

## TRANSLANGUAGING AS AN ACT OF EMANCIPATION: RETHINKING ASSESSMENT TOOLS IN MULTILINGUAL PEDAGOGY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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### ABSTRACT

*A plethora of research concerned with translanguaging pedagogy exists. The available research shows a considerable effort by researchers at the tertiary level in South Africa. However, the question about which language should be used for assessment, especially at university, has been a matter of concern among many lecturers.*

*Using a group of first-year medical students, a study was conducted to find out if proficiency in the English language is required as a measure of success in content-related material. Statistical analysis of a control group and an intervention group showed a significant difference in the performance of the students after the assessment of a task. The intervention group, that had been given the opportunity to discuss the main ideas of a text and write a summary based on the text, performed better than their counterparts in the control group. However, it should be noted that during the assessment, the English language grammatical rules were not the priority; instead, emphasis was placed on students' ability to identify and use the main ideas in the summary.*

*The results prompts this researcher to conclude that students are emancipated from the bounds of proficiency in the English language through the use of a translanguaging pedagogy when assessed on their display of content knowledge instead. For this reason, the researcher urges all academics to compile assessments that focus on content knowledge and allow students to use translanguaging to understand and make meaning of content material.*

**Key Words:** Translanguaging pedagogy, Assessments, English language, Multilingualism

### INTRODUCTION

The literature on translanguaging pedagogy has continually increased globally since 2011 and significant attention is being accorded to the practice (Poza 2017). Poza (2017:101) reviewed 53 published articles on translanguaging published between 1996 and 2014 and found that the majority of the articles focus on primary and secondary education with very little on tertiary education. The findings from Poza's survey is accurate because it concentrated mainly on literature from the northern hemisphere with little focus on the southern part of the world. In the analysis, Poza 2017:119 only mentions Madiba's 2014 article where he references translanguaging pedagogy in higher education in South Africa. Since 2014, literature on the use of translanguaging in higher education has increased, especially in South Africa. A brief background of how translanguaging has been embraced and is being used by lecturers in South Africa will be provided.

Hibbert and van der Walt (2014) published an edited volume on multilingualism in South African higher education of which three chapters dealt with translanguaging in higher education. Among the authors in this book, Makalela (2014:88) explores the effects of translanguaging in the development of multilingualism in higher education. He used a study that encouraged multilingual students to appreciate the use of their linguistic repertoires in their learning. Madiba's (2014) article that Poza (2017) refers to introduces the aspect of using a translanguaging approach to promote concept literacy among university students. Since then, translanguaging has been the talk among many English language lecturers in tertiary education in South Africa.

Makalela (2015) published an edited volume as well and one of the chapters contributed by Boakye and Mbirimi (2015) provides a study on lecturers' perceptions on the use of translanguaging in the higher education context. Makalela (2015) introduces the concept of 'moving out of linguistic boxes' through translanguaging and uses preservice teachers in his approach. The momentum in this field has continued to grow with the focus on higher education and several articles on translanguaging as an effective pedagogical practise have been published.

Mbirimi-Hungwe (2016) published an article on how translanguaging can be used in summary writing to enhance reading comprehension among first-year university students. Ngcobo, Ndaba, Nyangiwe, Mpungose and Jamal (2016) provide a classroom-based approach to teaching summary writing skills using a translanguaging approach. Boakye and Mai (2016) also provide an analysis of how reading can be taught using a discipline-specific approach. They recommend translanguaging as an effective teaching approach to enhance reading comprehension among university students. Mbirimi-Hungwe and Hungwe (2018) wrote an article on students' perceptions of using translanguaging to understand computer science concepts. In addition, Mbirimi-Hungwe (2019) has shown lecturers' perceptions of using translanguaging pedagogy in science education.

The aforementioned are a few of the works that have been published in the South African higher education context. This suggests that work is being done to show that translanguaging is an effective pedagogic strategy that needs to be adopted in a multilingual context such as South Africa. In sociolinguistics, translanguaging refers to the use of the speaker's full linguistic repertoire without concern for linguistic borders (Garcia, 2009; Garcia and Wei, 2014) However, in the South African context where translanguaging is used for pedagogic purposes, teachers are resourceful in manoeuvring and using different languages to enhance the teaching and learning of multilingual students (McKinney and Tyler 2019:4).

