



## Exploring Early Language Learning Instructional Patterns in Multilingual English Foreign Language Classrooms across South Africa and Zimbabwe

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### Abstract

African colonial history reshaped the linguistic terrain and complicated language planning in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The coming of the colonial languages brought linguistic inequality which relegated the National Indigenous Languages (NILs) into the periphery. This paper explores stakeholder perceptions of translanguaging in teaching and learning of English Foreign Language (EFL) for selected South African and Zimbabwean primary school learners. The multiple qualitative case study based on constructionist ontology and interpretive epistemology is used in the study. Drawing on ideas of cultural capital theory, four key-informant teachers and four school principals (South Africa) or school administrators (Zimbabwe) were selected through purposive sampling. Data were gathered through two virtual focus group discussion (one per country) using open-ended questions. Data were analysed descriptively using thematic web-like approach. The open and axial coding techniques of grounded theory were applied. The sub-themes, themes and global themes that emerged were constructed and interwoven into a narrative about the participants' perceptions of translanguaging in multilingual classrooms using EFL as Language of Teaching and Learning (LoLT) (per South African terminology) or EFL as Medium of Instruction (MoI) (per Zimbabwean terminology). Findings revealed that key-informants perceive translanguaging differently and take it both as an asset or liability in EFL learning spaces. For some, it is an instructional pedagogical asset for bridging linguistic gaps in multilingual and multicultural contexts while for some it is a liability that may derail efforts in fostering learner' English language proficiency. The paper recommends that similar studies be undertaken in other contexts to see if they are echoing the same sentiments.

**Keywords:** Code-switching, language-in-education policy, code-mixing, cultural capital theory, translanguaging.

### Introduction

According to García (2009), limiting the language of teaching and learning (LoLT)/medium of instruction (MoI) to one language is too restrictive, rigid and a mark of insensitivity to diversity. Based on this assertion and through capital theory lens, this paper uncovers teachers and principals/school administrators' perceptions of translanguaging in Zimbabwean and South African primary schools. This is necessitated by the need to assess progress regarding translanguaging practices especially as we get into the mid-term target of the 2022-2032 International Decade of Indigenous Languages (IDIL) 2022-

2032 proclaimed by the United Nations (UN) in 2025). Further, there are very few studies in Zimbabwe and South Africa that examine teachers and principals/school administrators' perceptions of translanguaging despite the wave of linguistic developments sweeping across the globe.

### Background

The dominance of English language in South Africa and Zimbabwe's education systems remains a key issue for over three to four decades after independence (Taringa & Manyike, 2023, Taringa & Manyike, 2024). English has remained the key to unlock educational and employment opportunities in South Africa and Zimbabwe

(Magwa, 2010) in universities in South Africa that students hold ideologies which valorise English at the expense of Africa languages (Lasagabaster, 2025 & van der Walt, 2024). The non-use of indigenous languages in education dates to the colonial era when they were viewed as contaminants to English language purity (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). There are more nuanced efforts in both South Africa and Zimbabwe to implement and prepare teachers to teach in multilingual classrooms which cannot be ignored (Madiba, 2013, Wildsmith-Cromarty et al, 2022, & South African Bill of rights, section 29(2). Such attempts into using indigenous languages are part of Africanisation (Litsekha, 2013, Rudwick, 2018, Msila, 2024) and decolonial project (Taringa & Manyike, 2025).

Over the decades, there have been developments that saw progression from emphasising on natural language processing to language and mental reasoning and subsequently to sociolinguistics which is central in enhancing communication effectiveness (Zein, 2020). The trends bring in new dimensions in NILs perception which is a critical approach and in turn views languages and language use as products of social, cultural, and political ideologies that result in inequitable linguistic power relations (García & Wei, 2014 & Pennycook, 2010). In South Africa and Zimbabwe, language communities borrow from each other and create hybrid languages with translanguaging traits. South Africa has eleven official languages (Republic of South Africa (RSA), 1996) while Zimbabwe has 16 officially recognised languages (The Government of Zimbabwe, 2013). Up to now, a full Ordinary Level certificate in Zimbabwe is still described as '5 Ordinary level learning areas including English Language'. This raised the status of English Language compared to its counterparts, the NILs. For Diko (2023), code-mixing mirrors the reality that South Africa is a so-called rainbow nation with many languages. This is also the same with the Zimbabwean context in terms of diversity, multilingualism and multiculturalism. However, there is not much use of indigenous languages in both South Africa and Zimbabwe beyond 3rd year of schooling (Mkhize, 2016, Prinsloo & Krause, 2019 & Ramadiro, 2023) nor is there a clause to do with translanguaging despite its widespread use in

learning spaces hence policy gap (Probyn, 2024, Hendricks & Xeketwana, 2024).

