'I CAN'T REALLY THINK IN ENGLISH': TRANSLATION AS LITERACY MEDIATION IN MULTILINGUAL/MULTICULTURAL LEARNING CONTEXTS

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The article explores some aspects of a study which investigates translation as academic literacy mediation in South Africa's multilingual/multicultural contexts. The focus is on learners' translations of academic texts between the L2 and L1, and vice-versa, as a strategy to cope with ESL academic tasks. Using reflection discourse from one-on-one and focus group interviews as well as study group discussion texts, the study uses the New Literacy Studies model of literacy as social practice and aspects of critical discourse analysis to identify some pedagogical implications. One of the conclusions is that although learners are able to 'translate' in the sense of swapping labels between the L2 and L1 for the same concept, they are unable to successfully 'translate' in the sense of transfer of knowledge/cognitive skills between the L2 and L1, and the reverse. The need for functional use of the L1 and L2, critical cross-cultural awareness and language socialisation, as well as for trained bilingual teachers and literacy mediators, is explored as a way to promote positive difference, and help learners develop strategies to achieve transform/recontextualise knowledge/cognitive skills between the L2 and L1, and vice-versa, in multilingual/multicultural contexts.

INTRODUCTION

Although English is the medium of instruction at most universities in South Africa, the majority of learners, now even at universities once 'reserved' for whites only during apartheid, are African languages speakers. To the majority of these learners English is at best a second language and at worst a foreign language. It is not uncommon then for learners to discuss class assignments and other class work among themselves in an African language (see Nakasa, 2003), often even in a classroom situation, before proceeding to answer, as requested, in oral or written English. Questions raised by these practices relate to the licensing constraints governing the transformation and recontextualisation of the text as it is (re)produced and interpreted.

1. How is mediation accomplished textually in multilingual/multicultural context?
2. How do learners use multilingual/multicultural contexts to negotiate meaning in literacy events (such as discussing assignments among themselves or with their tutors and/or lecturers before writing and submission for marking)?
3. What values, power relations and ideologies are at play during such discussions?

Using data collected at the University of the Western Cape, the study problematises the effectiveness of translation between ESL and L1 as a tool for academic literacy mediation.

Cummins' (1981) notion of academic language proficiency, particularly the idea that knowledge in the L1 is transferable to the L2 is relevant here. Cummins' distinction between the 'conversational' basic interpersonal communication skills (BICs) and the cognitively demanding cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), together with his notion of common underlying proficiency (CUP) has contributed to arguments by South African academics that African learners should be taught in the mother tongue for a greater part of their primary education before switching to English (cf. Heugh, 1995; Luckett, 1995; Alexander, 1995). Related to this position is the controversial argument that knowledge acquired in the first language (L1) will necessarily transfer to the second language (L2) situation. Research in second language writing (cf. Myles, 2002; Anderson, 1985; O'Malley & Chamot, 1990 cited in Myles, 2002; Baker 1997; Kern 2000) has shown that transfer of acquired knowldge between the L1 and L2 is not automatic and that it could be a function of idiosyncratic strategies, social and cultural experiences. Kern (2000: 179) illustrates this point when he describes an L2 learner of Chinese:

> …. she found that most of her difficulties stemmed from her mistaken assumption that literacy in English and Chinese was differentiated only by the shape of the squiggles on paper, which led her to approach Chinese literacy with the same strategies that had proved successful with her English. She came to discover, however, that a surprising significant aspect of learning Chinese was learning a new way of thinking, a new set of values, a new way of presenting herself to the world – in other words, learning new Discourses in Gee's sense of the term.

Let me use Kern's illustration to define what I mean by *translation* and *transfer*. *Transfer* here is seen as translation (of labels, for example) between English and Chinese. However, in terms of academic literacy, transfer means translation of cognitive skills from English to cognitive skills in Chinese and vice-versa. (That is why in this study translation and transfer are used sometimes used interchangeably). In the above case it does not mean that being English L1 stunts the learner's cognitive competence; or that she is being inhibited by being born English. Rather, cognitive competence in one language (English) does not necessarily transfer to competence in the L2 (Chinese). The culture specific nature of schemata – abstract mental structures representing our knowledge of things, events and situations – can lead to difficulties when learners handle academic texts in L2 (Myles, 2002). Comparing writing in the L1 and L2, Myles (2002) points out that learners writing in their L2 have also to contend with proficiency in the use of language in addition to new strategies, techniques and skills. In other words, learners need to be taught the basic skills of language in both the L1 and L2, but critically, they also need to be taught or apprenticed in the skills of strategic cognitive knowledge use/manipulation or translation to enable them create or advance new knowledge in the L2. In essence, there is need to distinguish two kinds of translation (cf. Baynham & Masing, 2000; Mohan, 2003).

My argument is that although Cummins' postulations have some merits, the debate that has followed his ideas has not comprehensively considered the most obvious data, that is, the use of discourse in the L1 and L2 by learners (Mohan, 2003). Particularly, research has not engaged with the nature of academic literacy which often confuses and disorients learners 'particularly those who bring with them a set of conventions that are at odds with those of the academic world they are entering.' (Kutz, Groden & Zamel, 1993: 30, cited in Myles 2002: 2).

The problem here is not only the dearth of research detailing the interdependencies among L1 and L2 textual products, cognitive processes, and socio-cultural factors (cf. Kern, 2000; Myles, 2002), but also issues related to positive or negative effects on academic language proficiency of the learner, of transfer or mediation between the L1 and L2. In South Africa, like anywhere else, the debate on L1 or L2 as medium of instruction has not often taken into account the fact that transfer has linguistic and cultural dimensions, and that taxonomies/classifications differ between languages (and cultures) and also within different registers in the same language (cf. Mohan, 2003). Thus, handling high level cognitive knowledge such as that required in the analysis and composing of academic texts, first and foremost has to be taught, whether in the L1 or L2 or both. And as the above example shows, knowing how to compose a 'summary' or 'analysis' in English does not necessarily mean learners will be able to do the same things in Akan or Japanese (cf. Myles, 2002: 2; Kern, 2000).

Therefore, this study recognises cross-cultural differences and distance, that is, issues related to societal values and sociocultural variation in the functions of the written language. It also illustrates how academic language proficiency levels in the L1 and L2 could support or conflict with each other in a multilingual and multicultural context. Acculturation in formal instructional settings is important for the development of both L1 and L2 academic proficiencies. But L2 performance, unlike L1, can also be inhibited by sociocultural difference, as well as limitations in knowledge of vocabulary, language structure and content.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The study looks at learner reflection interview discourse and translation data as units of social practices which are part of the wider contexts of a school and community (cf. Banda, 2003 [2004]; Gee, 2000; Fairclough, 1995, 2000; New London Group, 2000).

In trying to understand these social processes, I draw on New Literacy Studies, particularly those that take literacy as social practice (Gee, 2000; Baynham, 2000; Baynham & Masing, 2000; Street, 2001; Barton, 1999; Prinsloo & Breier, 1996) and aspects of critical discourse analysis, particularly that dealing with the analysis of values, identities, ideologies and power relations embedded in texts (Wodak, 2002; Fairclough, 1995, 2000; Van Dijk, 1998; Eggins & Slade, 1997). Values, identities, ideologies and power relations are not only reflected in social behaviour, but could also be used to explain certain social practices.