At present, the focus should not be on how much literature on translanguaging is available, it should rather be on finding ways of extending the practical use of translanguaging pedagogy. Many lecturers have expressed concern that this has not been addressed adequately; this researcher believes that if these concerns are not addressed, the development and effectiveness as well as the acceptance of translanguaging pedagogy in higher education might be hampered.

Many lecturers accept and acknowledge the need to allow students to use their linguistic repertoires to make meaning of academic material. In a study conducted by Mbirimi-Hungwe (2019) at Sefako Makgatho University, lecturers raised concern about the use of translanguaging pedagogy when the assessment is in one language i.e., English. In the same

manner, Boakye and Mbirimi-Hungwe (2015) also describe lecturers' concerns at the University of Pretoria about the language of assessment being English in most cases.

Despite these voices, many lecturers are hesitant to use translanguaging; they question why students should use other languages besides English for learning when eventually they will be assessed in English. Until this dilemma is resolved, translanguaging will be viewed from a theoretical perspective and not from a feasibility point of view. The purpose of this paper is to open the discussion on what to consider in assessment in the light of a translanguaging approach to teaching. It will provide suggestions on how to shift the minds of academics towards using translanguaging as a vehicle towards pedagogic emancipation and transformation.

## **TRANSFORMATION THROUGH TRANSLANGUAGING**

For translanguaging pedagogy to be transformative, it is important to explain the role that language as well as translanguaging play in learning. Before proceeding, however, one should trace the history of the English language and how it came to be a dominant language.

When King William defeated King Harold at Hastings in 1066, Norman kings ruled the Kingdom of England. Norman's English speech became the preeminent dialect in use at the time (Park and Wee 2012:26). Garcia (2019:153) explains that England continued to consolidate power by the defeat of the Spanish in 1588 and for them to succeed, English was the only legitimate way of speaking as was determined by the ruling class. Additionally, for the empire to be deemed governable, the English language was used to categorise people into the governable subjects that the empire needed (Flores 2013). In this effort, only white people who were born in England were considered to be native English speakers. Other whites i.e., the Welsh, Scottish and Irish were delegitimised by being called bilingual.

When the British Empire spread its dominion to Asia, Africa and the Pacific, it gave the people of those countries limited access to the English language, thereby rendering them 'speechless' people (Garcia 2019). Only those at the top of the colonial social class were allowed to learn English but they were participating as second-class citizens of the colony. In this regard, it can be argued that by continuing to claim and strive to be proficient in the English language, we are striving to continue being speechless and second-class citizens.

The teaching of English as a second language was formalised at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century which became known as the field of language planning and language policy. This period saw an attempt to control the way people spoke in the newly formed states (Garcia 2019). In the case of Africa, this attempt negated the fact that Africans in particular, had their own, existing linguistic repertoires. Consider the twentieth century civilisation of Mapungubwe in the Limpopo valley where people traded and a viable economic status existed. There was no language policy and no sociolinguists who planned the languages, yet various language practices were utilised for communication and trade. As Makalela (2017) states, it was *the 'Ubuntu'* that kept the Mapungubwe valley economic hub viable. People were aware of their interconnectedness and did not require anyone to come and plan or draft a language policy for them.

Makalela (2017) laments the disruption of the 'linguistic ecosystem' by the coming of the Dutch and English missionaries whose aim was to standardise the languages through orthography. It is in this light that one needs to analyse the events. Even though Africans had

language practices that had sustained their lives prior to the introduction of the English language, the education system was used as an agent to render them speechless and in need of a language. Hence English became the dominant language.

It is, however, important to heed Makoni and Pennycook's (2007) enlightenment that languages were named by the western states as a strategy to consolidate power. Garcia (2019) contends this assertion by pointing out that the Afrikaans language was a Dutch creole yet was declared an official language together with English in South Africa in 1961. This was due to the demands of the apartheid regime that was in power during that time.

Languages have been accorded different statuses in various contexts. In the education system, especially in South Africa, the English language has been accorded an elevated status due to political influence by those in power because it is regarded as the academic language. Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2014) maintain that there is nothing inherently academic about the English language that should give it preference over other languages. Despite this assertion, in South Africa, access to higher education, which is emblematic of employment prospects and progressive social mobility, depends on English language proficiency (Klapwijk and van der Walt, 2016: 67).