Multilingual learners in multiracial and multicultural primary schools may either consciously or unconsciously translanguage in English L2 language learning spaces (Ncoko, Osman & Cockcroft, 2000). English continues to enjoy greater stature and recognition in education as LoLT/MoI, the judiciary and business spheres (Probyn, 2009, Diko, 2022 & Marlowet et al., 2023) despite policy insistence on use of Indigenous languages (DHET, 2020) and the argument that indigenous languages enhance communication efficiency.

However, in teacher training, the multilingual classes have been perceived as a linguistic problem that are liable to be code-switching (Han, Li, & Filippi, 2022). As a result, the possibility of using two (or more) languages in the classroom in a structured and systematic way to support learning per translanguaging has not been recognised or developed (Probyn, 2009 & Setati, Adler, Reed, Bapoo, 2002). This frequent behaviour by bi/multilingual speakers in which they oscillate from one language to another is called code-switching (Nemeth & Park, 2019 & García, 2014) is ignored neither its role in EFL learning space had been considered.

According to Zein (2022) the term 'translanguaging' was originally coined by Williams (1994) in the mid-1990s. Baker (2011) used the term translanguaging in English language pedagogy. Translanguaging extends beyond the traditional notion of language learning and views language as a process of making meaning of the world by communicating in interaction (Swain, 2006). Scholarship view translanguaging as extending beyond an additive view of bilingualism which implies interdependence of languages and hybrid of languages (Orellana & García, 2014, García & Wei, 2014, De Los Reyes & Bagona, 2022, Zein, 2020, Grosjean, 1989, Kiramba, 2016 & Lartec et al. 2014).

### **Theoretical framework**

The study is informed by cultural capital theory. Bourdieu (1977) posits that cultural capital theory is the rich tangible and intangible heritage

and cultural assets that learners bring into schooling due to their background. Traits of the upper-class like language, mannerisms, values and behavioural attributes are valued by the education system. Access to material possessions like cars, technological gadgets and vast exposure to other cultures through trips and internet access put learners from the upper-class at a greater advantage over their counterparts from the lower-class. The tenants of this theory are handy in screening teachers and principals/school administrators' perceptions to translanguaging phenomenon in EFL learning spaces and the extent to which the phenomenon serves its intended purposes in selected primary schools in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The Cultural capital theory has been established in education whereby the learners from homes where home and schooling language are synonymous have an edge over their counterparts whose home and schooling languages are not. Purist approach to language learning excludes all other linguistic semiotic resources that are not aligned to the LoLT/MoI. The approach denies some learners of an otherwise could have been an opportunity to rely on the linguistic assets learners may have acquired from birth and mastered already. An inferiority complex creeps in the moment they realise that their languages are excluded from the pedagogical spaces. According to Gora (2017), children would then assume that the LoLT/MoI is a language of higher status than theirs. Hence the theory is in line with the purpose of this paper which is to uncover stakeholder perception of translanguaging in selected Zimbabwean and South African primary school and whether translanguaging phenomenon does serve the intended purpose. This study is informed by the following three research questions; what is the rationale for translanguaging in EFL teaching and learning?, How has translanguaging served its intended purpose in EFL teaching and learning? In what way has translanguaging poses as an opportunity and challenge in EFL teaching and learning?

