

MULTILINGUAL PRACTICES IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF UBUNTU TRANSLANGUAGING FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

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Abstract

Monolingual approaches to language learning proves inconsequential in teaching an African language to a cohort of students who have limited access to the language of teaching and learning. This study aims to examine the effectiveness of students' repertoires in L2 classroom. The study further seeks to establish how students make use of non-target languages to support language learning. This study is underpinned by ubuntu translanguaging as a pedagogical approach which is applied in the classroom setting to enhance learning. This study employs a qualitative approach by applying a document analysis approach. The findings indicate that the use of non-target languages in the classroom is used as a resource for meaning making, provides ontological access to disciplinary content, and that this approach empowers students within the language learning context. Therefore, the use of non-target languages is an inescapable reality in a time sensitive learning environment. Moreover, it has been determined that the use of non-target language(s) are an important component in the process of meaning-making. This study promotes the use of ubuntu translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogy which enhances access, meaning making, and student empowerment in an African language classroom. The study actively advocates for pedagogical transformation and a curriculum design rethink in the teaching and learning of an African languages as an additional language.

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INTRODUCTION

Monolingual approach proves inconsequential in teaching language to a cohort of students who have limited access to the language of teaching and learning. Language learning students exhibit very strong reliance on their primary language(s) as they learn a different language in class, and this manifest in the manner in which students rely on their first language(s) in the process of framing thoughts and expressing emotions (Nishanti, 2020). Nishanti (ibid) argues that students from developing countries learn very little in learning institutions due linguistic competency limitations in the language of teaching and learning. To mitigate this challenge, students systematically incorporate their primary languages into the classroom to support and facilitate a humanizing learning experience (Khetoa et al., 2023). This linguistic practice signals a lucid coexistence of languages within learning space. Huckle (2022) posit that tapping into students' complete language repertoires as a resource for learning – is a humanising act and, is vital for countering dehumanising language policies (Huckle, 2022). In

human activities such as teaching and learning language is an important feature which can either inspire a student to learn or sink in despair. The teaching and learning environments have diversified such that lecturers ought to develop appropriate advocacy and compensatory skills to effectively facilitate successful teaching and learning. Monolingual pedagogies are irrelevant in post-colonial Africa as African languages have the potential to support learning and teaching. McKinney et al (2015) postulate that a monolingual approach can have a profound effect on deterring students from active classroom participation and eventually denying them access to quality education. Khetoa et al (ibid) argues that within the context of South Africa, students' true potential is sometimes hindered by limited proficiency in the language of teaching and learning. This inspires students to resist monolingual policy prescriptions in favour of a more inclusive teaching and learning approach (Makalela, 2015). Language practices in a learning environment must support knowledge transfer and facilitate optimal learning.

This article seeks to explore the effects of multilingual practices in teaching and learning African language(s) in higher education. This is done with the view that monolingual pedagogies alienate students who have limited linguistic competency and performance in the language of teaching and learning within a classroom environment (Makalela, ibid). African languages classrooms, particularly, language learning classes are composed of diverse linguistic repertoires. In light of this diversity, lecturers ought to develop required capabilities and skills in order to effectively facilitate a successful teaching and learning experience (Khetoa et al., 2023). In higher education, most teaching practices still observe monolithic practices. This approach is upheld due to the belief that home languages have no role to play at school because they are regarded as obstacles to effective acquisition of the language of teaching and learning (Sierens and van Avermaet, 2014). Pragmatically, this phenomenon in education births linguistic tension, which is an ideology that silences linguistic diversity (Pulinx et al., 2017). In view of monolingual approaches to language learning and teaching, failure of embracing students' linguistic repertoires affects students' interaction with the curriculum, thereby alienating students with a limited command in the language of teaching and learning (Khetoa et al., ibid). This linguistic practice in a learning environment interferes with prospects for successful language acquisition and/ or learning. Monolingual approaches alienate students such that this alienation manifest in students feeling powerless in a learning environment, the lessons being meaningless to students, students isolating themselves, resulting in students' self-estrangement (Suryanto, 2018). Situations like this calls for lecturers to adopt humanizing teaching pedagogies. This approach is sensitive towards what it means to be human and developing agency in issues relating to access and social justice. A humanizing pedagogy is crucial for both teacher and student success and critical for the academic and social resiliency of student (Kajee, 2019). Thus, multilingual approaches to language learning ought to be seen as transformative practices that seek to give students and lecturers a more human experience of teaching and learning a foreign language.

