



Investigating the Translanguaging in South African Higher Education: Insights from Lecturers and Students

Dorcas Cathrine Mokgope¹, Seshoka Joseph Rapeta^{2*}

¹Department of Education, University of South Africa, South Africa

Article History:

Received: July 15, 2025

Revised: August 12, 2025

Accepted: September 29, 2025

Published: October 07, 2025

Keywords:

Multilingual,
Native Languages,
Translanguaging,
TVET College.

*Correspondence Author:

rapetsj@unisa.ac.za

Abstract: This study aims to investigate how translanguaging is practiced by both lecturers and students in South African higher education institutions, to benefit both teaching and learning processes. A qualitative case study research design was employed for this study, as it offers a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their real-life context. Six lecturers and six students from a North-West Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) college in South Africa participated in this study through semi-structured interviews. Thematic data analysis was employed to interpret and make sense of the collected data. The findings revealed that translanguaging creates inclusive educational spaces where linguistic and cultural diversity are valued, supports the construction of social connections among learners from diverse backgrounds, and enables students to understand academic content more effectively and express it more clearly. These findings suggest that the use of English as a medium of instruction and its impact on teaching and learning can be a valuable framework for multilingual contexts, as it empowers learners to use their home language. It is recommended that clear language policies be developed that recognise and support translanguaging as a legitimate pedagogical strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Translanguaging is increasingly recognized globally as a powerful pedagogical approach for addressing the complexities of multilingual education. Cenoz and Santos (2020) explored its application in a multilingual secondary school in the Basque Country, where students engage with English, Spanish, and Basque in an integrated and flexible manner. This model allows learners to draw on their full linguistic repertoire to enhance understanding and participation. In South Africa, the recognition of South African Sign Language as the twelfth official language highlights the country's linguistic diversity. However, the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) remains a significant challenge. English continues to dominate as the primary medium of instruction, particularly in colleges and higher education institutions, often to the exclusion of indigenous languages. This marginalization disadvantages students from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Ojong & Addo, 2024; Kulung, 2021), perpetuating educational inequalities (Adamson et al., 2024; Macaro et al., 2020). The continued prioritisation of English as the primary language of instruction in South African higher education settings results in the exclusion

of students who are not fluent in English, particularly those whose first languages are indigenous or local. This linguistic marginalization creates barriers to learning, comprehension, and academic success for these students. Mahalingappa (2024) argues that current language practices disproportionately benefit white and some coloured students who receive instruction in their mother tongue, while black students face barriers to comprehension, vocabulary development, and academic success (Banda et al., 2023). The system, therefore, privileges certain groups while disadvantaging others, reinforcing existing educational and socio-political inequalities. These challenges are compounded by systemic issues, including limited resources, inadequate infrastructure, and insufficient support in disadvantaged schools (Peer, 2024).

The lack of a strong linguistic foundation in early education, combined with the historical dominance of Afrikaans and English in South Africa, has created enduring obstacles. Wendimu and Gebremariam (2024) advocate for innovative, collaborative strategies to improve literacy and academic writing for students who find English a barrier. Similarly, Tsai (2022) critiques the education system's failure to adopt inclusive language instruction, particularly in TVET colleges, where research remains limited. Translanguaging offers a promising solution. It can enhance academic performance, foster inclusive education, and empower learners from diverse linguistic backgrounds (Phillips & Genao, 2023). Translanguaging is presented as a progressive and inclusive educational strategy that can help overcome the limitations of monolingual instruction (Duarte, 2018), particularly in multilingual contexts such as South Africa, by allowing students to use their languages during learning. Incorporating multilingual practices, such as code-switching and translation, can help overcome existing barriers and reduce reliance on dominant languages, leading to more equitable and effective instruction.