### Methods

The research is inductive and qualitative one, based on a multiple case study design that included four primary schools, two in South Africa and two in Zimbabwe respectively. According to

Nieuwenhuis (2007), qualitative research is concerned with understanding the processes and social cultural contexts that underline various behavioural patterns and is mainly concerned with explaining the why question. Thus, the approach is suitable in explaining and accounting for changing language patterns and LoLT/MoI patterns. Morgan and Sklar (2012) added that the qualitative paradigm is concerned with interpretations and meanings. It is interested in how people interpret their language, use practices, experiences and how they construct their world (Creswell, 2009). In this case, it suits well the purpose of this study which is to explore the rich or deep descriptions of the phenomenon, that is, language's changing patterns in Zimbabwean and South African EFL learning spaces. The answer is obtained through interacting with the participants in their natural setting (*in situ*) and focusing on their meanings and interpretations (Charmaz, 2008). The emphasis is on quality and in-depth detail. In this case, it fits the study's purpose that was concerned with the uniqueness of each situation of translanguaging in four selected South African and Zimbabwean primary schools. It augurs well with the qualitative argument that reality is a socially constructed phenomenon and therefore multiple realities exist about teachers and principals/administrators' perceptions. The qualitative paradigm takes a postmodernist position that there is no fixed truth, but multiple realities can be constructed by different people with different experiences, which is also relativist and constructivist in nature (Morgan & Sklar, 2012).

### Case study design

The delimitation of the paper maps geographical, conceptual and historical boundaries. Geographically, the study is limited to South Africa and Zimbabwe. According to Bryman and Bell (2007), we cannot study everyone doing everything everywhere and; thus, in this study, we purposely sampled a reasonable sample of four primary schools, two from South Africa and the other two from Zimbabwe. A teacher and an administrator from each of the four urban government public schools where EFL is LoTL in South Africa and MoI in Zimbabwe were chosen as key informants (n = 8). Nieuwenhuis (2007) explains that a case study phenomenon, as

a bounded system and unit of analysis that strives towards a comprehensive, holistic understanding of how participants relate and interact with each other in a specific situation. The four cases of primary schools are an enough sample to proffer insights that form the basis for understanding the dynamics of the translanguaging phenomena and other language patterns and practices.

### ***Sample and sampling procedures***

The study considered a small intentional and purposive sample of eight data rich key participants. The sample included only those teachers and school principals/administrators who are responsible for the early learning and foundations phase in primary education in the selected urban government public schools. In Zimbabwe, this comprises the Infant Phase according to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE). In South Africa this comprises the Foundation Phase that is Grade R to Grade 2 by the Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2015). All participants specialised in primary school education training at college or university. These participants are currently practicing and had at least 5 years of experience in English L2 teaching and learning in the demarcated phases of the primary schooling in South Africa and Zimbabwe education systems. The government public schools in Zimbabwe and South Africa are mainly for the low and middle income earners' children and for the purposes of this study government schools have been chosen.

### ***Data collection***

Data were gathered through focus group discussions which were conducted virtually through WhatsApp to enable an in-depth description of the phenomenon through obtaining rich data. Two virtual focus groups of four key-informants each per country were conducted (two teachers and two principals/school administrators from two primary schools per country) using voice calls and text messages or voice notes. The key-informants could respond to questions via text messages or voice notes at their own time which they were sending on WhatsApp groups created for data collection. The participants made follow-ups on what their colleagues said. The participants were asked to ascertain the extent to which

language use practices reached their desired purpose when teaching EFL classes in South Africa and Zimbabwe. The recorded voice and written text responses were transcribed according to the interview questions using a Microsoft Office Word document on a laptop. An electronic document with guiding questions that was sent to participants through WhatsApp platform had been designed for the purpose of data collection in which it served well as a guiding tool for eliciting data.

### ***Data analysis: Grounded theory***

The study utilised grounded theory as an analysis method and coding system. Grounded theory is inductive in that it starts with data and generates theory from the data (Charmaz, 2008). In grounded theory anything from interviews, observations, field notes and documents are data (Charmaz, 2008). In grounded theory research, researchers use coding, constant comparison, memo writing and theoretical sampling to develop a theory. In this study, grounded theory was handy as it allowed sub-themes, themes and global themes to emerge from data, hence moving from data into theorising and from the particular to the general in exploring teachers and principals/school administrators' perceptions of translanguaging. The data were thematically analysed through open and axially coded into sub-themes, themes and global themes that were woven into a coherent story for reporting on the noticeable language patterns in the Foundation Phase (South Africa) and the Infant Phase (Zimbabwe) in EFL teaching and learning spaces.