Contemporary societies in South Africa embrace multilingualism in their daily experiences. Multilingualism can also be observed in the education system of South Africa which upholds exoglossism. Heugh and Stroud (2020) expound that South Africa experienced at least three of multilingual education wherein a hegemony of colonial languages was commonly observed. Multilingualism is a notion that is recognised by various institutions of higher education and learning in South Africa were African languages performs a secondary function to English. Gauteng province in South Africa hosts about six universities (University of the Witwatersrand, University of Pretoria, University of Johannesburg, Tshwane University of Technology, Vaal University of Technology, and Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University) that are accredited by Department of Higher Education and Training. Wits University upholds multilingualism with English as a medium of instruction, isiZulu, Sesotho and South African Sign Language offered as courses (University of the Witwatersrand

Language Policy, 2015). At the University of Pretoria English is the language of teaching and learning (in lectures, tutorials and assessments) except in cases where the object of study is a language (Sepedi or Afrikaans) other than English (University of Pretoria Language Policy, 2019). The University of Johannesburg also recognises multilingualism in that English is used as the medium of instruction and the use of Sepedi, isiZulu and Afrikaans is promoted as far as that is reasonably practicable with due consideration of the nature of the target audience, and the availability of human and other applicable resources (University of Johannesburg Language Policy, 2022). This linguistic orientation of higher education presupposes that the dominant language in students' academic career is English.

According to the Gauteng City-Region Observatory (2013) the most dominant language that is spoken in the province is IsiZulu, followed by English, Afrikaans and Sesotho, respectively.

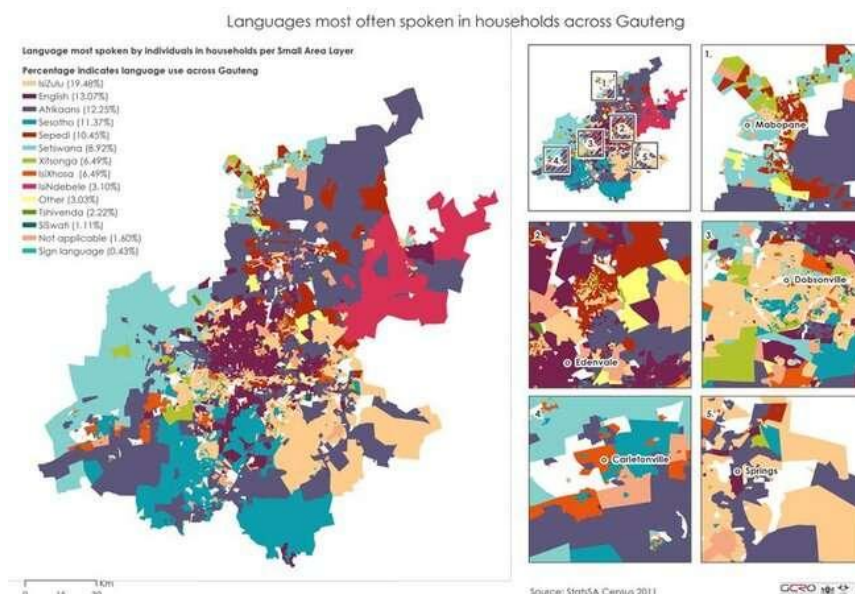


Table 1 2013 Gauteng Language Map - adopted from: <https://www.gcro.ac.za/outputs/map-of-the-month/detail/spoken-diversity-gauteng/>

Sotho languages spoken in the region accounts for 30.74 % of the languages spoken in the region. Sesotho is spoken by 11.37%, Sepedi is spoken by 10.45% and Setswana is 8.92% of the population. Sotho languages have a total of 30.74% number of speakers in the province while Nguni languages have a total of 30.18% number of speakers. The data that is presented in the map image hereabove represent the data that was extracted from StatsSa Census 2011. Noticeably from the image, Sesotho is the most spoken language in the households compared to its sister languages. This indicates that there is a reasonably adequate number of Sesotho and/ Sotho language speakers in the region for L2 language learners to practice the language or hear Sesotho from people other than their immediate lecturer. Interestingly, the province's name is derived from Sotho language family group.