In addition, Bantu education policies that had been enacted during the apartheid era engraved beliefs and attitudes in many South African parents that the use of indigenous languages for teaching and learning is tantamount to substandard education (Kotze, 2014). In the same manner, Klapwijk and van der Walt (2016) explain that many South African students who enter university are aware of the fact that English is the 'linguistic currency' for obtaining success. Based on these beliefs and perceptions, the English language is considered to be superior to other languages in South African society and academic institutions.

This background leads to the need to explain how translanguaging is an agent of transformation and emancipation in higher education contexts. Translanguaging has gained intense recognition in the last decade but it is a concept that has been in existence since 1996 when Cen Williams (1996) coined the term. Williams saw the need to develop Welsh students' bilingualism by allowing them to engage in tasks that allowed them to use both English and Welsh. Since then, many academics have referred to the use of language as a dynamic and linguistic repertoire (Kleyn and Garcia 2019). In this sense, this study allows students to read a text in English, discuss through translanguaging and write summaries in English.

According to Garcia (2019: 163), the goal of translanguaging is to liberate sign systems that have been constrained by sociopolitical domination. This applies to the education system where proficiency in the English language has been viewed to be the gateway to success. Assessments in the education context have been used in the realm of proficiency in the language for one to be deemed successful. Thus, the goal of teaching language has always been for students to achieve native speaker standards and one way to measure this is through assessment.

It is important then to consider an aspect of translanguaging that needs to be adopted. The prefix 'trans' implies that when speakers speak they go beyond the named languages by selecting features that assist them for meaning-making and communicative purposes (Kleyn and Garcia 2019). In this sense translanguaging pedagogy shifts ideologies about language

and focusses on extending the linguistic capacity of students to make meaning (Kleyn and Garcia 2019: 79).

In this case, when lecturers teach students, especially in English language courses, it is important to note that these students bring language practices that are imperative for them to make meaning of academic material. The focus of teaching should not be on the language and its structure but should rather be on the student's development of the language repertoire as they make meaning of the academic material. In contrast, many lecturers focus on teaching language as a set of skills rather than practice; in most cases, students' home languages are abandoned and the focus is on English grammar rules and vocabulary.

In response to this, Garcia, Johnson and Seltzer (2017:591) identify three components of translanguaging pedagogical practices that can be used in multilingual classrooms: *stance*, *design* and *shift*. In this paper, I will focus on stance. According to Garcia et al. (2017: 594) stance refers to a teacher's beliefs and ideologies about the multilingual students they meet in the classroom. According to Kleyn and Garcia (2019:79), an educator who allows a student to use their linguistic resources in the classroom gives the student the right to achieve academically. Thus, by strictly insisting on the rules of English and disregarding a students' linguistic background, lecturers are guilty of positioning students' linguistic resources inferior to the English language. Indeed, when a translanguaging stance is adopted in classrooms, the resulting transformation will enable students to disrupt the hierarchical structures of power. This paper intends to suggest an assessment method where translanguaging was used as a scaffold towards a task and the assessment criteria was emancipatory of strict English rules.

## METHODOLOGY

### Participants

Participants in this research are first-year students studying medicine. A convenience sampling method was used to select the participants. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2012), convenience sampling (also known as availability sampling) is a specific method that relies on data collection from population members who are conveniently available to participate in a study.

For this research, participants were selected by virtue of having been allocated to the researcher as their lecturer. The participants were 85 first-year medical students. In addition, the mean age was 19, 40 males and 35 females participated. As mentioned earlier, these students are not first language (L1) English speakers. As stated, the study used a control (37) and an intervention (48) group. The class was divided into two tutorial groups. Thus, one group became the control group and the other became the intervention group.

A survey of the first languages spoken among the treatment group identified eight languages namely Sepedi, Setswana, Tshivenda, Afrikaans, Chishona, SiSwati, isiZulu and Xitsonga. In the same manner, the control group equally comprised nine languages spoken by participants i.e., Sepedi, Afrikaans, Chichewa, SiSwati, isiZulu, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, IsiXhosa and English. It is important to note that participants were not grouped according to the languages they speak as their first languages; instead, the groups were linguistically heterogeneous. The reason for this was to ascertain the interrelatedness and fuzzy boundaries of languages based on the assertion by critical poststructuralists (Garcia and Wei, 2014; May, 2014; Makalela,

2015; Makoni and Pennycook, 2007; Wei, 2016) who advocate that languages should not be treated as separate entities but rather as interrelated entities that form a single linguistic repertoire. In addition, the strategy also allowed for the use of urban varieties such as ‘Sepitori’ for communicative purposes. These urban varieties do not separate languages, rather they allow for the use of mutually intelligible languages to be used as one language (see Mbirimi-Hungwe and Hungwe 2020).

