TRANSLANGUAGING AS A VEHICLE FOR EPISTEMIC ACCESS: CASES FOR READING COMPREHENSION AND MULTILINGUAL INTERACTIONS

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African multilingualism has always been construed from a monoglossic (i.e., one language at a time) lens despite the pretensions of plural language policies in Sub-Saharan Africa. The study reported in this paper explored the efficacy of alternating languages of input and output in the same lessons in order to offset linguistic fixity that is often experienced in monolingual classrooms. I present two case studies of translanguaging practices, one at an institution of higher learning and another in the intermediate phase (primary school). The results from these cases show that the use of more than one language by multilingual learners in classroom settings provides cognitive and social advantages for them. Using what I refer to as the ubuntu translanguaging model, I make a case that fuzziness and blurring of boundaries between languages in the translanguaging classes are (i) necessary and relevant features of the 21st century to enhance epistemic access for speakers in complex multilingual spaces, and that they are (ii) indexical to the pre-colonial African value system of ubuntu. Useful recommendations for classroom applications and further research are considered at the end of the paper.

INTRODUCTION

Research on the relationship between language and ways of knowing has convincingly established that multilingual learners are often put under pressure to use a monolingual lens to make sense of the world and of who they are (García & Wei, 2014; Makalela, 2015; Makoni, 2003). This orthodoxy of monolingual orientation in the school curricula was imbued by a one-ness ideology (i.e., one language, one nation; one classroom, one language), which was central to the formation of European nation states in the 18th century (Ricento, 2000). From this European Enlightenment period, schools have always created situations where one language was pitted against another while teachers have, invariably, adopted a protective approach to guard against cross-contamination between languages (Makalela, 2013; Ricento & Hornberger 1996; Shohamy, 2006). In reality, however, the separation of language systems and attempts to control their continuum are artificial and often counter-productive (Shohamy, 2006). It is in this connection that research on literacy failures in making a transition from learning to read to reading to learn can be apportioned to the imposed monolingual orientations on multilingual speakers (e.g., García & Wei, 2014).

As more recent scholarship on superdiverse schooling communities has shown, monolingual ideologies and practices are ineffective and do not provide positive school experiences as well as pedagogic and cognitive support needed for multilingual children (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010). The advent of superdiverse settings in the 21st century has increasingly required classroom practices, curricula and policies to build on multiple repertoires of the learners and to acknowledge the linguistic fluidities that overlap into one another (e.g., Creese & Blackledge, 2010; García, 2011; Wei, 2011). There is, however, a paucity of studies that report on alternative pedagogical strategies that may be suitable to these changing contexts. In this paper, I report on the effectiveness of using translanguaging – a fluid communicative language practice where the languages of input and output were purposefully juxtaposed – for teaching reading comprehension in primary school and for teaching an indigenous African language to speakers of other African languages at an institution of higher learning. At the end, I interpret the translanguaging practices in both classes from an epistemological orientation of ubuntu (i.e., languages are interdependent on one another), consider recommendations for adaptations in similar classrooms and offer insights for further research on translanguaging for biliterate development.

FROM FIXITY TO FLUIDITY

Current research on local and global multilingualism has questioned the validity of thinking about languages as static, reified and sealed categories with clear boundaries and has favoured porous and complex systems of communication that overlap (García, 2009, 2011; García & Wei, 2014; Hornberger & Link, 2012; Makalela, 2014, 2015; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Mignolo, 2000; Wei, 2011). This epistemic shift from the orthodoxy of monolingual paradigms is generally referred to as the 'multilingual turn' (May, 2013) to signal the focus on multilingualism as the beginning point in understanding language practices. These scholars revealed that a monoglossic orientation towards language systems has lost space in the global, fluid and mobile communicative spaces.