The table hereabove illustrates the multiplicity of languages and culture that are found in the province. Languages co-exist with each other. Because of this nature of languages coexisting side by side, multilingual approaches to language practices are often observed e.g. “*Good morning, re ntse re kgopela tshwarelo ka go starta late*” [Good morning, we apologise for starting late] or “*maar re tla leka go re re mathe ka matla ka mokgwa o re ka kgonang ka teng*” [but, we will try to be as quick as possible] (Mabule, 2019). This phenomena is commonly referred to as code-switching which helps facilitate effective communication between speakers of varying linguistic backgrounds. It normally compensates competence and performance limitations in the language of discussion. Mabule (ibid: 67) postulate that “South Africa is

characterised by a multiplicity of languages by which its people are identified". This multiplicity manifests in people's language practices as observed in the examples provided by Mabule.

Sotho languages have experienced a significant growth in the number of speakers that are found in the province since the 2011 StatsSA data. Recently the Gauteng City-Region Observatory has published new data to this effect. Khanyile and Ballard (2022) under the banner of Gauteng City-Region Observatory shares a table indicating language prevalence as of September 2022 in the province. According to their data, Sesotho is the second most prevalent language after isiZulu in the province of Gauteng.

Sesotho language speakers in the region have grown by 2.03 % since 2013. Interestingly, while IsiZulu is the dominant language in the province, in terms of language family groups; Sotho and Nguni languages have equal number of speakers in the province. Both language groups have 35.2% number of speakers in the province. So there are equal opportunities for language speakers to acquire five basic components of language acquisition (phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics and pragmatics) of either language group. Therefore, language acquisition students in the region have enough number of language speakers to practice the language that is being acquired or hear a mutually intelligible language around.

Against this background, this study seeks to respond to the following research questions: (a) how do students utilize non-target languages to support learning in an African language L2 classroom?, (b) in what ways does ubuntu translanguaging enhance to disciplinary content and meaning making in the target language?, (c) what are the pedagogical implications of using students' multilingual repertoires in time sensitive teaching and learning environment? These questions are essential for helping the researcher to interrogate how non-target languages functions as tools for learning, access, and empowerment in African language classroom in higher education. The interrogation of the use of ubuntu translanguaging for determining its effectiveness in disrupting normalised pedagogies.

The language learning process (L2)

The multiplicity of languages in South Africa encourages South Africans to learn languages other than their mother tongue for purposes that include the ability to fully socialise, acquisition of economic opportunities, mobility and so on. In the development of L2, a language rich environment where there are ample opportunities for exposure to elements of the acquired language is important. Language learners must find adequate amount of time in an environment that supports successful acquisition on an L2. Therefore, in institutions of higher education, academic institutions ought to co-operate in supporting students' acquisition of an L2 by availing resources to support the process of language learning.

Sechele (2002) explicates that students who receive formal instruction in the acquired language generally outperform naturalistic learners, in that, L2 classrooms teach grammatical features which enables language learners to see plausible formations in the language which a governed by language rules. In this study, the advocacy is that classroom language learners must blend with naturalistic language learners which will ultimately exposed students to hearing the language being used in different forms. This approach is effective in enabling students to learn language skills that makes it possible for them to communicate effectively and be able to use the language to analyse language content. The process of language learning involves a more conscious process of accumulating knowledge of features of a language such as pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, typically in an institutional setting (Yule, 2015). Furthermore, Yule indicates that successful language learning result in more knowledge about the language than fluency in actually using the language. Therefore, blending with naturalistic learners, this mitigates aspects which are limiting in terms of attaining 'fluency' in the learned

language. Notably, in the process of learning a new language as an adult, there are inescapable barriers which must be overcome such as encountering L2 only for a few hours a week.