### **Ethical Considerations**

Participants were provided information regarding the research and having adequate knowledge about the research process, signed consent forms. The students whose work had been used in this research consented to participate in the research. The research was approved by the research ethics committee at the institution where the research was conducted and a certificate was issued.

### **Data Collection**

Eighty-five participants from both the control group (37) and the intervention group (48) had to complete a summary writing task. Participants were required to read an article entitled ‘The doctor who vanquishes pain’. The article describes the evolution of the use of anaesthesia; how anaesthetic drugs have developed as well as the responsibilities of an anaesthetist during a medical procedure that requires a patient to be anaesthetised. The syntactical complexity of the text was measured by the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level and it was at level 12. According to Chall and Dale (1995), the Flesch Kincaid grade level 12 assumes that the text is easily read and understood by university students. It is however important to acknowledge that the grading system used applies to first-language speakers of English. Nevertheless, when students enter university they are required to read and understand the same texts whether they are first-language speakers or not. The text was suitable for these participants because it was related to their field of study, medicine.

Participants were required to read the article individually outside class time. When they returned to class, they were allowed to discuss the main points of the article in their discussion groups focussing on the role of the anaesthetist before, during and after surgery. Students were in groups of six and the groups were linguistically diverse. Thus, the control group had six discussion groups and the intervention group had eight discussion groups.

Students were randomly allocated to the discussion groups using the jigsaw puzzle selection technique. According to Lestik and Plous (2012), the jigsaw puzzle technique was designed by an American social scientist whose aim was to use the technique to weaken the racial cliques that were prevalent in forcibly integrated schools in America. For this research, the jigsaw puzzle technique was used to ensure that there was diversity in the discussion groups and to avoid students speaking the same home language being in the same group.

The task was clearly specified so that the participants’ responses would not be subjective. Clearly defined task requirements guided the students on the parameters of what is expected (Alderson, 2000). Participants were allocated 60 minutes of discussion and clarification of concepts. Likewise, the intervention group was explicitly instructed to use the various linguistic resources that they possess to explain concepts to each other as well as to identify the main ideas during their discussion. The control group, on the other hand, was asked to

discuss the main ideas of the article as well as any other concepts needed to grasp the meaning of the text in English.

Thereafter, participants wrote summaries individually ensuring that they uncovered the main ideas of the article. For this research, each participant had to produce a written summary of 200–250 words to determine their understanding of the text as well as their ability to identify the main ideas to be used in the summary. To determine the latter, the researcher sat down with two colleagues from the Department of Language Proficiency and wrote summaries within 40 minutes, which was the time to be allocated to the students. The most frequently occurring main ideas from the three lecturers were regarded to be the prespecified main ideas that were to be used for assessment. Eight ideas were identified to be the prespecified ideas.

During a 40 minute-long lecture period, participants were given time to write the summaries and submitted them at the end of the lecture period. The control group wrote the summaries first because they attended their tutorial every Tuesday afternoon. The intervention group wrote on the Wednesday of the same week that the control group wrote and the completed written summaries were collected after the 40 minutes of lecture time.

An assessment rubric was designed per content-related criteria specified by Yu (2007). This criterion focusses on the coverage rate of ‘prespecified main ideas’. During the assessment, each main idea adequately restated was awarded 2 points. The maximum score for main ideas was 16. The other four marks (half a mark per idea) were allocated for students’ ability to paraphrase and integrate each main idea into the paragraph. The summary carried a possible score of 20 marks. It should be noted that the assessment criteria for the summaries was more concerned with students’ ability to show their understanding of the original text. Therefore, grammar and spelling were not considered at this point.

The researcher assessed the summaries written by both the control and the intervention groups; the two colleagues who had assisted in identifying the main ideas also assessed the summaries to eliminate any bias. Where a few discrepancies emanated from the assessments, the three colleagues including the researcher moderated those and agreements were reached. Scores from the control and the intervention groups were compared using a t-test. In statistics, the t-test is used to gauge whether two independent populations have different mean values on some measures (Siegle, 2011). Thus, the test was used to test find out if there was a difference in the performance of the control and intervention groups in the written summaries.