Several concepts that mark the multilingual 'turn' were identified as metrolingualism, polylanguaging, codemeshing and translanguaging (e.g., Bloemmart, 2010; Canagarajah, 2011) to reflect the discursive nature of language systems that are not hermetically sealed into boxes. For the educational focus of this paper, I prefer translanguaging to represent linguistic fluidity that is often found in complex and super-diverse classrooms. The idea of translanguaging, that is, purposive alternation of languages of input and output, can be traced as far back as the work of Cen Williams, who studied Welsh-English bilingual secondary school learners' language practices in Wales (Baker, 2011; Wei, 2011). As understood from its earlier version based on Williams' work, the phenomenon referred to a language communicative function of receiving an input in one language and giving an output in another language. For example, as part of the teacher's lesson plan, listening and reading were conducted in one language while speaking and writing were produced in a different language. This process allowed bilingual learners to use their home language and develop positive experiences at school. When more than one language is used to access the same content, the learners develop a deeper understanding of the subject matter. For language teaching classes, translanguaging became a useful strategy to develop a weaker language through cross-transfer of skills between the linguistic repertoires that students already possess.

Studies have found that translanguaging is a social practice that goes beyond classroom interactions and that it includes all metadiscursive regimes that are performed by all

multilingual speakers in their everyday way of making sense of the world around them (García, 2009; Wei, 2011). To explain this phenomenon, García (2009) uses a metaphor of an all-terrain car that has wheels that extend, contract, flex, and stretch while making movements that are irregular on 'an uneven ground' (García, 2009: 45). Although the movements of the all-terrain car may appear to an onlooker as irregular, they are systematic and effective. García (2009) sees this discursive practice as ideologically desirable for multilingual students and their languaging practices as part of the decisions about who they want to become. Beyond this, the students articulate thoughts and make strategic choices that are situation-sensitive in order to achieve their communicative goals. In this connection, monoglossic curriculum programmes might be cognitively limiting for multilingual students and consequently negate their transformative, creative and critical values in learning a language (Makalela, 2013).

Research has also shown that teachers who functioned under current bilingual education models that encourage use of one language at a time manifest in monologic classroom practices and creation of two monolinguals in one body (e.g., Blommaert, 2010; Makalela, 2013; Wei, 2011). García (2011) reveals that the teachers and language practitioners' roles are that of enforcing language boundaries in the same way that a gardener prunes flowers in separated flower plots. Classifications of 'first', 'second', and 'mother tongue' do not fit the sociolinguistic realities of the majority of the speakers who do not learn languages through serial, linear and sequential modes. Similarly, in Black South African townships such as Soweto and Alexander where one grows up in a potpourri of languages that are dynamically linked in the first six years of one's life, the notion of mother tongue has become irrelevant to a larger extent in this complex multilingual context (Makalela, 2013, 2014). In order to take a more complex account of language use and match multilingual spaces, classroom language practices of multilingual learners should be characterised by a discursive practice of 'languaging', which refers to 'social features that are called upon by speakers in a seamless and complex network of multiple semiotic signs' (García, 2011: 7).

It should be stated that there are epistemological differences between translanguaging and code-switching even though instances of the latter may be part of the former. Unlike code-switching, which refers to the use of two or more separate languages and the shifting of one code to another (Hornberger & Link, 2012), translanguaging does not recognise boundaries between languages, but focuses on what the speakers do with their language repertoires. From these repertoires, the speakers 'select language features and soft assemble their language practices in ways that fit their communicative needs' (García, 2011: 7). Furthermore, code-switching often carries language-centred connotations of language interference, transfer or borrowing of codes (see also Makalela, 2013) while translanguaging shifts lens from cross-linguistic influence to how multilinguals intermingle linguistic features (Hornberger & Link, 2012: 263).

It was also well established in the literature that bilinguals have the tenacity to transform restrictive monolingual landscapes. One of the highly reported cases is Creese and Blackledge's (2010) study of British complementary schools in Britain. Using translanguaging techniques in these schools revealed the benefits such as the ability to engage with audiences, establishment of identity positions and simultaneous development of literacies. Baker's (2011) work has particularly shown that translanguaging is not simply copying information from one language to another. The cognitive advantages of translanguaging are elucidated as follows:

> It is possible in a monolingual teaching situation, for students to answer questions or write an essay about a subject without fully understanding it. Processing for meaning may not have occurred. Whole sentences or paragraphs can be copied or adapted out of a textbook, from the internet or from dictation by the teacher without real understanding. It is less easy to do this with 'translanguaging'. To read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be processed and 'digested'. (Baker, 2011: 289)

