi-*expor*t uba ndithenga ngemali yam.* Into *esijonga kuyo phaya yi*rand *a neh, uba yimalini i*rand, *yimalini i*country *eyikhuphileyo yayisa kwamanye amazwe, yabe yona ifumene inkunzi ezingakanani kula mazwe. Ekugqibeleni* is not about *i*loss is about *umahluko.* <I can say deficit can be explained in different ways. When it comes to import and export, you are aware that export is when I buy with my money. What we are looking at here is the rand, that is how much is the rand, what money the country has taken to other countries, and then it gets capital back from these countries. In the end it is not about the loss, it is about the difference.>

28. Facilitator: *Yha yha,* the concept of loss there does not seem to fit it is because now you are exporting more, but you are importing less the country is sustaining loss than gaining in the country. The difference is what we brought in the country than we take out of the country.

29. S2: *E-e, i*deficit *andithi singayibeka* in terms of *ishishini lodwa, uyaqaphela kule nto yoba i*country *i-*export(a) *ayenzi* loss, *i*loss *kuxa mna ndithengisile ndaza ndafumana imali encinci kunale mna ndiyikhuphileyo. i*loss *yona isekuthengiseni.* <Yes, a deficit can be described in terms of a business, you understand that the country does not incur loss on what it has exported, for me a loss is when I have sold goods and then got less money that what I have spent. Loss occurs with sale. >

30. S1: Okay, *xa si-*import(e) more than *i*country, than *si-*export(e) *iba njani i*balance *yayo*? <Okay, when a country

import more than export, how is the balance?

31. S2: *Yi*surplus *ke leyo*. <This is surplus.>

32. S4: No *asiyos*urplus, if *u*-import (a) more than you spend more money, you export less. <No, this is not surplus, if you import more than you spend more money, you export less.>

33. S2 and S3: That means you export more products

34. S4: No, is not about product, you look at *imali*.<No, it is not about product, you look at the money.>

In this example, students were tasked with discerning the distinctions between deficit and loss, posing a challenging, high-order question that necessitates advanced thinking skills. The objective was to evaluate students' comprehension of the deficit concept through the application of translanguaging pedagogy. Although the students were not explicitly familiar with the term 'translanguaging', it became apparent that they had been exposed to translanguaging pedagogical practices during their earlier years of schooling (cf. Probyn, 2009). The ensuing discussion on the variance between deficit and loss proved dynamic and animated, with students tapping into linguistic resources from both English and isiXhosa varieties, extending beyond these linguistic boundaries (cf. Li, 2011: 1223). This approach not only defied linguistic restrictions but also maximised the potential for students' learning.

Another observed advantage of translanguaging in this study was its promotion of 'languaging', described by Li (2011: 1223) as "the process of using language to gain knowledge, to make sense, to articulate one's thought and to communicate about using language". The students' definitions in isiXhosa showcased a deeper understanding of the discussed concept.

For translanguaging to become an inherent part of their learning pedagogy, students must open and sustain translanguaging spaces, consistently utilising these spaces when exploring various concepts (Li, 2011). The students in question demonstrated such initiative in this context, with the facilitator and the tutor assuming facilitative roles as the student's asserted agency over their learning.

The example above illustrates various translanguaging strategies employed by students, showcasing how students gained epistemic access and comprehension by drawing on their full linguistic repertoires during the tutorial. Thus, Hurst et al. (2017) emphasise the need for surfacing and valuing students' linguistic repertoires in class.

EXCERPT 3: Students' critical reflections on translanguaging pedagogy as a decolonial strategy

Students participating in the project were interviewed at the end to give their reflections on the project. The following are a few responses from the interview:

35. Facilitator: I think basically the exercise which we are trying to do here, if we look at these concepts and how they were defined in English and then try to engage with them in our own language, it can help us to make sense, instead of just trying to rote-learn, the tendency in most cases is to memorise phrases and so on, without understanding the meaning.

36. S1.: The thing is sometimes it becomes challenging, because most of us are not educated in deep-deep Xhosa, we just have maybe home language until matric, or grade 7 or something and then they give us these and you go to a Xhosa website and it has got like deep-deep, (dip) which you have never seen.

37. Facilitator: Okay, the level

38. **S1**: Like it does not help sometimes, because it is just deep deep

39. S2: Xhosa is too broad, it is like, for instance, even *nase* Eastern Cape isiXhosa, *bakhona abantu abasithetha uqonde ukuba, ewe* it is my language

but *andimvanga*. <isiXhosa is too broad, for instance, even in the Eastern Cape there are people who speak isiXhosa the way that I, myself cannot even understand.>

40. S3: IsiXhosa *sinzima kakhulu, yeyona* language, but if *singayi-understanda ngale*-simple Xhosa, *esisisithethayo ngoku*…<isiXhosa is very difficult, it is the most difficult language, but if we can understand it like this simple Xhosa, that is the way we speak…>

41. S4: *Xa be-translata bona mele benza i-*dictionary *ene*-simple language, like *esisi*Xhosa *sisithetha ngoku* then *nabani naha anga-undertsand-a*. <When people translate they should come up with a dictionary that has simple language so anybody can understand, like this isiXhosa we are using now, so that any person would understand.>

42. Facilitaror: Not the deep one?

43. Tutor: Because isn't the point to help them understand the English concepts?

44. S2: *Ewe* <Yes>

45. Facilitator: So, you do not want to be too deep

The examples provided offer interesting insights, clearly indicating that multilingual students exhibit a preference for translanguaging in teaching and learning over solely using standard languages. Despite the conventional requirement for standard academic discourse, whether standard English or the designated standard isiXhosa, the students expressed a preference for what they termed 'simple Xhosa'. They were critical of translators' language ideologies, which tend to prefer deep-rural isiXhosa. These translators employ what they consider overly complex, deep-rural isiXhosa in their translations. The challenge with the standard varieties of African languages in South Africa is their artificial creation, often deemed as invented scripts by European missionaries, as highlighted by Makoni and Pennycook (2007).