Of interest at this juncture is that ideology, like values, attitudes and power relations, is usually reflected in discursive practices, and is thus associated with language use. It is typically expressed and reproduced in and through language. In the context of discourse, then, language reflects and constructs ideology (Oktar, 2001; Gee, 2000; Van Dijk, 1998), and can said to be 'the basis of social representations shared by members of a social group' (Van Dijk, 1998: 8). Thus, '…. an ideology is a self-serving schema for the representation of us and them as social groups, and reflects the fundamental social, economic, political or cultural interests of, and conflicts between, us and them…' (Oktar, 2001: 314). In relation to this study, the choices learners make between isiXhosa or English as medium of instruction in bilingual contexts, as well as how they interact with texts, will reveal something of the values and attitudes towards these languages, as well as the ideology behind the choices between the languages. In particular, ideology helps us understand how and why research (such as Banda, 2003[2004]; De Klerk, 1996, 2000) suggests L1 speakers of African

languages appear to opt for ESL medium of instruction as early as possible, disregarding pedagogic models which proclaim the benefits of L1 instruction.

By extension, studying ideologies embedded in discourse could help us understand why certain individuals in households or communities that have no literacy tradition still manage to excel despite the odds being stacked against them. It would also help us understand the conflicting views between academics who insist on mother tongue medium of instruction for African learners, on the one hand, and African parents and learners who insist on English second language medium of instruction.

Ethnographic approaches have demonstrated that our interpretation and production of discourse are constrained by socio-cultural context (Hymes, 1972, 1974; Gumperz, 1982a, b). In essence, our cultural context constrains our participation in discourse events in much the same way as psycho-cognitive factors. Gumperz (1982a, b) has demonstrated that speakers from different socio-cultural backgrounds may be 'tuned in' and understand discourse differently according to their interpretation of contextualized signals in discourse.

The argument here is that the multilingual/multicultural nature of South Africa makes the social situation potentially conflictual – not in the classic sense of Afrikaans vs. English or isiXhosa vs. isiZulu (speakers), but in the sense that different cultures could have different theories of social practice and different ways of interpreting social practices, which could increase the potential for miscommunication. But this could also open up possibilities for innovative use of prior knowledge as it is applied to new contexts in a different language. In essence, bi/multicultural individuals may therefore embody the conflict within themselves, which could potentially be used in innovative ways for positive difference. This does not mean that monocultural individuals are immune to such conflict. On the contrary, a monocultural individual is also faced with theories and viewpoints that contain dilemmas and inconsistencies (cf. Scollon & Scollon, 2001; Mohan, 2003). Therefore, an individual, whether mono- or bi/multicultural, is faced with new choices and has to negotiate choices in discourse. How well an individual mediates between the choices determines the difference between positive and negative transfer. Effectively, a comprehensive pedagogical theory needs to account for both psycho-cognitive, as well as socio-cultural affective factors in multilingual/multicultural contexts.

Mediated Academic Literacies as Social Practice

Interest in this study is in the second language classroom in as far as academic L2 learning, academic L1 maintenance, and content learning is concerned. In particular, interest is in the kind of mediation that takes place in the translation of knowledge between the L1 and the L2 (and vice-versa) during the process of content learning.

In recent years, a number of studies have been done on literacy mediation. In the New Literacy Studies the notion of literacy mediator has been used largely in sociological and sociolinguistic terms. For instance, literacy mediation has been studied with regard to social networks and social roles (Barton & Ivanic, 1991) with regard to teenagers as mediators in Black and Puerto Rican communities (Shuman, 1993); mediation as a strategy for achieving literacy purposes in the Moroccan community in London (Baynham, 1993,1995)**;** mode switching, discursive switching and with regard to codeswitching among coloureds in the Eastern Cape, South Africa (Malan, 1996). In all these studies mediation is a consequence of difference and distance. (Bayham & Masing, 2000: 195). Mediation has to do with closing an

information gap or *distance*, as well as the *difference* in power/knowledge and socio-cultural and psychological distance. It is not always possible to tell whether a particular pedagogical problem is a result of 'distance' or 'difference' or both. Therefore, in this study the term 'difference' is sometimes used for 'distance' as well.

In looking at translation between L1 and L2, and vice-versa, as literacy mediation in multilingual and multicultural context, the current study necessarily problematises distance and difference. For instance, in this study, learners at university insist on English medium of instruction, and that they do their writing of academic tasks in English, though they do all the discussions and preparations on academic topics in the L1. To understand the learners' perspective, we have to go beyond the realms of learning theories and pedagogy to socio-cultural and power relations at play in South Africa's multilingual context. For the learner, then, doing academic tasks means constantly translating between the L2 and L1 and vice-versa, as well as dealing with dilemmas arising out of conflicting values, ideologies and power relations in society. One problem, however, is that neither the learners nor their teachers have had the bilingual training to effectively translate between L1 and L2 and vice-versa. Thus, translation as academic literacy mediation, as will be evident in this study, does always not work to the benefit of the learner.

It is important to distinguish between:

1. Literacy mediation as a message transmission in which there is verbatim reproduction, and thus acceptance of an authoritative discourse, and
2. Literacy mediation as transformation in which there is appropriation and reworking of the words of others. (Baynham & Masing, 2000).

Schematically mediation can be represented thus:

1. The transfer of A to B via C.
2. The transformation/recontextualisation of A into B by means of C.
    (Baynham & Masing, 2000).

The first kind of mediation relates to what I will call 'ordinary translation', that is, the mere substitution of labels between languages for the same words or concepts. This is not cognitively demanding use of language. This is akin to using the L1 to understand the 'dictionary' labels of the words or concepts. This is constituted by tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description (Myles, 2002) or mechanical or formal aspects of 'write down' (Omaggio Hadley, 1993 cited in Myles, 2002: 1). Effectively, there is little or no significant movement from A to B (in terms of knowledge or information reconstruction and transformation, for example) even though C (L1, for example) has been used. From a pedagogical perspective, this kind of mediation could promote rote learning as it does not encourage knowledge transformation. In reality and in terms of cognitive demands what goes in is more or less what comes out, with the difference being that two languages were used in the process.

Translation as academic mediation should be geared towards the second kind of transfer or mediation. The second kind of mediation leads to a relatively more powerful discursive stance, and could be very productive in a second language classroom situation. In fact, the second kind of mediation can be said to be critical to academic language proficiency particularly in a multilingual classroom situation. Potentially and theoretically, the different

languages and ways of interpreting social practices should put the learner at an advantage due to the broad multilingual and multicultural base at his/her disposal. For example, a learner uses 'old' knowledge and L1 experiences of a concept to create or interpret 'new' knowledge and L2 experiences in different socio-cultural contexts. This is cognitively demanding language use. Formulating new ideas can be difficult as it involves reworking and transforming of information as the learner is involved in 'a two-way interaction between continuously developing knowledge and continuously developing text' Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987: 12, cited in Myles, 2002: 1). Clearly, mediation of the second type, in particular, is fraught with risks owing to different ways of interpreting social practices and also to dilemmas and conflicts inherent in the texts/discourse. Secondly, the rigidities in the current education system, which prescribe particular ways of writing essays, for example, as well as learners' own values and ideologies, could restrict second language learners to the first kind of mediation. But even when the learner has transformed and reconstituted L2 knowledge in the L1, the quality of the work can still be restricted by his/her knowledge of the L2 linguistic rules during the process of oral or written presentation.