### ***Ethical considerations***

The permission for collecting data was received from the ethics committee of the University of South Africa where both researchers are located as research fellow and chairperson of department respectively. The key-informants were informed in writing about the purpose of the research. Both anonymity and confidentiality were ensured through using codes instead of actual names (e.g., ZT1 - teacher (1) from Zimbabwe and SAT1 - teacher (1) from South Africa). The key-informants consented and all of them were adults above 18 years of age. The participants participated voluntarily and were assured of the

right to withdraw from the study at any time they may feel no longer willing to continue.

## Results

The findings generated from the data are presented and discussed thematically in the ensuing sub-sections:

### Rationale for translanguaging in teaching and learning of English L2

When asked to give the rationale for translanguaging during EFL lesson delivery, the teachers said:

ZT1: I translanguage so that I relate learning activities to learners' day-to-day home experiences. I am aware that the cultures that may be represented in English language native discourses may be different from those that the Shona and Ndebele learners already know.

ZT2: I translanguage to simplify the learning of concepts especially when concepts appear too abstract for learners. Translanguaging helps in bridging the linguistic gap. I sometimes code switch consciously when there is linguistic and cultural dissonance between the culture of the MoI in the target language and home languages.

SAT1: I translanguage so that I make learners feel relaxed and comfortable during the lesson. It is a teaching strategy that I employ in fostering a democratic learning space.

SAT2: I translanguage in order to motivate learners and encourage them to work very hard. In addition, I personally believe that there are other language competencies that can be acquired without necessarily following English language grammar and spell check which is communicative.

There are three perceptual dimensions that came out from the scenarios given above by the selected teachers. First, they all acknowledge translanguaging as a pedagogical tool which in itself is a positive perception. Second, the content phrases, 'to motivate', 'to make learners feel relaxed' and 'to simplify concepts' are pointing to the fact that translanguaging enhances teaching and learning in the diverse bi/multilingual classroom spaces. Third, the positive perception

that comes out from the scenarios signals redefinition of language in education in two formerly colonised countries, which in a way is evidence of decoloniality. The scenarios are in line with cultural capital theory that encourages leveraging on the already acquired linguistic and cultural assets in enhancing learning of EFL. Rather than traditional discreteness of linguistic forms and resources that put languages into silos and compartmentalise them into standalone entities, the new discourse of translanguaging stresses performativity, using the full range of semiotic repertoire of resources at one's disposal in communication with others to represent, interpret, and negotiate meaning (Wei., 2018). In addition, school administrators elaborated on their perceptual rationale for translanguaging as follows:

ZA1: Usually, teachers translanguage to help make learners connect schooling with what they are living and experiencing at home and in their daily interactions with peers. Translanguaging is a way of achieving learning area integration which is the 'in thing' in contemporary education systems.

ZA2: Teachers translanguage when they run short of vocabulary from MoI which is English language. Yaa! So, translanguaging could be a compensatory technique for linguistic weakness.

There are divergent views on translanguaging between the two Zimbabwean administrators. One administrator acknowledged that teachers help learners to 're-live' content, which is a pragmatic approach. On the other hand, the other administrator viewed translanguaging as evidence of linguistic deficiency when teachers run short of vocabulary, or struggle to make themselves understood in the target language and thus pretend to be assisting learners. The administrator who regarded translanguaging as a weakness is in a way a purist in approach and viewed translanguaging as language pollution that contaminates language. The purist approach disregards observations that regards translanguaging as a pedagogical asset that acknowledges learners' diversity in multilingual and multicultural communities (Hawkins, 2011).

The remarks by the Zimbabwean principals are far different from their South African colleagues who narrated the rationale for translanguaging in the comments below:

SAA1: Translanguaging is a game changer in pedagogical teaching and learning strategies that recognises individual differences in learners. The strategy prioritises communicative skills acquisition rather than making linguistic barriers and to deny some learners access to skills acquisition. In doing so, the learning spaces become democratic and inclusive rather than excluding other learners on the basis of languages.

SAA2: The purposes of code-switching and translanguaging are in line with the constitution that education is a human right. In this case, none should be prejudiced based on whatever difference, be it language. Also, it is in line with the recognition of South Africa's eleven (11) and Zimbabweans sixteen (16) national indigenous languages as official languages. So, through translanguaging, the education systems promoted development and use of the official languages.