Multilingual students consistently draw upon their complete linguistic repertoires, sometimes using mixed languages or what is referred to in the literature as code-switching. While such language practices may face discouragement from lecturers who perceive them as hindrances to learning or mastering the so-called academic language, the opposite appears to be true. Makalela (2018) bemoans the problem of academics or intellectuals whose minds have been colonised. Such scholars need what Ngugi wa Thiong'o refers to as the decolonisation of the mind (wa Thiong'o, 1994).

Dynamic language use can give rise to novel discourses that transcend the boundaries of both English and isiXhosa. Over time, these discourses may become standardised within specific academic registers that inherently embrace a translingual nature. Thus, translanguaging not only fosters profound learning but might also contribute to the development of flexible standard registers for indigenous African languages, or what I commonly refer to as 'simple vernacs'.

Discussion of Findings and Conclusion

The objective of this study was to examine the implementation of translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogic strategy at UCT. Following the introduction of its English-plus language policy, UCT piloted translanguaging as a pedagogical approach to enact its policy in teaching and learning, aiming to facilitate curriculum transformation and ensure a transformative learning experience for students. This initiative gained momentum amid the decolonisation debates, which led to the "Rhodes Must Fall" and "Fees Must Fall" protests in 2015 and 2017, both advocating for the decolonisation of the curriculum. Translanguaging emerged as a tool to implement decolonial pedagogy across various curricula, with this article specifically focusing on the concept literacy project, a component of the larger collaborative OBUESA project, illustrating how translanguaging pedagogy can be integrated into the curriculum.

Several insights were gleaned from this study regarding the use of translanguaging as a

decolonial pedagogic strategy. Notably, the predominant use of natural translanguaging among multilingual students was a central finding. Probyn (2009) observes that such natural translanguaging is a common practice among teachers in basic education when instructing multilingual students and persists as these students transition to higher education. The economics students involved in the project consistently employed their complete linguistic repertoires to grasp lecturer-provided concepts, challenging the conventional view of language as a discrete and separate entity. In addition, students challenged the standard language ideology, favouring what they termed 'simple isiXhosa'.

Contrary to the deficit model, the students in this project did not employ translanguaging due to English deficiency as they would communicate with lecturers or tutors in good English. As Canagarajah (2007) points out, multilingual students may use translanguaging as a mode of resistance, re-appropriation, and transformation of English academic discourse. From this study, translanguaging served as a means for students to cultivate their unique voices, engaging critically and creatively with academic concepts beyond mere rote memorisation of definitions. When asked about their use of translanguaging, students expressed that it comforted them as it aligned with the language variety to which they had been accustomed since their schooling experiences.

This study dispels the notion of academic English as a fixed form, highlighting how translanguaging empowers multilingual students to engage profoundly in their studies, surpassing superficial English-centred learning. While some scholars, such as Heugh and Stroud (2020), express concern about translanguaging potentially generating substandard academic English, this study argues against such claims. The study refutes the assumption of a fixed form of academic English, with the acknowledgement that academic English itself is part of raciolinguistics, discriminating against non-native English speakers (Flores and Rosa, 2015). Translanguaging, as demonstrated in this study, offers an alternative approach for crafting academic discourse or registers, necessitating a shift from a colonial structuralist view towards

recognising language in academic settings as a blend of diverse languages, registers, conventions, and artefacts shaped through ideological, social, and historical lenses (Canagarajah, 2020).

A significant concern with academic English, as revealed in the study, is its cultural bias, reflecting the norms and values of the English-speaking world. This cultural bias poses challenges for students from diverse cultural backgrounds in fully understanding and engaging with academic content in English (Flores and Rosa, 2015).

The study also emphasises the role of linguistic repertoires in academic contexts, defining them as the total linguistic resources available to speakers, students, and staff (Bush, 2012). Multilingual students effectively utilised their fluid, dynamic, and heterogeneous linguistic repertoires to create translanguaging spaces in economics tutorials, challenging the dominance of the English language in academic contexts (cf. Paxton, 2009; Madiba 2014, 2018).

Lastly, the adoption of translanguaging pedagogy carries implications for the decolonisation of university language policy and planning. Current language policies in South African universities, rooted in monoglossic ideologies, lack objectivity and rationality, driven more by political expediency. The study suggests a shift towards a bottom-up approach, starting with linguistic repertoires rather than treating languages as sealed entities. Translanguaging emerges as a promising alternative for shaping institutional language policies and practices towards the development of a genuinely multilingual university.

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