This quote implies that using one language to engage with texts is not as advantageous as the use of translanguaging techniques that use more than one language. The latter assures deeper processing and digestion of the content knowledge. While reading, discussing and then writing subject matter in different languages is one of the modes of translanguaging that are productive, there is a paucity of research on practices where more than two languages are used in the same classroom. This research was thus prompted by this knowledge gap on the efficacy of translanguaging in the contexts where English and African languages, on the one hand, and more than three African languages and English, on the other hand, are used simultaneously.

THE STUDY

The study involves two cases; one of a university class setting and another of a primary school setting in a remote rural area of Limpopo Province. The study is underpinned by the following questions:

1) What are the effects of translanguaging techniques on reading comprehension in primary schools?

2) What is the role of translanguaging techniques in the teaching of African languages to speakers of other African languages in South Africa?

Each of the study cases was undertaken to answer the research questions above. Each case is reported below:

Case I

This case study forms a series of the work that investigates the efficacy of translanguaging as a teachable strategy in higher education and primary schools in South Africa. Participants in this study consisted of a group of 24 university students (15 females and 9 males) who were enrolled for a Sepedi class at an additional language level. The student participants were mother-tongue speakers of isiZulu, siSwati, isiXhosa and isiNdebele language varieties. They were without prior exposure to reading and writing three Sotho languages: Sepedi, Setswana and Sesotho.

In order to promote multilingualism, the Division of Languages, Literacies and Literatures at the University of the Witwatersrand undertook a comprehensive programme that facilitated pre-service language teachers to major in any of the following five languages: English, Sesotho, Sepedi, isiZulu and Afrikaans. In addition, the Division introduced new languages courses for all students who were required to take an additional language outside of their home language cluster either in their first or second year of their study. The purpose of the new languages programme was to ensure that every student teacher mastered at least one new language so that they were prepared for multilingual classrooms. It was also the goal of the

new languages course to provide the student teachers with basic conversational, reading and writing abilities so they were fully equipped to work with multilingual learners in schools.

Translanguaging strategies

The study is based on a one-year course that aims at developing basic communication skills among non-mother tongue speakers of Sotho languages. The first semester was geared towards the development of receptive skills in listening and reading texts and the second semester focused on productive skills (speaking and writing). Both oral and text-based approaches were used in the course to provide students with opportunities to practice the use of the language through input-output alternation. The course instructor only responded to grammatical errors as they emerged in actual language use.

This course was structured with an attempt to depart from the grammar-translation method that is often used in African languages classes. Instead, a communicative approach was used within a functional-notional syllabus prescribed, which included thorough engagement with cultural content. There were topics that included greeting to friends, elders, processes of asking and of giving directions, autobiographies, and expressions of ownership. During the lessons, concepts were compared to and contrasted between a range of languages used in class.

The instructor's teaching approach approximated typical translanguaging practice where isiZulu, isiXhosa, siSwati, isiNdebele and English were encouraged especially in discussion groups. The main language of communication was Sepedi, with English used sufficiently in the first semester and less so in the second semester.

Case II

This case involves the use of translanguaging techniques to facilitate reading development in home language (Sepedi) and additional language (English) in a primary school at a rural area. The participants were from an intact group of Grade 6 learners (n=60). Their mean age was 12 years, 4 months. This study followed a three-phased experimental procedure; namely, pre-test, treatment, and post-test. The researcher and the teachers in these classes worked collaboratively in teaching reading comprehension after the initial pre-test revealed that the learners had reading difficulties in both English and Sepedi as home language. The translanguaging workshop for the learners included alternation of languages in vocabulary induction exercises, reading comprehension (silent reading), read-aloud protocols, and development of print environment in both languages. Each of these steps are described in detail below:

a. Bilingual vocabulary contrasts
Vocabulary induction in two languages involved explicit attention to graphological, semantic and phonological attributes of the words. The learners needed to recognise the different spelling and phonological aspects of Sepedi and English in order to attach the importance of drawing on language differences explicitly when teaching reading literacy in bilingual and multilingual settings.