The above scenarios described by principals in South Africa illustrate translanguaging as a positive pedagogical strategy. One principal commended it as a 'game changer' strategy in that it recognises individual differences, prioritises communicative skills acquisition and makes the teaching and learning environments democratic and inclusive regardless of linguistic and cultural diversity. The recreated classroom, where translanguaging is practiced, recognises and upholds learners' linguistic rights where no one is prejudiced based on linguistic difference. In the principals' view, translanguaging is in a way a step in eliminating systemic linguistics barriers that prejudiced some learners.

The purposes for which interviewed teachers use translanguaging resonates with Baker's (2011) view that translanguaging is the process of making meaning, shaping experiences, gaining understanding and knowledge through the use of two or more languages. Such a pragmatic approach acknowledges the tangible and intangible heritage assets that learners bring from home in contrast with the purists who exclude all

other languages other than the one stipulated by language policy in education.

The extent to which translanguaging serves its purpose in teaching and learning of EFL

Upon asked about whether translanguaging that teachers use in handling multilingual and multicultural classes does serve the intended purpose, teacher participants said:

ZT1: Sometimes I do it consciously, especially when English target language has no equivalence and even if I do not know the equivalence. Sometimes I translanguage through inter-sentential and intra-sentential as a way of showing solidarity with learners.

ZT2: Sometimes I just switch from one language to another like I say something and translate it. I demonstrate reading a passage and then summarise it in the indigenous languages. Usually, I use Shona and Ndebele to make sure that I benefit all of them. I sometimes translanguage through brokering or interpreting in a linguistically and culturally diverse class to benefit other learners who may not have heard the other language.

Zimbabwean teachers acknowledged that they used tags, code switch from one language to another, may summarise a passage after reading, translate or switch the intonation, interpretation and brokering. They also summarised or paraphrased comprehension passages and interpreted them to some extent to enhance communication. The fact that they make an effort to do it is evidence that it serves the intended purpose. The move is in line with cultural capital theory that aims to utilise the cultural and linguistic asset that learners have acquired already. This is in line with cultural capital theory that learners have language resources that they bring to pedagogical setting on which teachers can leverage on (Bourdieu, 1977).

Similarly, when South African teachers were asked on the extent to which translanguaging serves its intended purposes for which it is used for, they had the following to say;

SAT1: Translanguaging is the only hope for foundational phase teachers when we introduce

new concepts especially in learning new language vocabulary. I realised that I am supposed to be moving from the language they already know to a new and target language. The form of translanguaging depends on the purpose and contexts of participants in which it is undertaken. I use the above forms of translanguaging like translation and interpretation in clarifying each idea.

SAT2: I deal with foundational phase learners. They are a linguistic delicate group that I take due diligence when teaching even simple concepts like verbs. The entire teaching of each verb item is through translation as I try to get equivalence in the learners' native languages to help in creating permanent mental hooks so that they will not forget concepts. I also add a demonstration of an action of the verb so that learners may see the action implied in the verb.

Just like their Zimbabwean counterparts, South African teachers admitted to using translanguaging so that they take advantage of languages that Foundation Phase learners have already mastered. The mentioning of the forms of translanguaging is evidence that teachers were aware of them and that they used these forms of translanguaging consciously (Marlow et al., 2023, Diko, 2022, Han & Filippi, 2022) & Setati, Adler, Reed & Bapoo, 2002).

In resonance, the Zimbabwean administrators also confirmed that teachers use translanguaging as indicated in the excerpts below.

ZA1: I agree with you that teachers usually interpret suggestions raised in sign language, gestures and facial expressions to those that may not understand it and vice versa. At times, I realised that teachers use English language, indigenous languages and Sign language, gestures and facial expressions to complement each other in the same conversation. Which means non-verbal language is another variety that is commonly used. In some cases, I summarise or paraphrase the passage to aid learner conceptualisation.

ZA2: Like the previous speaker has said, teachers deploy all linguistic repertoire at their disposal including verbal and non-verbal. On top of informal sign language that teachers use, they

also use facial expressions to help learners understand tone and mood of discourses. Teachers maintain order and discipline through facial expressions and gestures, especially during lesson supervision.