Language skills development

The pace at which different students acquire language is not the same. At times, students are preoccupied with keeping up with their academics (assignments, projects, presentations, classroom activities, etc.) which ultimately disadvantages students' opportunity to fully acquire a language. Therefore, students end up facing competency challenges which has a direct influence on their ability to become successful in the language. Students who are acquiring a new language face the challenge of lacking appropriate skills for thinking, speaking, writing and speaking. This challenge requires that the lecturer together with the students to find appropriate methodologies or approaches to language teaching that will be beneficial to the learning experience. Proactive strategies towards language acquisition mitigates opportunities for self-estrangement and seclusion. By relying on students' pre-acquired knowledge and allowing students to demonstrate this knowledge in relation to the knowledge being acquired helps to acknowledge students and that way they might feel appreciated in the learning space, thereby enhancing of comparing what they know to what they are acquiring.

Language is necessary for thought processing. It is a single tool that students rely on to make a learning process meaningful in the acquisition of language and/ or knowledge. Therefore, failure of recognising students' linguistic repertoires in the process of learning a foreign language within a diverse classroom disrupts learning and/ or the acquisition of a foreign language. Lecturer's inability to engage students' linguistic repertoires may result in disengagement with the language that is being acquired. There are limited opportunities for exposure to the language in a multicultural and multilingual context. Learning in a foreign language is a frustrating endeavour which could be explained by students' under-preparedness to learn in an unfamiliar language, and students' inability to quickly adopt and adapt to the new language. This affects students' performance and the ability to be successful in the language as an elective.

This study aims to examine the effectiveness of the use of students' repertoires in the L2 classroom. It also seeks to determine how students make use of non-target language to support L2 acquisition. To achieve this aim, the study is guided by the following questions (a) does multilingual approaches to language learning such as translanguaging support effective learning of a language? (b) do students use non-target language to support L2 acquisition? These questions are essential to establish language practices within an African language teaching and learning environment and to determine the function of translanguaging. These questions are inspired by the observation that black South Africans alternate between languages in a single communication circumstance.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by ubuntu translanguaging as a pedagogical approach which is applied in the classroom setting to enhance learning. Teaching African languages to speakers of other African languages is growing within the context of higher education. This is due to the language policies that advocate for multilingualism. Language learners bring their languages to the classroom as a means to support their learning. This leads to various versions of translanguaging being used within a teaching and learning environment, depending on student's needs or topics that are discussed in the classroom. Sefotho (2022) explicates that the mobility within and among countries have made the world culturally and linguistically super-diverse, and that modern day classrooms are characterised by learners bringing with them unique and different linguistic repertoires to the classroom. Charamba (2023) argues that the use of multiple languages in the classroom enables multilingual students to engage in the practice of generating and creating knowledge in their own voice, thereby resulting in better academic performance.

Sefotho (2019) recommends translanguaging as an effective pedagogy which allows bilingual (in the case of this study ‘multilingual’) learners to make use of their linguistic repertoires to enhance learning. Translanguaging is associated with circumstances where more than one language is used to address students’ diverse linguistic needs and is used as a vehicle for epistemic access. Learners use multilingual repertoire to achieve power, agency, and voice (Banda, 2018). In this study, we are open to the fact that some scholars might regard translanguaging as disruptive in language learning classrooms, particularly because of the ideology that L2 language learners must be thoroughly exposed to the language that is being learned. However, Khetoa et al (2023) postulate that in the new dispensation, the teaching and learning environment have diversified such that educators ought to develop appropriate advocacy and compensatory skills in order to effectively facilitate successful teaching and learning. These scholars postulate that the incorporation of students’ home languages humanizes the teaching and learning experience in that they mitigate student’s alienation.

Recent empirical research has supported the theory of ubuntu translanguaging by demonstrating its pedagogical value in multilingual African classrooms. Sefotho (2023) demonstrate how educators cope with policy constraints by adopting translanguaging strategies that facilitate inclusive teaching and learning. Albaba (2025) emphasizes the necessity of drawing on students’ full linguistic repertoires to maximize cognitive participation and the decolonization of learning spaces. Similarly, Heidt and Svrcek (2025) advocates for honoring students’ changing linguistic and cultural assets and presents translanguaging as a tool for equity and meaning making. Mbirimi-Hungwe (2023) signals that the outcome of her study shows that multilingual students benefit more from using a translanguaging approach to understand academic concepts as opposed to using the code-switching approach. Mbirimi-Hungwe’s study shows that students yearn for linguistic recognition and the utilisation of their linguistic repertoires in their academic endeavours. Mncwango and Makhathini’s (2021) study emphasizes the importance of using learners’ first languages in rural English Second Language classrooms. This illustrates that non-target languages support comprehension and academic success, especially for learners whose linguistic competence and performance of English is limited. These studies justify the pedagogical and decolonial value of ubuntu translanguaging and validate its relevance in diverse South African educational contexts.