The basic model of literacy mediation as social practice adopted in this study combines some aspects of critical discourse analysis (CDA) with analyse text/discourse data (Fairclough, 1995, 2000; Wodak, 2002; Eggins & Slade, 1997). The texts/discourse data includes learner translations of academic work and discussion data, as well as a collection of interview data, in this case, (Xhosa L1) learners' reflections on the use of the L1 and the L2 for academic purposes. The text/discourse data, then, contains the 'evidence' of the social practice(s), including their values and ideology (cf. Eggins & Slade, 1997; Baynham, 2000; Baynham & Masing, 2000; Wodak, 2002; Mohan, 2003).

THE STUDY

The initial study (Banda, 2003 [2004]) was a survey of literacy practices among African and Coloured learners at the University of the Western Cape (UWC). 120 participants took part in the initial study. The next stage was a follow-up study of ten individual interviews and five focus group discussions (four learners in each group), as well as recording study groups discussing a range of topics in preparation for final semester examinations . This involved black learners, all of whom grew up and did their primary and secondary education in the former apartheid 'Homeland' of Transkei in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. All the participants claimed that isiXhosa was their L1. Text/discourse data from two typical interview data are used in the study. Data from the other interviews are discussed where necessary. Texts/discourse data from the focus group discussions are identified as being from 'Group 1' or 'Group2'. Group 3 is the study group which generated discussion data.

The data were collected in 2003 in naturally occurring learning situations in the sense that the learners concerned had come to consult the lecturer (who did the recording with their permission) on difficulties they had with a second year course on cross-cultural communication. All the learners involved had already repeated the course at least once. This means the sampling of subjects was by rules of 'natural' selection in that learners were selected on account of having failed the course more than once despite the fact that some of them spoke ESL quite well. In this sense, the data can be said to be already already biased. But it has to be understood that the initial motivation was for learner-teacher consultation to find a solution to academic problems.

The learners used in the current study were all female and their ages ranged between 22 and 27. The interviews and focus group discussions were done in the lecturer's office during consultation time. The study group discussion data were recorded by one of the participants involved in the discussion in the UWC library basement during the learners' preparation for an examination.

Following Eggins & Slade (1997: 5), the transcription key is as follows:

Symbol	Meaning
.	Certainty, completion (typically falling tone)
No end of turn	Non – termination (no final intonation)
,	Parceling talk; breathing time
?	Uncertainty (wh-interrogative)
!	'surprised' intonation
( )	Untranscribable talk
(words within parenthesis)	Transcriber's guess
[Words in square brackets]	Non-verbal information
= =	Overlap (contiguity, simultaneous)
…	Short hesitation within a turn (less than three seconds)
[pause – 5 secs]	Indication of inter-turn pause length
Dash – then talk	False start/restart

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The texts analysed below highlight both the pervading values and ideology in favour of English-based literacies, as well as the different ways and difficulties learners that participated in this study have in mediating discourse between their L2 and L1 and vice-versa. I am, however, wary of overgenerations on account of the small sample I am working with.

Teaching and learning English in isiXhosa

It was clear that for the participants in this investigation, the simultaneous use of the L1 and the L2 for academic purposes started in primary school. What is interesting here is the claim that not only English literature, but English language as well, was taught in isiXhosa. In theory, in most African schools, English is supposed to be the medium of instruction at secondary school level and after 3 or 4 years of primary education. But in practice that does not appear to be the case.

(Interview)		
Turn	Speaker	Text
43	Zethu	My experience is that I learnt everything in Xhosa so even if it was in English so now I regret it it's difficult to speak English because I didn't grow up speaking English. I only met English in Varsity it is not nice people. Who are looking at us will say you can't speak English but you are in University.

It is apparent that the learner is frustrated that her being taught in her L1 has not helped her cope with English academic tasks at university. From the learner's viewpoint knowledge in the L1 has not really transferred to the L2 contexts. In the last sentence, she appears to feel that she is viewed disparagingly because of the limitations of her English.

From a pedagogical viewpoint, it is worrying that the learner appears to blame being taught in

her L1 for her lack of L2 academic proficiency. The negative value judgements against the L1 in favour of English are evident in the other texts cited below (see also below, Group 1: turns 187, 189).

In attempting to help learners cope with their L2 academic work, primary and secondary school teachers either continued to teach through isiXhosa or resorted to mediation of academic work through the use of isiXhosa (cf. Group 1: turns 182, 191). Ironically, instead of helping learners the practice does not promote learning. The problem here is that learners are not themselves involved in the development of new knowledge, or of L2 proficiency using their L1 experiences, as the teachers did the translation for them (cf. turn 191)

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
179	Lecturer	Ok, and ehm, as a matter of interest the time English was taught in primary and secondary school in particular - what- how was English taught?
180	Bongi	In Eastern Cape?
181	Lecturer	Yes in your school.
182	Vuyise	In my school, mine was a terrible English teacher, she used to write- read to us a novel, then she will explain it in Xhosa, so you have no... you don't even listen... 'cause you know she's going to explain it in Xhosa, so...
183	Bongi	= = 'Xhosalise' English.
184		[They all speak at once]
185	Lecturer	= = Ok, so the teacher, what you are telling me is that they were teaching Xhosa in English- you mean = = English in Xhosa?
186	Students	= = English in Xhosa
187	Nomvu	= = most of the time, most of them, that is why we struggle.
189	Nompu	They teach everything, but, differently, everything they do teach but most of the time they 'Xhosalise' it.
190	Lecturer	They 'Xhosalise' it? [then he laughs]
191	Vuyise	and then there're going to explain it after that we don't even care what we're reading 'cause we know she's going to tell it in Xhosa.

In essence, teachers unwittingly created a 'dependency syndrome' in which learners depend on the teacher to do most of the 'thinking' that goes with translating, reconstruction and transforming of academic material.

I should point out that it is not in all black schools that teachers teach everything including English in isiXhosa, or isiXhosa mixed with English. This was clear in some of the other interviews. However, what was clear in all interviews and focus group discussions that in some schools, classroom practice did not involve learners translating knowledge between the L2 and L1, and back.

L1 OR L2 AS MEDIUM OF INSTRUCTION: DILEMMAS AND CONFLICTS

De Klerk (1996, 2000) has shown that African parents and learners prefer English as the medium of instruction. She discusses in detail the dilemmas and conflicts arising from this preference, particularly considering isiXhosa as a vehicle of cultural transmission for *amaXhosa*. However, the argument here is that unsystematic 'Xhosalisation' of English texts could in part explain why learners have difficulty transforming and recontextualising academic knowledge as they translate between the languages. Learners have not acquired the skill to systematically translate isiXhosa and English texts.