b. Text comprehension
The learners were exposed to a model of reading passages of comparable levels of difficulty, genres and length as prototypes for teaching comprehension strategies. The learners were given two texts, one in English and another one in Sepedi, to read successively in the same

lesson. Both texts were about the story of a bird and an elephant that clashed over the shaking of a tree where the bird had lain her eggs. For example, texts read in English had questions that were answered in the Sepedi and vice versa.

c. Oral reading proficiency (read aloud)
One of the features of the programme was simultaneous introduction of oral reading proficiency in two languages. Learners were asked to read aloud a text in one language, followed by another text in a different language. The purpose of the read-aloud juxtapositions was to compare and contrast sound systems and syllabic features of the languages. It was envisaged that the participating learners would develop oral fluency in the two languages.

d.   Print environment
Incidental reading forms part of reading development in young readers. The translanguaging class sought to maximise the learners' use of incidental reading in different languages to balance reading development in more than one language. The learners were asked to divide A4 pages in the middle to write up stories about their names and their homes. The first part of the page would be in Sepedi as home language and the second part in English. They realised that retelling the stories in a different language extended the information they had initially scribbled in their home language. This print environment exercise modelled how multilingual literacy corners could be encouraged through texts produced by the learners in the classrooms.

DATA ANALYSIS

Descriptive statistics were used to measure central tendencies and dispersion regarding the reading comprehension tests. To compare the mean gains in the pre-test and post-test, a paired t-test, pitched at an alpha value of 0.05, was used to assess statistical significance. Analysis of the qualitative data, on the other hand, relied on thematic analysis with verbal reports to support each theme that emerged. In addition, textual analysis was carried out to assess the story-telling and print environments in the primary school classroom.

RESULTS

The first part of the results from Case I shows that multilingualism in this class is a resource useful for learning African languages in a complex multilingual context. Specific metacognitive reflections of the participants' experience with translanguaging involved changing negative attitudes towards African languages, positive experiences in learning the target language and cultural content, and realisation of multilingualism as natural and language learning as an identity investment. These are reported below:

Attitudes towards African languages

One of the biggest challenges for using African languages as media of learning and teaching or as school subjects is the negative attitudes and stereotypes associated with these languages (Makalela, 2014). In this study, the students had a different experience, as expressed below:

> Extract 1:
>
> Well, at first I was not sure why we were asked to take African languages at university. It didn't make sense to me. You know, but now I realize that there is so

much to learn and to utilize them in our social spaces. The more I learned this language in the way I did the more I felt connected with its speakers.

Here, we see a student who questioned the value of taking African languages as subjects at the university level because he did not see how they would be useful in the economy. After attending sessions in class where translanguaging was used, the student's perception changed as he started to see social benefits of using the language with its native speakers. More importantly, the student-participant comments about 'the way I did', meaning the method used in the course as valuable in changing his perceptions.

Positive experiences in learning the target language

One of the key contributors to learning a language is the process of learning. Outside of the contents and grammatical structures one is exposed to, experiences with the language often predict the outcomes of learning. Using translanguaging as a strategy in this study yielded positive experiences that would not have been possible through traditional language teaching approaches. This is illustrated in Extract 2 below:

> Extract 2:
>
> This is different from learning in the language I don't understand. I never thought about it this way. Always when I learned English, I felt so much like an outsider. The fact that I was allowed to use my own language in this class made me feel at home. Both sides of me were brought into play. One side I was an expert in my own language and the other side a novice in the new language. This gave me control over what I was going through- a balance I don't usually get when I learn a language or content subject.

In this extract, the participant articulates the feeling of being an insider in learning Sepedi as a new language. Because isiZulu was used in the learning process, he felt he was in control of his learning process. In other words, using his own language provided him with a balance that he needed to learn another language. This observation validates several other studies on translanguaging which posit that using a large linguistic repertoire at the students' disposal is important for identity formation, that is, the choice on who one is and who one becomes. Instead of separating the self and the other, translanguaging gives room for both and legitimises their interrelationship to advancing acquisition of new knowledge (see García, 2009; Wei, 2011). I referred to this complex interdependence of language systems as *ubuntu translanguaging* to signal an ancient African value system of human, cultural and linguistic interconnectedness (Makalela, 2014, 2015).