If there were no difference in the significant value then it would mean the intervention made no difference to the performance of the two groups, therefore, the null hypothesis will be accepted. A null hypothesis means that there is no statistical difference between two variables in the test (Siegle, 2011). If the t-stat is less than the t-significant ( $t\text{-stat} < t\text{-critical}$ ) then there is a significant difference between the two variables. In this case, if the results from the t-test showed a significant difference implying that the intervention had made a difference in the performances of the groups, the null hypothesis would be rejected.

## **RESULTS**

To establish if there was a significant difference in the performance of the students because of the treatment, a statistical analysis of the results of the summaries was performed. A t-test was used to establish the variance. The t-test assesses whether the means of two groups are

statistically different from each other. This analysis is appropriate to compare the means of the two groups.

Results show that the intervention group performed better than the control group as evidenced by an average score of  $M=57.4\%$  for the intervention group and  $M=37.5\%$  for the control group. The results show a t-stat that is less than the t critical ( $-6,64247 < 1,663884$ ). The t-stat shows that the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05. Due to the p-value being  $-6,64247$  it is less than the significance level of 0.05 hence the significant difference. In this regard, results from the t-test require that the research rejects the null hypothesis and conclude that there is a statistically significant difference between the control group and the intervention group. The difference may be attributed to the treatment (translanguaging) that was administered to the intervention group.

**Table 1**

| <b>t-Test: Two-Sample Assuming Unequal Variances</b> |              |              |
|--|--------------|--------------|
|  | <i>Grp 1</i> | <i>Grp 2</i> |
| Mean   | 37,5         | 57,43243     |
| Variance   | 267,0213     | 117,53       |
| Observations   | 48           | 37           |
| Hypothesized Mean Difference                         | 0            |              |
| df   | 81           |              |
| t Stat   | -6,74247     |              |
|  |              |              |
| P(T<=t) one-tail                                     | 1,05E-09     |              |
| t Critical one-tail                                  | 1,663884     |              |
| P(T<=t) two-tail                                     | 2,11E-09     |              |
| t Critical two-tail                                  | 1,989686     |              |

It is important to note that the results from the research did not prejudice participants from either group because the results were not used as a contribution to their formative assessments that contribute to their coursework marks. The results were only used for this study.

## DISCUSSION

The results show that the group of students who allowed to use translanguaging to discuss the main ideas of the text produced better summaries than the group that was not specifically instructed to use translanguaging in their discussion. This result could suggest that the emphasis that is placed on English monolingualism is detrimental. Mazak and Hebas-Donoso (2014) correctly asserted that there is nothing about the English language that should elevate it to a higher status than other languages. All languages are equally important and beneficial for teaching and learning. The status that English acquired during the 10<sup>th</sup> century was because the speakers of the language wanted their language to be accompanied by high status, not that the language itself is of higher than other languages.

After reading the assigned text in English, the intervention group identified and discussed the main ideas of the text in a translingual manner. This process helped the students to understand the text better. According to Kleyn and Garcia (2019), many of the language

practices that students bring into the classroom are often disregarded and perceived as a problem or a challenge to their learning. Ndhlovu (2017:145) explains that these students are relegated to remedial classes and perceived to be academically inadequate.

This study allowed students to utilise all their language practices to explain and discuss the text. They were able to understand the text better and to produce good summaries. This prompts inquiry regarding the question of the language of assessment; whether it is important to focus on using English only because it is the language used for assessment. Based on the results of this study, the language of assessment should not be the barometer used to discard a multilingual's language practices. English can be used as the language of assessment but the learning process should include all languages in the speaker's repertoire.

Lin (2013: 4) cautions against the teaching of language in isolation from other contexts such as the content area. The structuralist approach to teaching insists on teaching language as a set of skills rather than a practice (Pennycook 2010) where correct grammar rules and vocabulary are the main focus. In most cases, the goal of this approach is to achieve the 'native speaker' objective (Kleyn and Garcia 2019: 63). Unfortunately, this goal is impossible to attain because many people who speak English cannot fit within the 'native speaker' label because of their race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status (Garcia and Kleyn 2019: 59).

This observation is true especially in the South African higher education context where many students are African and multilingual as well as coming from poor economic backgrounds. One cannot use the native speaker standard to assess these students. In this study, assessment of the summaries did not consider the set of rules for the English language; the focus was rather on whether students were able to understand the text based on their area of study, namely medicine.

Therefore, even though assessment can be done in English it is not important neither is it necessary to insist on the rules of the English language at a native speaker level. One should instead consider that by insisting on the native speaker label, privilege and power is given to some speakers while oppressing others (Kleyn and Garcia 2019: 70) who might have the potential to achieve great things despite not being native speakers of the English language.