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
149	Nompu	It's difficult sometime because, sometimes you want to explain something but you don't have- you don't know how to put it in English, so you end up just... you don't know how to put it, maybe... in your language neh you could be clear in what you really want to say.
150	Bongi	And sometimes when that, if you want to know something and that person, if can, answer you in your own language it can be easier and then I know I can put it in English when I- when I write it, but if he- if he- he or she can answer me in my own language, I can understand better.

But the problem does not end there. Sometimes even when the learners think they know what to say, they find they do not have the language with which to express their thoughts correctly orally or in writing (Group 1: turns 164, 168). In essence, learners are aware that translating between the L1 and L2 is risky and problematic , but seem powerless to do anything about it.

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
164	Bongi	Sometimes you can know, when you want to answer but- the question that has been raised but you won't know = = how to proceed.
165	Nomvu	= = how to proceed.
166	Nonqa	Sometimes you know, you know something, but you- you... I can say you ask something from us, but we didn't- we didn't understand your question. We write = = another thing, only to see that you want something else we didn't know.
167	Lecturer	= = another thing
168	Nomvu	Only to find that we know the answer... but we didn't understand, the question.
170	Nonqa	Sometimes... we can speak it well but we can't write it, we don't know how to write it.

What seems the case here and elsewhere, is that learners are able to point out the dilemma and conflict involved in the use of the L1 and the L2 for academic purposes. But they struggle to discuss the nature of the dilemma and conflict.

Unbeknown to learners, perhaps one of the problems is the limited ability to translate or swap labels between the L2 and L1 as opposed to the strategic competence required to translate knowledge across intercultural and linguistic boundaries. I elaborate on this elsewhere.

ATTITUDES, VALUES AND IDEOLOGIES

Studies on Xhosa communities in the Eastern Cape (De Klerk, 1996; 2000) and Xhosa learners' literacy practices (Banda 2003 [2004]) suggest that the pervading values and ideologies in these communities support English-based academic literacies more than L1-based ones. This is also clear in the text below, where despite the difficulty learners have learning in English, 'thinking' and discussing assignments in Xhosa and then transferring the information back into English, they cannot countenance the notion of Xhosa medium of instruction. They would rather maintain the status quo in as far as language of education is concerned.

(Interview with Zethu)

Turn	Speaker	Text
3	Lecturer	So you wouldn't mind if that question was in Xhosa and you have to answer that question in English.
4	Zethu	Yah it won't cause problem because I can think more in Xhosa. My problem in English you think but you can't find the good word then you end up leaving the information because it will be poor, it can't make sense.
5	Lecturer	What if we start we start teaching at University in Xhosa?

6	Zethu	Nooo! [emphatically]
7	Lecturer	Why not, but that will be easier won't it?
8	Zethu	Yah, what? But all subjects in Xhosa? Some of them must be in English I don't agree with that = =
9	Lecturer	= = why in English
10	Zethu	I think it will be boring learning Xhosa all the classes.

There is also a perception among students that it would be difficult if not impossible to teach in isiXhosa at university level, let alone translate teaching material into the language. But it is apparent here that the resistance is due to social attitudes and practices all in favour of English, as well as values and ideologies meant to maintain the status quo. Learners appear to have internalized the perception that isiXhosa cannot accommodate the demands of academic subjects (cf. Group 1: turns 115, 119, 121).

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
113	Lecturer	Nompu, suppose, eh, you know, all these questions, if we were to translate them, for example, into Xhosa, do you think they would be easy to understand?
114	Bongi	Yes, yes.
115	Nompu	Some others you can't translate them = = in in Xhosa.
116	Nonqa	= = some because…
117	Lecturer	Mmmh, if we were to translate everything, including the workbook …
	Students	(Giggle in disbelief)
118	Lecturer	You seem to have doubts, well, even like for example, to translate the whole workbook, all the test and exam questions into Xhosa.
119	Nomvu	I don't think it can be easy.
120	Lecturer	No, but it's possible, it can't be easy, but, but it's possible. I can see you have, you have doubts [giggles] Ok, ehm, you think only the questions, not the workbook, but the questions is it? What about teaching? What if we started teaching this course = = in Xhosa, yes?
121	Students	[Perplexed] = = in Xhosa?
122	Bongi	What about the Coloureds and others = = it can't be taught in Xhosa, for the sake of others who don't understand Xhosa, so at least English they may be = =
123	Lecturer	= = Ok, that's another issue. But suppose it was possible [pause 2 secs] then we stop teaching in English, everything, then we start teaching in Xhosa, what will you, do you think it'll be helpful?
124	Nomvu	It'll be helpful to Xhosa speakers, but to others it'll be difficult.

What is interesting here is that even those learners who think learning in isiXhosa would be beneficial do not want to be taught in the language (cf. Group 1: turns 114 and 122). As the above exchange illustrates, learners go as far as using other African language speakers and coloureds (most of whom do not speak isiXhosa) as a reason not to use isiXhosa as a medium of instruction at university. It could be argued that the motivation for opting for English is altruistic.

There is no doubt that it would be very difficult to convince African learners about the benefit of learning through the mother tongue. It seems learners have learnt to filter their values and experiences through the dominant culture (Devine, 1994). As can be seen from the extract below, there appears to be a sense in which 'being educated' is associated with English, not the mother tongue (Group 1: turns 57, 60).

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
56	Nomvu	And the problem is that we're not fluent, we do speak English, we do understand it but the problem is that we don't speak it effectively.
57	Nompu	More especially we're from the Eastern Cape, I'll tell you the only people who can speak English fluently are those from the Model Cs [former Whites only schools] I believe so.

58	Lecturer	But despite all that, you feel we shouldn't change the medium of instruction to Xhosa?
59	Bongi	Yes, yes, you shouldn't because we do want to learn English [Giggling]
60	Nompu	It's a must (to be taught in English) it's a matter of a MUST for us to know English.
61	Lecturer	Ok so you have no problems discussing your English assignments in Xhosa = =
62	Nompu/Bongi	= = then writing in English. No problem.

However, some learners would prefer to learn and to write in isiXhosa. Zuki said she would have no problem learning and writing in isiXhosa and she said that she would pass with 'flying colours.' This seemingly positive value judgement towards isiXhosa, is, however, betrayed by the attitudes she seems to portray in the extract below. The apparent contradictions about her passing examinations if written in isiXhosa and her expressed desire to discuss academic work in English during preparation, as well as to whether she belongs to a study group or not (it later transpired she belongs to two study groups), all reflect the conflicts and dilemmas Zuki seems to find herself in.