Multilingual verbal behaviour as natural

It was the purpose of the class to bridge the gap between multilingual realities outside of classroom and the classroom environment. The majority of the student respondents appreciated the use of multilingual resources in their classroom as indexical to everyday ways in which multilingual communication occurs. This is typified in Extract 3 below:

> Extract 3:
>
> The outside environment and what we did in this class are the same. I use more than one language most for the time when I talk with friend, parents, and relatives. It is

normal for me to be multilingual and mix languages when I communicate. The class has made it feel like the way I usually talk. I heard and used almost all the languages that I knew in class- it felt odd at first because we were in an academic environment, but later I realized that this was the better way for me to learn the new language and its literacies so I could compare with what I already knew.

This participant reveals how she appreciated the class' investment in their multilingual resources. In particular, it was a unique classroom environment for her to be multilingual and draw from her repertoires as she usually does outside of the classroom. In the beginning, the experience was unsettling because she was used to monolingual classroom environments where only one language is allowed. Using translanguaging in the class became a 'better way' for her to learn a 'new language and its literacies'. Because she acquired the literacies of the new language already as an adult, she relied on previous language learning experiences. Translanguaging does allow for the use of modalities and resources students bring with them to class.

Identity investment

There is a relationship between identity and language learning (Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). According to Canagarajah (2011), multilingual speakers shuttle between different spaces of self when they articulate thoughts in different languages. The following extract shows this relationship:

> Extract 4:
>
> I liked the way the class made me feel at home and belonging. It is always a struggle for me to change from who I am and become a different person in class. The class has for the first time in my life made it easy for me to feel I have brought myself in class and I just love the feel of it.

Here, the participant is comfortable to be who she is in class while she is aware that learning a different language from hers makes her assume another layer of self. This experience is different from previous language learning experiences where she was not able to 'bring herself' into the classroom. The idea of language learning as identity investment is found in the scholarship on translanguaging. García (2011) avers that in multilingual communication, languaging is an integral part of identity construction. That is, languaging experience represents negotiating identities that are multiple and fluid. When the speakers shift from one identity to another, they do so in a non-conflictual way; they shuttle as and when it is ideologically desirable for them to do so (Canagarajah, 2011). Given the multilingual spaces to express complex meanings, these speakers decide who they want to become (Makalela, 2013). When framed in this light, it appears that the translanguaging experiences in this class provided fertile opportunities to invest in the identities of the students.

Taken together, the results of Case I show that translanguaging has upset the linguistic fixity that is associated with monolingual classroom instructional practices. From the student-participants' metacognitive reflections, the class was unusual and effective in helping them deepen what they brought with them from outside of class and gaining deeper understanding in learning the target language and its cultural content.

The results from Case II show three interrelated results: (i) transformed designs, (ii) production of multilingual corners and (iii) improved reading comprehension gains in two languages. Each of these are discussed in detail in the following subsections.

Transformed translanguaging designs

One of the outputs of the translanguaging intervention was the learners' ability to reproduce and expand meanings of the original texts in the same language, juxtaposition of the language of input and output, and production of blended bilingual texts. These results are summarised in Figure 1 below.
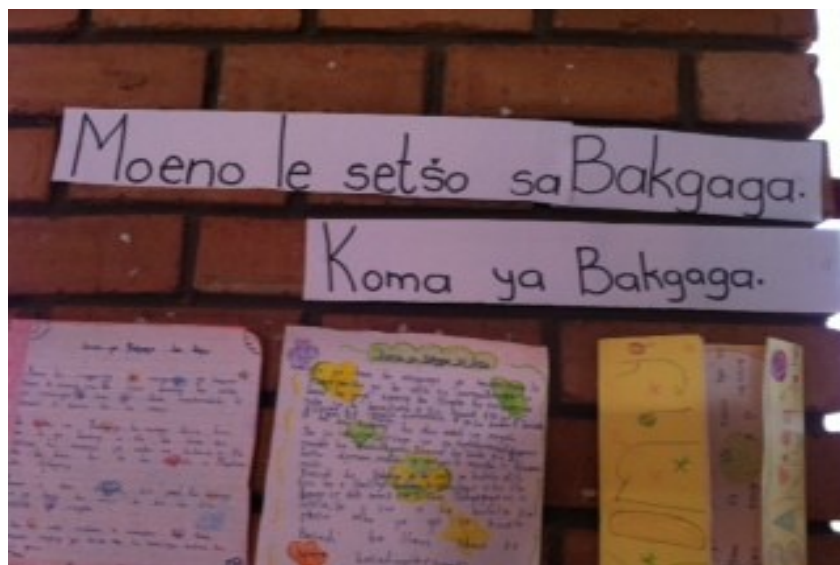