In order to determine where to place the English language in the assessment loop, lecturers need to reflect on whether they are assessing students' content knowledge, knowledge of the English language or how to use language in general ( Lopez, Turkan and Guzman-Orth 2017: 6). The disentanglement of these three areas can be seen in this study. The purpose of assessment was to find out students' content knowledge after reading content-related text. Students knew that all they had to produce was a summary comprising all the main ideas of the text and to demonstrate their understanding of the text. The assessment did not consider the students' knowledge or proficiency in the English language; the focus was on the content knowledge instead. Because students were allowed to use all the languages they know to understand the text, they were assessed based on this.

Kleyn and Garcia (2019: 69) claim that translanguaging is the only available and promising way to disentangle language from content learning and it allows for students to be assessed fairly based on what they know about the subject rather than their knowledge of linguistic features that they are in the process of acquiring. Garcia (2019: 164) reveals some bitter truths about multilingual education assessment tools when she asserts that multilingual students are assessed with instruments that forbid the full use of their linguistic repertoire

whereas monolingual i.e., English-speaking students, as well as Afrikaans-speaking students in the case of South Africa, are allowed to enlist almost their full linguistic system. This type of assessment, where multilingual students' are assessed based on set linguistic standards that do not take cognisance of their linguistic practices is the reason for academic failure, the achievement gap and sadly, poverty (Garcia 2019: 160).

A translanguaging stance as identified by Garcia et al. (2017: 696) allows lecturers to believe that students' language practices are a resource that transcends the limits of the English language as prescribed by schools. Lecturers who take a translanguaging stance leverage students' language practices and allow those to be used for meaning-making of academic tasks and content material. This study took a translanguaging stance – the lecturer allowed students to use their linguistic repertoires to understand and make meaning of the text. This stance has been taken by many scholars in South Africa, for example, Madiba (2014) adopted the use of multilingual glossaries to teach economic concepts to first-year students. Makalela (2015) also uses a translanguaging stance to teach preservice teachers and recommends it as a teachable stance that affords multilingual students a social advantage as well as a deep understanding of content.

Although research in the field of translanguaging in the South African higher education context is ongoing, more research must be done in order to attain a fully teachable stance using translanguaging. In a recent conversation between this researcher and well-known scholar professor Finex Ndlhovu, he pointed out that what is lacking in the current research on translanguaging, especially in South Africa, is a well-documented methodology of teaching by using this practice. Professor Ndhlovu concedes that although research and literature on translanguaging in the South African context are available, synergy in the methods of teaching using a translanguaging approach is lacking. In this regard, researchers and academics are urged to research this further.

## **CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this paper was to open up a discussion on what to consider in assessment in the light of a translanguaging approach to teaching. The paper has shown that there is considerable literature available on translanguaging from a South African perspective. In addition, the paper aimed to show that what is of more concern to researchers in South Africa is the question of assessment: which language to be used for assessment if translanguaging is a better teaching strategy.

The paper has shown that translanguaging can be used to assist students in the understanding of content material. Even though the English language is used for assessment, it is not necessary to assess students' knowledge of the language but rather the ability to show their understanding of content material.

Based on the results of the study used in this paper, students were able to show their understanding of the text they had read without them being assessed for their knowledge of the set grammatical rules of the English language. The recommendations are the use of translanguaging and the abandoning of assessing students by using unfair practices of expecting multilingual students to write at a native speaker level. After all, these students can never become native speakers of the English language because of certain factors that cannot be changed such as race, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. In addition, lecturers should heed the fact that it is not the English language, but the ability to understand concepts, that

determines academic success. Given that research in South Africa is continuing, researchers need to consider devising a teaching methodology to use in translanguaging teaching practices.

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Vimbai Mbirimi-Hungwe is a senior lecturer in the Department of Language Proficiency at the Sefako Makgatho University of Health Sciences in South Africa. Her research focusses on the use of translanguaging, reading comprehension and collaborative learning at university level. Vimbai Mbirimi-Hungwe is convinced that multilingualism is not a learning deficit instead it should be viewed as an abundance of learning skills. Her passion is in using translanguaging to enhance reading comprehension in multilingual students who are not L1 speakers of English. Thus, her research interest emphasises the fluid use of languages for meaning making and deep understanding of reading material.