This study advocates for the systematic use of ubuntu translanguaging as a framework for access and acquisition of knowledge. This framework was firstly advocated for by Makalela, who outlines it as an approach to translanguaging that is informed by African value system, cultural values and linguistic realities. Makalela (2016) posits that Ubuntu translanguaging is a translanguaging model that is based on Ubuntu principles. He reports that Ubuntu translanguaging shifts the gaze from language divisions to complex repertoires that are fluid in everyday meaning making interactions. Bolden (2014) indicates that the concept of Ubuntu is an alternative to individualistic and utilitarian philosophies that tend to dominate the West. In Makalela’s view Ubuntu as a model for translanguaging shows a confluent, fluid and porous existence of language entities, operating at within the logic of ‘I vs We’, in that, ‘I am because you are or you are because we are’. This perception is important considering that as languages develop, they tend to borrow linguistic items from languages they coexist with. Therefore, according to Sefotho (2022: 6) ‘I am because you are or you are because we are’ can be interpreted to mean “that one human being is not complete without others and that one language is not complete on its own but depends on other languages to be complete”. This coincides with the principle of learning because one can never fully learn a language without the help of others. The lecturer in this course compensates students’ limited command in the language of teaching and learning by carefully alternating between repertoires for the benefit of student’s participation and comprehension of demanding concepts. This alternation is intended to support

teaching and learning. It does not substitute the ideals of acquiring or learning an additional language.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is underpinned by a qualitative approach. This form of an enquiry is concerned with people's feelings, ideas and/ or experiences (Ugwu and Eze, 2023). Within a qualitative enquiry, a phenomenon is studied in a natural setting. In this inquiry the researcher is interested in assessing translanguaging in the teaching of an African language with special focus on how this phenomenon manifest in the context of teaching and learning, its quality and function. The practice of translanguaging takes many forms. It can be observed in verbal communication circumstances and also in written forms. In both circumstances, this phenomenon completes varying functions. This qualitative treatise takes a closer look at the practice of alternating between languages in a control environment with the aim of trying to understand its function within the context of learning an African language by African languages' speakers.

Research Design

This study applies document analysis. Document analysis is a valuable method in qualitative research which is concerned with scrutinising various types of documents such as books, newspaper articles, academic journal articles, and institutional reports (Morgan, 2021). This approach is used to analyse pre-existing texts, which saves time for researchers who would not have resources or time needed to do field research (Morgan, *ibid*). Furthermore, Morgan explicates that this approach can reduce ethical concerns associated with other qualitative methods. However, the prospective documents must be credible and authentic. Flick (2018) provides four factors that must be considered in the process of selecting documents for the purpose of evaluating or analysing them: (a) authenticity, (b) credibility, (c) representativeness, and (d) meaning. In light of Flick's assertion, the researcher's contention is that the institutional students' evaluation reports together with test question papers provides a manifestation of students' linguistic competencies and their attitudes towards language usage in an academic space, particularly in the space of language learning. These documents represent students' language usage, thereby, reflecting patterns of how students make sense of what they are learning. Students' evaluation reports and scribbled question papers are authentic documents portray students' language practices and preferences. Therefore, an evaluation of these documents offers a narrative which will inform the researcher about students' linguistic behaviour.

These documents provide written accounts of how students make sense of their learning experiences. Qualitative research is concerned with feelings, ideas or experiences (Chinyere and Val, 2023). In this study, the researcher seeks to understand the notion of multilingual experiences within the context of language learning, how it manifests, for what purpose. Chinyere and Val (*ibid*) expounds that qualitative research studies study the nature of a phenomenon, including its manifestation, quality, the context under which the phenomena occurs or appears, and perspectives about the occurrence of a phenomena. This explanation is consistent with the goals of this research which seek to evaluate multilingual approaches to language learning and how multi-language practices manifest, and for what purpose. This research seeks to gain in-depth understanding about strategies students employ to support learning a target language. At this point, it is important to briefly discuss the documents that are analysed in this study.