Figure 1: Bilingual story-retelling

In this figure, the learners reflect on their understanding of the text they were asked to read and reproduce in both their home language (Sepedi) and English. The original text was a Sepedi text entitled 'Moeno le Setso sa Bakgakga'. The design shows three texts, one in English, another in Sepedi and the last one in both English and Sepedi (wrapped). Retelling of the story through three texts gave the learners an opportunity to move back and forth between the languages and produce the three inputs as represented: English, Sepedi and alternation of Sepedi and English. As shown in the design, production of a Sepedi output from the Sepedi text gave the learners a sense of ownership and confidence as co-producers of knowledge. One identifies their voices through rewriting, summarising, retelling and evidence of a deepened comprehension of the text.

The second part of the design shows an English output from the Sepedi text. This type of production is a typical product expected in a translanguaging lesson where the language of output is juxtaposed with the language of the input. In this case, the learners read the text through the medium of Sepedi and produced an equivalent one in English. As can be gleaned from the text, the English version is not a mere reproduction of the Sepedi one. Rather, the learners have reinterpreted the Sepedi source and developed high order thinking and reasoning skills about the historical and cultural realities of the Bakgakga clan. Baker's (2011) observation about the value of translanguaging in enhancing higher planes of cognition is instructive in that 'to read and discuss a topic in one language, and then to write

about it in another language, means that the subject matter has to be processed and digested' (Baker, 2011: 289).

The third output in the translanguaging design is a wrapped text that has both English and Sepedi. The learners started a rewrite in Sepedi and in the middle of the sheet they continued their story in English. Here, there is a meaning crossover carried out in two linguistic codes. The aim of this text was to emphasise the potential sociolinguistic output of multilingual speakers; that is, the reality that knowledge acquired may be transferred and reused through two languages. This exercise helps the learners to cross boundaries and make a seamless transition between the languages.

All three parts of the design show that there has been a deeper understanding of the content. The text producer in this case reworded the title of the text to fit in what he considered the central theme in the text. Although the original author presented the main idea as 'moeno le setso sa Bakgaga' (The norm and traditions of the Bakgakga), the learner transformed and redesigned it as 'Koma le setso sa Bakgakga' (Circumcision practices of the Bakgaga). In this way the text has been reduced to a particular issue that intrigued the reteller's imagination. Not only did the readers gain summarising skills through this exercise, they also gained deeper understanding of the subject matter and reorganisation of ideas to fit their way of thinking. In this way, the translanguagers make sense of the world and increase their epistemic access to the world of ideas (Creese & Blackledge, 2010).

Publishing corner: multilingual print environment

At the end of the translanguaging exercises that the learners underwent for a period of eight weeks, the readers were assigned a multilingual corner where they published their stories. The teacher made selections based on the quality of content and aesthetics of the rewritten product. Figure 2 is a prototypical corner that evolved from translanguaging activities.

Figure 2: Bilingual publishing corner

This corner contained versions of the original texts given to the learners and extended texts that the learners read on their own. There were two features of the text. The first showed equivalents placed side by side (parallel) and the second showed a continuum of two languages carrying the same theme and content (dynamic). Publishing the work on this wall was competitive and required a continued effort to read in one language and write in a different language. The teacher made the translanguaging strategies explicit and included low-stakes assessment for the work produced using the translanguaging techniques. The class teacher reported on the efficacy of the corners as follows:

> Extract 5:
> They go to the wall to read each other's work during the study time or at any time they have a break. I usually see many of them going to the corner without me directly sending them to the corners. I just think they are acted by the fact that they are the producers of the texts themselves.