(Interview with Zuki)

Turn	Speaker	Text
11	Lecturer	And…. Alright I will come back to study groups later but I just want to find out from you the process you go through when you have a question such as this one…Okay eeh…. Don't worry that's not coming in the exams. So how would you go about answering that?
12	Zuki	First Prof I have to know the Maxims = =
13	Lecturer	== So you don't translate?
14	Zuki	Oh ya, English and Xhosa, but most of the time I use English and if I don't understand a word I use a dictionary.
15	Lecturer	Okay, all right, so in your case you just use English and don't have to translate. Now suppose that the question was translated into Xhosa for example, do you think it would help you answer it better.
16	Zuki	I think so.
19	Lecturer	So you feel for example if the exam could be written in Xhosa it would help you pass.
20	Zuki	Of course Prof, I would pass with flying colors.
27	Lecturer	Do you belong to a study group because now they are the most common way of studying.
28	Zuki	Yes Prof it's not a study group as such. We get together when we don't understand something and then we discuss it amongst ourselves.
29	Lecturer	How many are you?
30	Zuki	Usually there are three of us but we can mix with whoever comes, it's not a specific group.
31	Lecturer	And who are your group mates?
32	Zuki	My friends Nandi and Nike, I also work with them.
37	Lecturer	In the study group, do you use English or Xhosa [or both]?
38	Zuki	We use English but if there's a concept we don't understand we use Xhosa
39	Lecturer	Why does your group use English because other people agree that discussions are better in Xhosa
40	Zuki	The problem is when writing exams we use English so it is pointless for us to do the discussions in Xhosa. We want to familiarize ourselves with using English.

It is also noteworthy that in this extract Zuki suggests that her study group does discussions are always in English. But the recording of Zuki's group discussing 'Gender issues and HIV/AIDS' done by Nandi another member of the group, shows that the entire discussion was almost exclusively in isiXhosa (see Group 3: Extract from Zuki's discussion group below).

The above extracts also demonstrate the earlier argument about the seemingly unresolved dilemma among African learners generally, concerning L1 and L2 use. Zuki's interview extract highlights these dilemmas and conflicts. It can be argued that Zuki's responses raise doubts about the validity of her expressed sentiments. However, the point is that the apparent gap between what she says [group discussion in ESL] and actual practice [group discussion in isiXhosa], is symptomatic of the dilemmas and conflicts, as well as symbolic of the

attitudinal, value and ideological systems attached to the use of the L1 and L2.

TRANSLATION AS LITERACY MEDIATION

It can be safely assumed from the texts, starting with the very first one analysed in this study, that most of the learners' academic discussion is done in the L1 (isiXhosa). This seems to be the case even at university level. Although the lectures are in English, learners follow up on their work in the mother tongue. This is not necessarily true for all learners, but the subjects used in this study try to get the logic and reasoning behind whatever topic done in the lecture through the L1 or L1 and L2 'mixture', not the L2 on its own. In other words, learners 'think' in the L1 and then try to translate it into the L2 (cf. Group 1: turns 14, 35).

(interview with Zethu)

Turn	Speaker	Text
11	Lecturer	Yah, how would you go about preparing to go and answer that question, that question relates to this( ). Are you going to translate into Xhosa first?
12	Zethu	Yah I will first do that = = Yah
13	Lecturer	= = Mmmh, okay so you will first translate that. Okay…alright do you think translating helps you?
14	Zethu	It helps me to think, when I speak Xhosa, I can always translate into English = = because I can't really think in English.
15	Lecturer	= = Okay
	NV2	[They laugh]
34	Lecturer	So you wouldn't mind if that question was in Xhosa and you have to answer that question in English.
35	Zethu	Yah, it won't cause problem because I can think more in Xhosa. My problem in English you think but you can't find the good word then you end up leaving the information because it will be poor, it can't make sense.

The lecturer's question in turn 11 might appear a leading question, but in fact he is merely prompting what Zethu had implied in turn 4.

However, it seems from the above text and others below (e.g. on 'Maxims' and 'Felicity Conditions') that somewhere between the point of translating and 'understanding' the question or content from the L2 to the L1; during transformation into intended meanings (if this stage is executed at all); and during translation back to the L2, that is the process of producing the (oral or written) text in the L2, things usually go wrong (cf. Anderson, 1985; Myles 2002). This strengthens the argument that learning should combine the development of content knowledge and language development in both the L1 and L2, practice in the use of this knowledge in both languages, as well as strategy training to enable learners to pursue learning independently.

Examples of something going wrong during translation are illustrated below. Contrary to the learners' claims, there is very little evidence that learners understood the concepts of 'Maxims and Implicature' after translation (cf. Group 2: turns 62, 64, 68). The same argument appears true for Group 1 on 'Felicity Conditions' (see below). It appears in both cases without the lecturer's heavy prompting is meant to be more meaningful and creative in the use of the L1 and L2.

(Group 2)

Turn	Speaker	Text
55	Lecturer	So first you would try to understand the question. But do you understand that question? What do you understand by that question? [Referring to question on Gricean Maxims]
56	Nosi	I can say the question is … [pause 12 secs]
57	Lecturer	You can say it in Xhosa, that's fine.
58	Nosi	You can understand Xhosa?
59	Lecturer	eeeh.
	All NV	[They laugh]
60	Lecturer	Right. You have the question. Let's see how you discuss it. (The four students begin to discuss in whispers in Xhosa, but inaudible)
61	Lecturer	But this thing (audio recorder) is not picking up what you're discussing.
62	Thembe	Hayi sixelela nge types ze maxims eye quality neye relevance. *[No, tell us about types of maxims of quality and relevance.]*
63	Lecturer	And - what do YOU say then? [pause 7 secs]. The next thing is to apply [the maxims to the advert] because you've already shown me your 'understanding'. That's fine, speak up please.
64	Nonte	I-maxims the *quantity* I-considerisha more information and what about *quality*? *[The maxims of quantity considers …]*
65	Lecturer	Being truthful? [Learners mumble inaudibly in isiXhosa]
66	Nonte	Okay. Yah.
67	Lecturer	Please speak up I want to pick up the things you're saying.
68	Nonte	Okay. I'm just saying this question is related to the maxims of quantity because it is clear and have more information.
69	Lecturer	Mmh? Okay. I think we should just move on…

The above text illustrates not only difficulties learners have discussing academic work in isiXhosa, but also demonstrate how they confuse concepts by merely swapping labels between the L1 and the L2 (cf. turns 62, 64). What learners seem unaware of is the fact that transfer between L1 and L2 cannot simply be a matter of translating labels for the same 'concept'. In addition, dictionary definitions are not always adequate to explain sociolinguistic and applied linguistic concepts. For instance, Nonte has translated Grice's maxim of *quantity* in terms of something measurable or countable in numbers. For argument's sake, she has classified *quantity* under 'amount', as in 'excessive' information. Through translating from L2 and L1, she has in fact given a dictionary definition of the concept. But *quantity* as a 'concept' in Grice's conceptualisation falls under *conversational implicature* and refers to efficient cooperative language use in which speakers provide sufficient information required for the current purposes of the exchange. In this taxonomy, *quantity* is not so much about less or 'more information' but rather whether and what speakers are able to *infer* or *implicate* from the exchange. Inferences are based on both the content of what has been uttered and what has not been uttered given a particular context. Thus, they are based on some specific assumptions about the cooperative nature of ordinary verbal interaction (Levinson, 1989). Therefore, for a learner to successfully mediate akin to mediation of the second kind as described above, s/he needs to both transform the notion of maxims from L2 to L1 and reconstruct the context of use during interpretation. This entails understanding what the 'associated' labels mean in the L1, as well as dealing with the cognitively demanding task of regenerating meaningful text back to the L2 after 'translation.' Of course, the quality of the textual representation will be limited by the learner's linguistic abilities in the L2.