Instruments

Research tools for this treatise include institutional students' evaluation report for Intermediate Sesotho Language and Culture course and scribbled test question paper for this module. Institutional course evaluation reports are important since they contain information about students' views and experience of the course. Academics use these reports to reflect on

the course and their teaching methodologies. Therefore, by evaluating institutional tools this research will inform on pedagogical practices that supports learning and teaching.

Tests are a common assessment and evaluation tools used in academic institutions. Written assessment is a widely accepted tool for evaluation in both formative and summative evaluation (Ramya and Jose, 2020). In this course, students are evaluated using formative assessment tools for every teaching block. This assessment is premised on evaluating students' linguistic competency and cognitive abilities. Test remain one of the most important tools which lecturers rely on to evaluate students' progress in a specific discipline in an academic context. In language learning, test are also an important tool in exposing students' shortfalls. This study uses scribbled test question papers due to the belief that scribbled question papers narrates students' experiences with the test question paper, thereby, communicating a story. Scribbling is an important step to learning because students use it to stimulate a response. For this purpose, this study seeks to evaluate the function of using multiple languages by looking at what students are doing on question papers.

Secondly, the study will evaluate students' responses on the institutional report for course evaluation for Intermediate Sesotho Language and Culture course. Course evaluation is an important part of any given curriculum (Nyabero, 2016). In the evaluation process, the goal is to assess the relevance or worth of something. Evaluation is used to determine if certain methodologies are appropriate to achieve predetermined goals of a specific course. The purpose of a course evaluation is to provide useful feedback that will aid in decision making about improving learning (Nyabero, *ibid*). In the Intermediate Sesotho Language and Culture courses, evaluations have been conducted for academic years 2022 and 2023. One questions required students to ponder on language usage and how this affects prospect for effective language learning.

I had direct access to the test question paper as well as the teaching and course evaluation report because I am the lecturer for the course that this study is based on. As part of standard teaching and evaluation procedures, I already had these documents. Their applicability to the study's emphasis on translanguaging pedagogy and multilingual students' engagement served as the basis for their selection. These documents were chosen based on their ability to shed light on students' responses and pedagogical practice rather than on information that might support preconceived notions in order to lower the possibility of the researcher's bias. Triangulation between the test and evaluation report ensured that both student perceptions and actual language use were fairly represented.

Data Analysis

In keeping with document analysis, this study conducts a thematic analysis of pre-selected documents. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research technique that researchers employ to methodologically arrange and examine large, complicated data sets (Dawadi, 2020). In order to provide a narrative that is embraced in the data set, the researcher continuously looks for themes for themes in the data set. In order to determine how students are using non-target languages to make sense of their learning experience in formal assessment setting, the researcher in this study aims to assess students' language practices in Sesotho Language and Culture assessments. This six-phase framework developed by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used to improve analytical rigor: data familiarisation, preliminary coding, theme development, evaluation, definition, and the production of the write up. In both the evaluation report and the test paper, recurring patterns revealed themes like pedagogical responsiveness, language negotiation, and multilingualism. These themes were validated through triangulation. For example, students' written reflections in the evaluation report, which described the alternation between Sesotho and English in order to understand complex concepts, gave rise to the theme of strategic multilingualism. Their actual use of both languages in assessment in responses supported this. This shows how multilingual resources are used to create meaning. By using

both reflective and performative data, this methodological triangulation makes sure that themes are based on both perception and practice.

RESEAH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section the researcher adopts a thematic approach to interpret the data on the assumption that students might present a subjective or socially constructed view on how multilingual teaching pedagogies affect them or their learning.

Linguistic proficiency

Assessment tools are prepared in the language and teaching and learning for this course. However, it has been observed that students tend to incorporate their strong and/or primary language into the assessment exercise. This manifests in students using non-target languages on the question paper as a strategy to either make sense of the questions or remember certain things. In Image 1, a lexical item from the target language is *lakatsa*. The student uses word equivalent “desire” from a non-target language to illustrate his/her understanding of the word. This is indicative of student’s reliance on his/her linguistic repertoires to make sense of the question paper.