Here, the teacher is aware that publication of the learner texts is an effective way of promoting incidental reading. The next section reports on reading comprehension results.

Biliterate development

As explained above, the primary school learner participants were assessed on how they performed before and after a translanguaging treatment on their reading comprehension trajectories. The results of the assessments are summarised in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Reading comprehension gains

Measure	Language	N	SD	M
Pre-test	English	60	10.5	91.51
	Sepedi	60	8.3	133.01
Post-test	English	60	6.14	126.13
	Sepedi	60	7.9	147. 16

ENGLISH t*obs*=7.26; P<0.05   SEPEDI t*obs*=2. 30; P>0.05

This table shows that English mean scores improved from a pre-test score of 91.51 (M=9.51) on a relatively homogenous group of learners with a very low standard deviation (SD=10.5) to a mean score of 126.13 (M=126.13; SD=6.14) in the post-test measures. Since the pre-test served as a control group in this design, the gaps in the gain were subjected to a paired t-test to assess the significance levels of the mean gains. The test observed value show that the differences between the pre-test and post-test are statistically significant at an alpha value of 0.05 (t*obs*=7.26; df=54; P<0.05).

The results on Sepedi mean gains show that there was an improvement on the mean scores from a pre-test value of 133.01 (M=133.01) and a low standard deviation (SD=8.3). The post-test results show an improvement in the mean scores (M=147.16) and a reduction in the standard deviation (SD=7.9). This shows that, while the learners improved their reading

performance, they also became homogenous, with initial gaps in their differences beginning to close. When it comes to the significance level, however, the paired t-test showed no statistical significant difference between the post-test and pre-test. This suggests that, although the means have generally improved, the Sepedi performance may have also been caused by other variables outside of translanguaging. Yet the improvements in the post-test mean suggest that the translanguaging treatment did not affect comprehension levels negatively.

Epistemic access through a heteroglossic orientation

This study has shown that translanguaging strategies increase epistemic access to bilingual and multilingual learners and students in both cases under investigation. The student teachers' metacognitive reflection of the class that used translanguaging strategies found that the techniques were effective in naturalising multilingualism as a classroom norm, investing in linguistic identities, enhancing positive language learning experiences and improving their perception towards African languages as social goods worthy of study.

Firstly, the results highlight a constant finding that dynamic multilingualism, which is premised on alternation of languages, is a norm on which all classroom pedagogy should be based. This finding goes against the grain of the orthodox with a monolingual bias of one language as a point of reference. The student teachers involved in the Sepedi course have realised that using more than one language in the class has cognitive and acquisition advantages that are not associated with monolingual classrooms. Translanguaging research has indeed been consistent on the superiority of translanguaging practices in increasing epistemic access. García and Wei (2014) see the use of translanguaging as the means to provide learners with opportunities to make sense of the world and to maximise their participation. When framed in this light, translanguaging, as all instances of heteroglossia, brings multiple voices, languages, and modes into contact.

The study further showed that there is a high degree of identity investment that is enabled by the translanguaging techniques used. Although the student teachers spoke Nguni languages that belong to a different language cluster, they had an imagined community in which they were going to utilise Sepedi for goods and services that are inherent within the knowledge of the language. These include their opportunities to break the boundaries into sister Sotho languages and communication with learners as student language and content teachers in Johannesburg, which has schools that offer Sotho languages (see Makalela, 2014). The fact that learning Sepedi added their repertoire to include knowledge and association with speakers of Sotho languages reveals the efficacy of translanguaging in enhancing multiple identities. When these identities have been activated, the speakers have a wide array of choices about who they want to be. When they translanguage in Sepedi and their home languages, they create multilingual spaces that contribute to their extended sense of self. Previous research on the relationship between identity construction and language learning showed that a multilingual repertoire is a safe space for identity formation, activation and transformation (Makalela, 2014; Norton, 2000; Pavlenko & Norton, 2007). Norton (2000) developed the notion of 'investment' that links to the economic metaphor of 'cultural capital' (Bourdieu, 1977). In this study, I showed that the use of translanguaging spaces in teaching an African language as an additional language provides both the symbolic and material resources and enhance the learners' modes of thoughts and knowledge. In hoping for the future communities to which they will belong, the students have acquired the target language to increase their linguistic capital and sense of self.