In this case, the learners misdirect themselves by translating the 'dictionary' labels *quantity*, *relevance* and *quality* into the L1 and then back to the 2. In fact, in this case, regardless of the language used for representation, for a meaningful translation, learners needed to understand that the labels fall under a different classification when discussed in terms of Grice's maxims. It is interesting to note here that the learners do not refer to the advertisement or specific

content in the advertisement (as required by the question) as they try to answer the question. Clearly, they have difficulty relating their 'understanding' of the concepts to the question on the advertisement. Ironically, this is one topic that L1 cultural experiences should have worked to the benefit of the learner to understand the concepts as used in the L2 – if at all transfer of knowledge was automatic – as owing to Africa's socio-cultural set up, *implicatures* are a significant aspect of language usage in African communities (cf. Obeng, 1997, 1999; Scollon & Scollon, 2001)

The problem of mediation between L1 and L2 could also be seen in the fact that learners have difficulty going beyond synonyms and giving examples (cf. Group 1: turns 12, 14, 16, 20). They are unable to transform and recontextualise a word or concept, which would be real evidence of understanding of a particular problem or a concept, and indeed evidence of positive mediation between L2 and L1. Consider the following extract:

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
1	Nomvu	Felicity conditions.
2	Lecturer	Eeh?
3	Nomvu	Felicity conditions.
4	Lecturer	Felicity conditions?
5	Nomvu	Yes
6	Lecturer	Alright? = = So we are talking about felicity conditions, alright. What was- what's the first felicity (condition for 'congratulating'?)
7	Students	= = Ok
8	Bongi	Congratulation.
9	Lecturer	Congratulation?
10	Students	Yes.
11	Lecturer	Yes, so what do you say to that, congratulating? (Pause) So all you need to say is that, 'What is the condition, for people or somebody to congratulate somebody?
12	Nomvu	To say 'congratulation' to that and that.
13	Lecturer	Yeah, yeah, but that's not really answering the question
14	Nomvu	When somebody come to say 'congrats'.
15	Lecturer	Yes, that's an example, we need a more general explanation, so = =
16	Nomvu	= = Passing.
17	Lecturer	But, those are examples, somebody passes, somebody ...
18		(Students mumble inaudibly in isiXhosa)
19	Lecturer	Eeh?
20	Mati	Let's say, I could win = =
21	Lecturer	= = winning, that's an example, not a condition.
22	Nompu	Not a condition?
23	Lecturer	No, but I know you know the answer, somebody must have, ... what? DONE SOMETHING ... GOOD or SOMETHING WORTH, yah something worthwhile, is it? So that's all that you gave are just examples but the condition is: Somebody must have done something worthwhile. Some deed of some kind, somebody is happy about (then a pause for about 5 sec) That's one…mmh ... what's the second one? (pause 112 sec)
24	Mati	The second one (Pause 20 secs)

The above extract shows that merely swapping labels, 'Felicity conditions for congratulating' are translated as examples for 'congratulating'. Thus, instead of translating the general conditions, and thus come up with a **general explanation or 'theory'** in context, the learners come up with **specific examples** of when someone congratulates.

Note also the long and awkward pauses as the lecturer waits for a response from learners (turns 11, 23, 24). The lecturer is forced not only to formulate the question for the learners (turns 1-6), but also, having failed to coax meaningful responses out of the learners, he is forced to spell out the answer (turn 23). Effectively, the lecturer unwittingly contributes to learners not mediating the text on their own, and thus, helps to perpetuate the 'dependency

syndrome'.

I should point out that it does not mean that learners are incapable of asking questions and generating general explanations/theories; or that they lack the social skill to do so. What appears the case is that in some African primary and secondary schools, learners are often not given the chance to develop these skills and hence lack the experience and L2 strategies to do so. This is clearly demonstrated below.

(Group 1)

Turn	Speaker	Text
203	Nonqa	In our school they (teachers) didn't allow us to ask questions, they just ask us questions from us only. No student = = will ask any question
204	Lecturer	= = don't ask? Ok, but what was the reason for that?
205	Nonqa	No
206	Lecturer	No?
207	Nonqa	They think that we don't know nothing, only them they … they just teach – teach and ask questions from us in class

Culture and status issues could also be used to explain why learners appear tongue-tied in the texts examined in this study. Though it could be argued that this does not apply here, in most African societies the younger person is not expected to initiate or appear to control the direction of a conversation, with an older person. In this case, it is as if learners expect the lecturer to have a monopoly of knowledge (cf. Devine, 1994. Moreover, apart from the obvious reason that learners do not understand the question or the concepts they are supposed to apply, the asymmetrical power relations and social status difference often associated with collectivist societies found in parts of Africa (Scollon & Scollon, 2001) could be a factor here.

This beings me to the question of translation and study group discussions, particularly whether group discussions in the L1 engender knowledge transfer and academic language proficiency in the L2. There is no doubt that they could, but only under certain conditions. Myles (2002) reminds us that unregulated study groups are usually the primary source of interlanguage discourse for L2 learners. I pick up this point later.

However, the extract below shows that albeit that learners do the discussion almost entirely in the L1, there is little evidence of translation of the second kind. For instance, though learners use the L1, there is very little (if at all) transformation and reconstruction of knowledge in the text below.

(Group 3: Extract from Zuki's Study Group)

This is Zuki's study group. The group is in the Library Basement discussing gender issues and HIV/AIDS in preparation for the final examination the next day in a course on Women and Gender Studies. It was recorded by Nandi.

Turn	Speaker	Text
1	Zuki	Abonabantu banezifo more than bona ngabafazi, nangona ingabo abantu abalala nabafazi abaninzi. Then amadoda awafuni kuyazi into yokuba aids ikhona and abafazi abanazipowers zokuthi masisebenzise icondom = =
2	Nandi	= = ngoba indoda mhlawumbi izakucinga ukuba ikho into ayenzayo umfaziecaleni, and number two
3	Zuki	Abakwazi kuthetha ngeecondoms emadodeni abo because baxhomekeke kuwo like in terms of ishelter, ukutya nezinye izinto. So bonqena ukungazifumani ezozinto.
4	Nike	Amasiko or iculture nayo inegalelo kulento yokwanda kwe AIDS ngoba iculture ye africans kwirural areas abakho allowed to discuss I sex naba yeni or amadoda abo, xa ungumntu ongumama you have to tell your child about sexual deases = =
5	Zuki	= = and like ukuba uyafumanisa kwezindawo kuthethwa kuzonge AIDS amadoda awekhongabafazi bodwa

6	Nandi	and amadoda ayasoleka kulento yokwanda kweaids, indoda isuka kwi rural areas to urban areas eyokufuna umsebenzi then phayana afune umntu wokuthatha indawo nemisebenzi yomfaziand benze isex ngaphandle kokhuseleko, abuyengeholide aze emfazini nezoo zifo
7	Nike	and norhulumente sisenokumsola kulento like kwi public institutions kufumaneka imakle condoms zodwa so kubafazi kunzima ukuzikhusela baxhomekeke emadodeni abo.
8	Nandi	Yintoni umahluko phakathi kwegender streotypes ne gender role?
9	Zuki	Mna igender role ndiyibona iyintoelungelelaniswa yi culture, like umfazi kumele apheke indoda kumele isebenze izinto ezinjalo. Then igender stereotypes yona, abantwana bafunda ebantwini abadala indlela yokuphila, like xa uyintombazana udlala onopopi inkwenkwe igani neemoto njengotata bawo
10	Nike	and iculture esiphila kuyo ikhuthaza into yokuba amadoda akwazi ukuziphilela angaxhomekeki mntwini.
11	Nandi	Okunye amadoda acinga ukuba abhetele kunabafazi
12	Zuki	Kwingxoxo yethhu yokuqala besifuna ukuqonda ukuba kutheni lento iAIDS iyigender issue, kweyesibini besiqonda umahluko phakathi kwe ender role ne stereotypes.