The continued use of translanguaging by teachers which was observed by the principals/school administrators is evidence enough that it works. The strategy seems to be helpful in giving emphasis and introducing new ideas. The view is in line with the cultural capital theory which calls for new learning materials to be linked to what learners already know. This has been confirmed already by previous scholars (Taringa & Manyike, 2024, Bourdieu, 1977 & Chivhanga, 2008). The above views partially resonates with South African school principals:

SAA1: At foundational phase, the business is about naming things and describing actions. Again, translation and interpretation from native language is important as it complements and adds to the target language vocabulary list in their linguistic repertoire. SAA2: Translanguaging practices draw from the learners' entire linguistic repertoires so that, at least, the learning experiences have a home linguistic flair. In such cases, the home mastered languages should form the basis for the target language learning. Such practice is based on the view that languages have the same underlying learning proficiency which when teaching is done well it should allow transferability from native language to the target language.

The fact that translanguaging is practiced for the benefit of learners is confirmation that it is serving the intended purpose. Also that the participants still have faith it and are using it year in year out for young learners is evidence it is serving its purpose to a greater extent. This is in line with a critical approach that views language and language use is shaped and reinforced by pervasive social, cultural, and political ideologies that result in inequitable power relations (García, & Wei, 2014, Pennycook, 2010, Hawkins, 2011 & Diko, 2023). Hence, code-mixing affirms the operationalisation of available linguistic semiotic assets.

### Accounting for translanguaging in EFL Classrooms in light of cultural capital theory

Teacher participants described what led to the emergence of translanguaging in EFL teaching and learning and their narratives are captured below:

ZT1: Translanguage came as a result of the need to introduce and teach and learn new concepts in unfamiliar language usually. I did this to make sure that learners understand new vocabulary and, especially when new vocabulary relates to western culture that is way different from Zimbabwean cultures.

ZT2: Translanguaging arose in bi/multilingual and multicultural communities where the languages borrow and share vocabulary, intonation and even spelling systems. Rather, the translanguaging is inevitably a part of the culture of diverse communities like Zimbabwe.

SAT1: It is the nature and composition of the classroom spaces that is multilingual that is rich and promotes diversity which force us as teachers to translanguage. I sometimes unconsciously translanguage when teaching comprehension skills like giving meanings of words and phrases as they are used in the context of the passages to learners who are not conversant.

SAT2: The artificially constructed English-only learning space is unsustainable to infant learners who may not have fully mastered the English language. Hence translanguaging is unavoidable for the sake of enhancing interaction for achieving a meaningful learning environment. This is worse when concepts become too abstract for learners the English language only vocabulary fails to suffice.

The above sentiments by the teachers indicate that the South African and Zimbabwean education systems are anchored in a LoLT/MoI in which very few learners in the case studies were conversant. In this context translanguaging became unavoidable despite decades in which this strategy was demonised. The artificial English-only classroom environment is giving way to a more natural and resilient translanguaging learning space. Thus, the scenarios resonate with cultural capital theory which posits that

communities need change and something completely new should emerge; in this case the changing educational world requires changing language patterns. In agreement with Mawela and Mahlambi (2012), the community's diversity is what enables South African learners to converse in multiple languages. The use of translanguaging by Magqashela's characters in the drama *Diko* (2023) already mentioned reflects South Africa's linguistic variety. Code-switching is not only a prevalent occurrence in multilingual settings like South Africa, but it is also possibly the most organic speech pattern (spoken or written) used by proficient bilingual and multilingual speakers in casual discussions worldwide (Simango, 2011). The circumstances are the same as in Zimbabwe. Following cultural capital theory, schools should utilise already acquired ethnolinguistic skills in enhancing learners' linguistic experiences in EFL learning spaces. The quest is to answer social questions and create a better and just education system and society that is heterogeneous and culturally diverse.

School administrators echoed the same sentiment noted by the teachers: translanguaging is a pedagogical strategy that scaffolds learners as they learn. This is indicated by the following comments:

ZA1: Teachers translanguage when they want to provide a bit of familiar ground when teaching about naming objects or concepts. They may want learners to name given objects in their home languages so that they relate learning to experiences beyond the classroom. Teachers usually structure question and answer teaching about object naming at infants and junior level in English and make translations to the indigenous languages so that learners understand the objects as they are known in their homes.