The second part of the study showed that use of translanguaging techniques improved reading comprehension gains. The study revealed that there were more reading comprehension gains in English than in the learners' home language. This differential mean gain has, however, brought proficiencies of the languages closer instead of developing further apart from one another. Here, the findings question monolingual bias in the teaching of English language literacy where the home languages of the learners are often excluded. It appears, therefore, that teaching English in isolation from home languages of the learners is neither desirable nor advantageous, given that their linguistic repertoire is realised in the same phonological loop of the brain. Put differently, classroom translanguaging is concomitant to the view that multilingualism is a social practice and its practices form part of a normal brain activity where language systems are not separated and used in segmented and isolated boxes (Wei, 2011).

Ubuntu translanguaging

Taken together, both the Sepedi course at the university and the Grade 4-6 classroom bilingual reading practices debunk the traditional classroom environment that treats languages as sealed units, capable of being placed in boxes. I have stated elsewhere (Makalela, 2014, 2015) that similar heteroglossic spaces to the ones described in both contexts of the study are consonant with the ancient African value system of ubuntu, which valorises a continuum as well as an interdependence of cultures and communication systems. Unlike the Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis, which avers that one language provides a solid basis for the development of the second language, ubuntu is a fluid, porous, fuzzy, but logical system that predates the colonial nation-statism ideology of oneness. The plural way of dynamic multilingualism can be gleaned from the Limpopo Valley in Mapungubwe where speakers of Bantu languages and Khoisan interacted and traded minerals between themselves and outsiders (Cox, 1992; Makalela, 2014). It is in this connection that African multilingualism is understood to be a continuation of this continuum of social, linguistic and capital resources under the mantra: *'motho ke motho ka batho'* meaning 'I am because you are or you are because we are' to denote the interconnectedness of all human as well as their cultural and linguistic existence. It is this complex way of making sense of the world and its multifarious language system that enhances epistemic access to learners and students who are culturally and linguistically wired from this system. As in the ubuntu worldview, African translanguaging favours a constant disruption of orderliness and simultaneous recreation of the new forms where one language is incomplete without the other (Makalela, 2015). This pre-colonial value system and way of life thus finds opportunities for re-enactment in the 21st century where boundaries between nation states and languages have become blurred, fuzzy and fluid.

CONCLUSION

This study investigated the use of translanguaging in providing epistemic access to students learning Sepedi at a university and to primary school bilingual readers. The main finding from both cases is that using translanguaging techniques, where input in one language is purposefully juxtaposed to the language of output, is an effective way to teach languages in multilingual contexts. The study has shown that the students under study preferred the translanguaging approach, which gives room for changing negative perceptions towards African languages, investing in their multiple linguistic identities, enhancing multilingualism as a norm and making language learning a positive experience.

Secondly, the results of the study revealed that English reading proficiency skills can be enhanced through use of the learners' home language in the same lesson. Both case studies counter the monolingual bias of one language at a time and offer evidence for a multilingual turn in the 21st century. I therefore observed here and elsewhere (Makalela, 2014, 2015) that these local languaging practices resonate with the ubuntu worldview of interconnectedness where one language or culture is incomplete without the other. The translanguaging classroom situations mirrored a constant disruption of orderliness and simultaneous recreation of fluid communicative practices that are concomitant with this ancient value system. Beyond this, translanguaging as a pedagogic strategy ensured deeper understanding of the content and identity formation – important pillars for a positive schooling experience. There is, however, a need for more detailed studies that experiment with translanguaging in a variety of content and language classrooms to assess its effectiveness on ways of knowing and making sense of the world.

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