(See Appendix for English Version)

The learners do not engage with the topic on gender and HIV/AIDS, nor against each other's perspectives. The text as a whole sounds like a memorised essay being *retold* in the L1. It might as well have been retold by one learner.

There is no doubt that the learners have done a good job in translating labels from the L2 to the L1. What they have not done is to use the L1 and their own socio-cultural experiences to reform and reconstruct what they 'know' on HIV/AIDS to come up with a more powerful discursive representation in the L2.

PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

It is clear from this study that the worlds of meaning are threatened, and theories and practices are endangered by dilemmas resulting from conflicting demands on the learners' education. It seems the learners in the study are confronted with conflicting demands and choices at every turn. Clearly, some of the demands are self-inflected. These include those resulting from learners' own values, attitudes and ideologies (particularly regarding choice(s) of medium of instruction). Still, learners are confused that despite the fact that they are able to understand and to translate material from L2 to L1, and back, and some speak both languages competently, but still do badly in L2 academic tasks.

The dilemmas and conflicts can be summarized thus:
- The mismatch in learners' perceived language proficiency, and the demonstrated academic language proficiency
- The mismatch between the language and culture of the education system and that of the learners' homes (particularly in the case of higher education).
- The mismatch between the languages of discussion of assignments, and that used in actual writing
- The mismatch between the learners' L1 production and the mediated versions in the L2
- The mismatch between what the learners think they know given the L1 and what they produce in the L2
- The mismatch between learners' values, attitudes and ideologies, and what is required for their development of academic language proficiency
- The choice between L1-based literacy practices and ESL-based literacy practices.
- The mismatch between the learners' demonstrated language ability and the demands of the curriculum process of the ESL classroom at higher education

- The mismatch between the learners' translations of academic tasks and the academic language proficiency required for these tasks
- The mismatch between 'translation' as swapping of linguistic labels and translation of cognitive skills between L1 and L2

These factors, among others, make it difficult for successful literacy mediation between the L2 and the L1. This brings me to the issue of whether L1 knowledge necessarily transfers to the L2.

Though this study should not be taken as definitive, it could still be argued that academic (literacy) mediation/transfer is much more complex than what Cummins (1981) envisaged in his 'Dual Iceberg' model and the threshold hypothesis. It involves not only translating through another language, but also through another culture and worldview, as well as different ways of making and interpreting meaning. In particular, as this study has shown, as academic literacy mediation in multicultural/multicultural contexts, transfer between L1 and L2 is more complex than mere switching of labels for the same 'concept'. It entails translation of socio-cultural and cognitive academic skills as well. As Mohan (2003: 4) argues: 'if a concept fits into one taxonomy in L1 and into another in L2 it is not the same concept any more'. As this study has shown, learners are able to substitute verbatim ESL labels of concepts into the L1, but fail to transform and recontextualise the concepts between the L2 and L1, and back.

In essence, learners find that translation of the second kind as described above very difficult to achieve. If this study is anything to go by, apart from lack of strategic competence in transforming knowledge from one cultural realm to another, a key problem could be a lack of conversational currency (Devine, 1994). Learners lack experience in both translation and academic conversation, particularly with regard to concept formulation and logical thinking in their L1 and ESL. That some socio-cultural practices in the home are different from those in the school should not be a problem if both teachers and learners are sensitised to such difference (Kern, 2000; Myles, 2002). But it is evident in this study that some learners are unable to resolve conflicting social practices in the two environments. As a result, learners' experiences and expectations of literacy practices are sometimes in direct conflict with and alien to the experiences and expectations of the ESL programmes in place. Learners' difficulty in asking academic questions and expectations of teacher-learner roles in classroom practice, are a case in point here. As a result, learners appear to find no expression both metaphorically and literally within language. This is the learners' *mutedness* (Devine, 1994).

I should hasten to point out that all these factors do not put breaks on Cummins's postulations. In fact, the lack of mediation between the L1 and the L2 as shown in this study could be explained in terms of lack of academic language proficiency in both the L1 and L2. However, that does not tell us why the black learners in this study who seemingly have difficulty transferring high level cognitively skills of analysing, synthesising and evaluation between the L1 and the L2, still insist that they be taught in English. The argument is that a comprehensive model needs to consider cultural, social, political, community values and ideologies, teacher and learner expectations and home factors (cf. Baker, 1997).

Taking advantage of multilingual/multicultural contexts

African learners need to use distance and difference as a resource for academic language proficiency to succeed academically. Distance and difference have to be seen as an opportunity to create something novel from the options generated by the multilingual/multicultural context, hence the argument for the development of multiliteracies (Banda, 2003 [2004]). In other words, there is a need to emphasise positive distance and difference as well. This entails that learners 'turn the tables' and strategically define the traditionally negative connotations into positive attributes (cf. Wodak, 2002). They need to come to terms with difference, otherwise they will remain marginalized. They need to find a solution to intercultural conflict and ideological dilemmas through self-irony, self-reflection and assertiveness (cf. Wodak, 2002). This entails the learners and teachers using the L2 and learners L1 and socio-cultural and psychological conditions, and home environmental factors, generally, in a more creative manner. This could mean a functional use of the L1 and L2.

All this cannot happen without changes to the education system, and ESL programme. At the classroom level teachers need to be made aware of language and cultural mediation which could lead to the enrichment of classroom practice. There is no doubt that this would entail adapting syllabuses, teaching methods and patterns of classroom interaction, to make full use of the multilingual/multicultural contexts. Like the English L1 speaking learner, the Xhosa learner, for example, would need to be encouraged to strategically define traditionally negative connotations into positive attributes, and thus s/he would become 'a very special bird' (Wodak, 2002: 13), getting nourishment from the multilingual/multicultural contexts.

If this study is anything to go by, learners need to be made aware of the potential of their educational, social and cultural experiences that appear to 'block' academic mediation from the L1 and L2 and vice-versa. As seen in this study, these experiences do not only relate to values systems or ideologies associated with particular languages, but could also include textual issues such 'rhetorical and cultural preferences for organising information and structuring arguments, …, knowledge of appropriate genres, …, familiarity with writing topics, … and distinct cultural and instructional socialisation.' (Myles, 2002: 2).

This brings me to the issue of conflict arising from academics, teachers, parents and learners having different views on the language of learning, or ESL programme. This has led to unnecessary misunderstandings, stress, dilemmas and conflict. It will be difficult to negotiate the differences as the positions taken by the different parties are themselves based on conflicting values and ideologies. At primary and secondary school, parents want their children to be taught in English, but teachers teach in an African language, or a mix with English. At university level, lectures are in English and learners want to be taught in English, but learners 'think' in their 'home languages' before translating into English.