ZA2: Translanguaging is especially used when learners remain quiet after a question is asked. The teacher is left with no choice except to code-switch into indigenous language that learners understand better.

While Zimbabwean administrators demonstrate that translanguaging is limited to verbal options from one language or language variety to another, the South African principals

went a step further and included verbal and non-verbal communication as a teaching strategy. This is illustrated below:

SAA1: When teaching verbs, teachers occasionally use gestures instead of words. Therefore, face expressions and hand signals are used to help learners with any necessary actions. Thus, moving from translanguaging to body language gestures and [non-verbal communication] and code-switching supplement L2 English, which young learners may not have mastered.

SAA2: When teaching in an inclusive classroom with learners from a variety of backgrounds, teachers use translanguaging. While some learners are spoken to verbally, others are addressed in their various languages, including sign language [non-verbal communication]. The best approach could be to use technology so that all learners can access the lesson in the languages and formats of their choice. The goal is to open up learning opportunities to everyone and democratize learning environments.

The narratives by teachers and principals/school administrators show that teachers and learners translanguaging as they navigate the restrictive EFL teaching and learning environment. Sometimes their EFL competence and proficiency is at a bare minimum to sustain teaching and learning interaction for the whole lesson depending on age and learners' developmental stage, in this case foundational phase/ infant learners. As a survival strategy, translanguaging is accompanied by body language, gestures and facial expressions which complement verbal communication. Thus the learning process through translanguaging is a natural development compared to the traditionally performative teaching and learning practice.

Opportunities and challenges that come through translanguaging in the EFL Learning

As highlighted by the teacher participants, translanguaging plays a crucial role if it is well planned and skillfully executed. This is illustrated in the comments made by both teachers and principals/school administrators below:

ZT1: Translanguaging promotes a multilingual and multicultural environment. It supports natural language use in diverse social contexts and facilitates precise expression of thoughts and ideas. However, there may be challenges like the possibility of fragmentation and hybridisation of languages which may result in loss, barrier in communication with monolinguals and demands for extra cognitive effort by learners and readers.

ZT2: Translanguaging relates classroom discourses to everyday interaction in multilingual contexts. It allows learners to make connections, knowledge transfer and live the learnt material hence learning and living becomes one. The phenomenon creates a democratic learning space that recognises learners' cultural capital assets.

SAT1: Translanguaging is skillfully blending the linguistic repertoire and semiotic assets that foundational phase learners may have so as to aid understanding the concepts learnt. Translanguaging does scaffold elementary learners though use of gestures to graphically represent the concepts that may be too abstract to complement oral language that they may have not mastered well.

Also, demonstrations and pictorial illustrations assist learners in visualising the concepts.

SAT2: Translanguaging pedagogical strategy flipped the traditional classroom practice that was rigid and flexible, one in which learners' talents are nurtured even if they may not be talented in the language of instruction. It diffuses the rigid and highly formal classroom spaces that existed in the colonial era. Through translanguaging, teachers gamify learning spaces and weaken home- schooling linguistic boundaries and allow home-schooling fluidity.

The teachers highlighted how the translanguaging strategy transformed the EFL learning spaces in the two selected research sites. Translanguaging created and value-added learning spaces by relating classroom discourses to everyday interaction in multilingual contexts. The move allowed learners to make connections, transfer knowledge and merge learning content,

living and playing spaces. The development democratised learning spaces through making use of learners' home assets and even manipulated non-verbal linguistic repertoire to represent concepts graphically. In so doing, translanguaging revolutionised and altered traditional English-only classroom practice. In a way, it diffuses the rigid and previously highly formalised artificial performative classroom spaces where teachers and learners now gamify pedagogical enterprise. It flipped the interaction model and naturalised English language practice which allowed home-school fluidity of communication (Taringa and Manyike, 2024 & Magwa, 2010).

Further to what teachers noted as implications of translanguaging in the EFL classes, the principals/school administrators highlighted the following:

ZA1: Translanguaging strategy allows learners a gradual transition from native home language to first additional L2 English language. It simplifies learning as learners will be moving from the known indigenous language to the new target language of teaching, learning and examination, which is English language.