In both assessment documents, a non-target language indicates a reliance on non-target language for the purpose of making sense of what is required. Students also provide word equivalents of the words provided in Sesotho so that they can rely on their dominant language to establish which lexical category the word belongs to. This assist students in finding plausible combinations wherein the use of the word can be appropriated. There is a heavy reliance on ono-target language to inform meaning which ultimately supports students’ understanding of the language that is being learned. It can also be deduced that the “target language only” linguistic behaviour is disrupted by students’ linguistic repertoires. Students use non-target language to empower themselves within an assessment period.

Evaluations of teaching and Courses AFRL2003A 2022

In this report, the researcher will focus on two aspects: (a) the ways of teaching, (b) methods of teaching, and (c) what must be maintained. The tables contained hereunder reports on students’ perspectives. Students welcome the use of non-target language to support language learning. The use of non-target language in the classroom gives students an opportunity to comprehend concepts. While students accommodate the use of other languages in the classroom, there is high advocacy for translations to be offered in English. This might be resulting from the consensus that this class is constituted by speakers of various African languages. Therefore, English is a common language among students.

Students indicate that the use of multilingual approaches to Sesotho language learning is beneficial, in that, it offers students an opportunity to participate in the classroom. Students appreciate the use of non-target languages because this linguistic practice helps students to understand course work better. Mere exposure to the language does not facilitate effective language learning. Therefore, students have demonstrated that it is important for the lecturer to offer explanations in non-target language(s) so that these non-target language(s) act as a referent which facilitates their comprehension of the course content.

Evaluations of teaching and Courses AFRL2003A 2023

The table hereunder provides qualitative feedback on students’ perspectives on what is working in the language learning classroom. The information contained indicates that students benefit from the use of their home languages. Their languages are used to enhance learning. Students’ linguistic repertoires supplement students’ comprehension of the language that is being learned.

Discussion

Language learners exhibit a high reliance on their native language(s) when acquiring an L2, as evidenced through the employment of accessible linguistic resources to organize thinking and express feelings (Nishanti, 2020). This finding directly responds to research question (a), which asks how students invoke non-target languages to help learn an African language L2 class. The results validate that students use their multilingual repertoires to mediate meaning, particularly when faced with unfamiliar Sesotho vocabulary or grammatical constructions. The dependence verifies the constraints of monolingual orientations in situations in which learners have little prior access to the language of teaching and learning. In response to research question (b), which examines how ubuntu translanguaging enhances disciplinary meaning-making and content, the study found that the students' multilingual practices were not only functional but relational too. The ubuntu principle of being rooted in humanness, respect for one another, and collaborative knowledge-making was shown in the manner in which students engaged with one another and the curriculum.

Students' use of multiple languages reflected on only cognitive strategies but also signals innovative ways of learning. This supports the argument that language learning in African contexts must be humanized and be culturally responsive. This aligns with the view that ubuntu translanguaging is both a pedagogical and ethical imperative in diverse language learning classrooms. In response to research question (c), on pedagogical implications of rendering students' multilingual repertoires in time-sensitive teaching and learning context, this research revealed that translanguaging enables students to access assessments more meaningfully and confidently. Even during formal testing environments, students use their linguistic resources to negotiate content, determine meaning, and express understanding. This suggests that time-sensitive teaching and learning environments can be made accessible for flexible, multilingual engagement without compromising academic success.

The context of this study captures the fluidity of African languages within the urban South African higher education institution. Students come with their code-switching and language negotiation experiences from speaking multiple languages, which they carry into the classroom. Based on this, the researcher sets out to recommend a pedagogical rethink in the teaching of African languages to African languages speakers at the university level. This is consistent with Khetoa et al. (2023), who assert that lecturers need to obtain advocacy and compensatory competencies in an effort to meet the diversified linguistic and cultural needs of students. In ubuntu translanguaging, lecturers can create a more humane, inclusive, and more effective language learning experience. In this study, it has been determined that students experience authentic literacy challenges with linguistic competencies required in the language of teaching and learning. This challenge is supplemented by employing a multilingual approach to teaching and learning. Students' languages are used in the classroom for the purpose of maximizing comprehension and enhancing participation in class. In essence, this helps students to appreciate the differences and/ or similarities that exist between their primary languages and the language of teaching and learning. Ngcobo et al. (2016) argues that students' languages must be recognized in a learning environment. Students have provided numerous reasons for upholding, valuing and practicing translanguaging in Sesotho language learning classroom. Students mentioned the following reasons as factors for translanguaging.