Clearly, this points to, not whether English or L1 should be the medium of instruction, but rather how much of each language and for what purposes should be used. The education system needs to take advantage of the potential of positive distance and difference, and functional use of L1 and ESL by African learners. The school's role for engendering learning becomes fruitless when parents/learners and teachers work at cross-purposes. South Africa's ESL programme at primary, secondary and university levels needs not only to promote learning, but also to put in place measures that enable learners to use both the L1 and L2 productively in multilingual/multicultural contexts. The argument here is that there has been too little institutional support in the education sector to develop isiXhosa, for example, as a

language for accessing discourses of power. At present these are mostly in English (and to some extent, Afrikaans). In addition, there cannot be said to be anything appreciable in the form of trained academic mediators (or translators) to help learners access English discourses of education. Thus, there is a need to remodel both the practice of bilingual language use and ESL programmes in South African schools. The ESL programme has to be in the forefront of helping learners. It has to help to identify vital issues of second language socialization as a way of resolving difference in multicultural contexts.

There is a need for classroom practice that emphasises positive difference. If this study is anything to go by, classroom practice should incorporate collaborative brainstorming, choice of personally meaningful topics, peer-group editing, as well as strategy instruction in the stages of composing, drafting, revising and editing multilingual drafts. (cf. Myles, 2002). Classroom practice should 'aspire to developing [learners'] ability to mediate between the different perspectives and different meanings born of two languages and cultures – a capability far beyond that of a monolingual native speaker.' (Kern, 2000: 305). In this idiom, learners become apprentice discourse analysts and cross-cultural explorers, whose role is characterised by what Kern calls the three Rs of *responding*, *revising* and *reflecting*. Responding means giving a reply or reacting to the text one reads, writes and talks. In reacting to the text, the learners should use their knowledge, beliefs, values, attitudes, ideologies, etc. For instance, in the discussion on 'maxims' and 'felicity conditions', learners needed to be made aware that these concepts were a result of a writer responding to something, and that in turn, they needed to react tothemt.

Revising entails rereading, rewriting, rethinking, reframing, and redesigning language. As we saw in this study, learners only retold. The idea, however, is 'not to repeat, but to *redo* within a different contextual frame, purpose, or audience' (Kern, 2000: 309, emphasis in original). Reflecting is about the importance of self criticism and evaluation particular in terms of cultural norms and cultural knowledge. This brings into focus, for example in this study, issues related to whether learners should ask questions and the teacher's reaction to them. Learners and teachers need to 'become more aware of their own cultural presuppositions and those of others in order to build a bridge of mutual intercultural learning. The process of raising cultural awareness implies a willingness for classroom participants to challenge their own assumptions.' (Jin & Cortazzi, 1998: 99 cited in Kern, 2000: 311).

Study groups can play an important role in literacy mediation, but only where they are well-organised, and perhaps formally constituted. It would be useful if they were structured as a workshop in which learners interacted, analysing, commenting and engaging each other around various texts. There were none of these attributes in the study group used in this study. Study groups should also be constituted in such a way that they allow for negotiation of meaning. As Myles (2002: 9) warns: 'Errors abound in peer review classes or computed mediated exchanges where learners read and respond to each other's compositions. … interlanguage talk or discourse is often the primary source of input for many learners.' Therefore, study groups could play an effective role in literacy mediation if they are infused or build around, a mediator, or learners skilled in L1 writing, and who are acquainted in the writing strategies, rhetorical and cultural conventions in the L2. Ideally, such learners should also have surpassed a certain L2 proficiency level, as well as having demonstrated skill in knowledge-transforming tasks in their L1.

In short, to be effective, the ESL programmes in South Africa will have to be vehicles of emancipation for learners, by helping them transform their understanding of themselves and

significant others, recognizing and removing obstacles to their interpretation and reconstruction of academic texts, and positioning parents, teachers and learners to renew and review their values and socio-cultural practices.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded from this study that translation as academic mediation will be useful only when it involves more than swapping of labels between the L2 and L1 and vice-versa. To be meaningful, it also has to involve the transformation and reconstruction of knowledge, and thus enable the transfer of cognitive skills from one form of representation (e.g., L1) to another (e.g., L2) and vice-versa. The skill involved in this kind of translation will not necessarily transfer between the L1 and L2 and vice-versa. It requires constant and continuous conscious effort and practice in composing, developing and analysing ideas in addition to linguistic skills in both the L1 and L2.

In other words, the skills involved in this kind of mediation will not just 'grow' on you or emerge out of experience, they requires institutional formalisation and apprenticeship. They have to be taught and learnt. Learners need to be taught the necessary strategies to translate knowledge between linguistic and cultural barriers.

There might also be a need to have social support systems and networks in schools and universities to help learners with academic literacy mediation through translation of academic texts, as well as to promote positive distance and difference in multilingual/multicultural South Africa. Critical cross-cultural awareness programmes and language socialisation among learners and teachers are important here. Lastly, there is need for well-trained bilingual teachers and mediators to facilitate translation as literacy mediation between the L2 and L1 and vice versa, and hence to help learners achieve transformation/recontextualisation of A into B by means of C.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix: (Group 3: Extract from Zuki's Study Group) English Version

Turn	Speaker	Text
1	Zuki	Most people who have the disease are women compared to men, although it is them who sleep around. Then men don't want to know the fact that AIDS is there, and women do not have power to say no we should to use a condom= =
2	Nandi	= = because may be men think that you sleep around and number two [secondly]
3	Zuki	And they don't speak freely about condoms and sexual related topics to their husbands because they depend on them in terms of food shelter and etc. So they are forced to accept any thing from their men.
4	Nike	Culture also has an effect on the spread of HIV& AIDS, because the African culture in rural areas doesn't allow women to talk about sex to their husbands, so if you are a woman it is your responsibility to see it to it that you tell your child about sexual disease = =
5	Zuki	= = and like if you can go around in the places where there are discussions about AIDS men don't attend
6	Nandi	and men are always to blame for spreading AIDS, because men move from rural areas to urban areas in search of work and when they get there they engage themselves in relationships and they have unprotected sex and during the holidays they will go back to their wives with those diseases
7	Nike	and also we can blame government about the spread of AIDS because in public institutions it is only male condoms that are mostly available, no female condoms, and that makes it difficult for women to ensure that they are safe. They have to depend in their partners.
8	Nandi	What is the difference between gender stereotypes and gender role?
9	Zuki	In my opinion gender role is the way culture shapes the way of living, such as, women cook and men work. Then gender stereotypes, children learn the way of living and to behave from their elders. That is if you are a girl you learn what your mother is doing, you play with dolls, pretend to have babies and boys from their fathers playing with guns and etc
10	Nike	and our culture also motivates or encourages the fact that men should be independent
11	Nandi	Also men think that they are better than women
12	Zuki	In our first discussion we wanted to know why AIDS is regarded as a gender issue. In our second discussion we wanted to know the difference between gender role and gender stereotypes.

Biographic Note

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