ZA2: The goal of translanguaging is to make the shift from one's native language to the target language less sudden and less disruptive to the cognitive processes of learners. By enabling learners to utilize their full arsenal of language communication repertoire, it enhances learning processes. It places more emphasis on conceptual learning than on mastering foreign languages.

SAA1: Translanguaging is one way of decolonising language in education. Prior translanguaging languages were compared to clothes during the colonial era in which there was English language that participants put on when going to school which they change upon return. Students and teachers wore school languages while they were in class, while learners wore home languages after school. As a result of translanguaging, native languages lose their status as community languages used in domestic relations and become intellectualised.

SAA2: Translanguaging made it possible to use home language resources to aid learners'

academic progress. Additionally, heritage-based education mediated via our own original native languages could result from the practice. By requiring intended beneficiaries to do business in borrowed languages as part of the educational endeavor, the technique frees hostage language systems throughout southern Africa. Fortunately, the languages were spared from linguistic annihilation and are still in use today.

Participants saw translanguaging as a beneficial pedagogical practice and a welcome development that enhances EFL experiences in multicultural communities. The situation concurred with Zimbabwean call for the Heritage-Based Curriculum for the primary and secondary education. To enhance learners' academic growth and liberate language systems throughout southern Africa, translanguaging plays a crucial role in fostering and supporting indigenous languages as channels for home linguistic resources. Additionally, it marks a shift away from the pedagogical practice that forces learners to communicate in foreign languages, which has been shown to undervalue learners (Taringa and Manyike, 2024 & Magwa, 2010). Findings showed that classroom practices undertaken are far broader than the simple language to language migratory tendency to cover other non-verbal linguistic repertoire assets. Thus, this research paper considers to call the process 'transfrontier' rather than 'translanguaging' to inclusively cover all the practices (body language, gestures and verbal and non-verbal communications) that are taking place in the selected primary school classrooms in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

## Conclusion

The pragmatists hail translanguaging as a game-changer that democratises historically restrictive EFL learning spaces in South Africa and Zimbabwe, while language purists denounce it as language contamination that results in language fragmentation and hybridisation. Despite the skepticism of Zimbabwean administrators, the translanguaging phenomena is employed in EFL classrooms. This paper discovered 'transfrontier' phenomenon which is not only limited to verbal communication but also body, facial and gestures that may not be employed by 'translanguaging'. It

is a useful teaching tool that helps foundational phase/ infant teachers to enable learners to better grasp concepts. Translanguaging, which aims to intellectualise national indigenous languages of once colonised countries, is thus a constructive attempt at decolonisation of South African and Zimbabwean language in education policy.

### Recommendations for language policy and practice

Basing on the findings, the paper puts forward the following considerations in informing policy makers and practitioners when choosing the LoLT/MoI. The stakeholders should consider the trends in communities' language patterns so that they avoid instructional language dissonance. As observed, inappropriate language choice in LoLT/MoI denies many foundational phase and infant learners in both South Africa and Zimbabwe access to educational opportunities due to language barriers. In relation to further studies, there is a need for a comprehensive survey of perceptions of stakeholders in South Africa and Zimbabwe of translanguaging in EFL teaching and learning and other learning areas in all levels of schooling. Research is also required to determine the English language proficiency of the primary school learners in South Africa and Zimbabwe who are taught through the translanguaging model.

### Limitations of the study

The study's sample was only four schools and eight key informant teachers and principals/school administrators were interviewed. This has the implication that while the small sample was meant to achieve in-depth understanding of unit of study it rules out the possibility of generalisability of the results to other similar sites. While it is impossible to generalise the finding, the qualitative case study allows for transferability of results to research sites with similar contextual conditions as may be determined by the reader or reviewer. Overall, the study is valued in that it proffers insights on the linguistic developments regarding LoTL and MoI in EFL learning spaces in South Africa and Zimbabwe respectively. In terms of methodology, WhatsApp had a bit of challenge in data gathering since sometimes the discussions would be asynchronous. Some participants would come late

in discussion and miss some episodes though they were constantly reminded to go through some contributions from other participants on the platform.

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### Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

### Statement of authorship

The authors were responsible for the conception and design of the study. The authors have approved the final paper.

### Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to two anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments on the earlier version of this paper.

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