Resource for meaning making

Sesotho is the required language for teaching and learning, however, due to command limitations students tend to make decisions about how to make sense of the curriculum. It is common practice to demand monolingual practices in language teaching with the view that complete exposure to the language will enable language learners to fully learn the language. Jonker (2021: 2) argues that "vernacular literacies, found in people's everyday lives, are less "visible" and are generally regarded as inappropriate in educational institutions". In this study,

it has been depicted that students rely on non-target language(s) to support learning, and for the purpose of meaning-making. Students' non-target languages are used as resources that are necessary to make sense of the language that is being learned. The student provides word equivalents in non-target languages to make sense of the curriculum or support their comprehension of assessment tools. Non-target languages help the student to understand the words that are found in the curriculum. Without this, the student might not even be able to engage with the curriculum.

Ontological access [disciplinary content]

Withing this language learning course, branches of linguistics are discussed. Linguistic discussions are limited to the structure of the language, the rules of the language and aspects of the use of the language. Therefore, where linguistic limitations occur, students have indicated a preference for translations being made available so that students do not lose on the content that is discussed in class. Students use non-target languages in the classroom as a means through which common understanding of information is achieved. This allows students to make sense of the knowledge that is acquired in the classroom. Students negotiate a shared vocabulary in order to discuss and share information.

Ubuntu translanguaging

Translanguaging is an inescapable method of language impartment in a time sensitive learning environment. Course modules are structured in such a manner that students ought to demonstrate certain linguistic competencies after completing certain sections. Therefore, unlike acquiring the language within the language community, learning a language requires certain methodological approaches in order to achieve certain results. In this study, it has been determined that translanguaging . Students have indicate that a multilingual approach helps them to understand Sesotho better.

CONCLUSION

This study explored the implications of multilingual teaching and learning approaches of an African language classroom in higher education within a multilingual and multicultural context. Students in classrooms of African language learning course are comprised of students with different linguistic repertoires. Therefore, sustaining the practice of monolingual pedagogies in such contexts typically results in linguistic isolation and limited access to the language of teaching and learning. This study examined the effectiveness of students' multilingual resources in an L2 classroom and how non-target languages are used to support language learning. Drawing on ubuntu translanguaging as pedagogical practice, the study employed a qualitative document analysis method. The results indicate that students' use of non-target languages are a source of meaning-making, providing ontological access to disciplinary content, and empower students in time-bound learning environment. These conclusions have several practice implications for language teaching. First, lecturers need to design curricula and tests explicitly to enable flexible use of languages so that learners can summon all their linguistic repertoires. Second, language learning strategies should be contextualised in approaches that are grounded in relationality, empathy and collective knowledge-making.

From the policy perspective, institutions must revisit language-in-education policies to support multilingual pedagogies. This means recognizing translanguaging as a rich and empowering practice that enhances access and equity in higher education and not a deficit or accommodation. This study's limitations include its reliance on a narrow set of documents from one course environment. Future research can increase the data set to include classroom observations, interviews or focus groups to capture more types of multilingual practices and student experiences. In conclusion, the use of non-target languages in African language classroom is not only an inescapable reality but also a pedagogical asset. Embracing ubuntu

translanguaging offers a more humane, inclusive and effective approach to language teaching and learning in higher education.

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INFORMED CONSENT STATEMENT

Participation in this study was entirely voluntary. Before involvement, participants were informed about the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks, and benefits. They were assured of confidentiality, informed of their right to withdraw anytime without penalty, and provided consent before participation.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data supporting this study are not publicly available because of privacy considerations and ethical obligations protecting participant confidentiality. However, reasonable requests for data access may be considered individually, provided prior approval is obtained from the relevant institutional ethics review board.

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