The primary objective of this study is to investigate how translanguaging is perceived and practiced by lecturers and students in South African higher education, particularly in the context of multilingual classrooms. Specifically, the research seeks to examine lecturers' perceptions and experiences of translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy, explore students' attitudes and practices toward translanguaging in academic settings, and analyze its overall impact on teaching effectiveness and student comprehension. By integrating these dimensions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how translanguaging functions as both a communicative and instructional tool, contributing to inclusive pedagogy and improved learning outcomes within linguistically diverse higher education environments.

THEORETICAL SUPPORT

Translanguaging Theory, introduced by Cen Williams in the 1980s within Welsh-English bilingual education, challenges the traditional notion of keeping languages separate in multilingual learning environments (Crawford & Ghuman, 2000). Williams coined the term to describe a pedagogical approach in which learners purposefully alternate between languages during the learning process (Anthony, 2008). This method encourages students to use their full linguistic repertoire, reading in one language and responding in another, to deepen understanding and enhance cognitive engagement. Rather than viewing

bilinguals as two monolinguals in one body, translanguaging recognizes them as individuals with a unified and dynamic linguistic system. This perspective allows learners to draw on all their language resources to make meaning, communicate, and learn, promoting both linguistic flexibility and academic success.

In the South African context, particularly within TVET colleges, translanguaging holds significant potential. These institutions serve a linguistically diverse student population, many of whom face challenges due to the dominance of English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). The exclusion of indigenous languages from instruction contributes to educational inequalities, especially for black students who often lack foundational learning in their mother tongue (Delprato, 2021). Integrating translanguaging into TVET pedagogy bridges these gaps. It enables students to engage with content in both English and their native languages, enhancing comprehension, vocabulary development, and academic performance. A balanced approach that supports English proficiency while embracing mother tongue instruction could foster inclusive education and empower learners from all linguistic backgrounds.

The process of translanguaging is unpacked in detail, illustrating how it can be implemented in classrooms to bridge linguistic divides and foster inclusive learning environments. The discussion offers practical suggestions for integrating translanguaging into teaching and learning strategies, aiming to support multilingual education that is both equitable and effective.

Multilingual-Overview of South African Language

As a multilingual nation, South Africa officially recognizes 12 languages, including South African Sign Language. In principle, all these languages are meant to be afforded equal status and recognition, particularly within the education system (Orosoo et al., 2024). However, in practice, this ideal is not fully realized. English remains the primary language of instruction, particularly in higher education and formal institutions (Sah, 2024). This dominance presents significant challenges, particularly for learners from historically disadvantaged backgrounds who may not speak English as a first language. These students often face linguistic barriers that hinder their academic performance and limit their full participation in the learning process. The unequal implementation of multilingual education policies exacerbates existing inequalities, making it difficult for all learners to access quality education in a language they understand best (Cioè-Peña et al., 2024).

Language Policy in South Africa

Despite the progressive legislative framework established by the South African Constitution (RSA, 1996), which accords official status to all eleven languages, including nine indigenous African languages spoken by the majority, a persistent imbalance persists in language use and recognition within education. Section 6 of the Constitution affirms the equal status of these languages and promotes multilingualism and linguistic equity. This commitment is further supported by policies such as the South African Languages Bill (RSA, 2011), the Language in Education Policy (LiEP), the Use of Official Languages Act No. 12 (RSA, 2012), and the Language Policy for Higher Education (DOE, 2002), all of

which aim to operationalize multilingualism in public institutions and educational settings. However, in practice, English continues to dominate as the primary language of instruction, governance, and socioeconomic advancement. This dominance marginalizes indigenous languages, limiting their development and use in formal domains and undermining the inclusive intent of these policies. Scholars such as Lukianenko (2024) and Haidar (2021) argue that this linguistic hierarchy perpetuates historical inequalities, positioning English as a gatekeeper to opportunity and upward mobility.

Translanguaging Theory offers a compelling pedagogical response to this imbalance. It enables students to alternate between languages for input and output, enhancing comprehension, cognitive engagement, and academic performance. In the South African context, particularly within TVET colleges, translanguaging could serve as a transformative strategy. These institutions cater to linguistically diverse student populations, many of whom are disadvantaged by the exclusive use of English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). By incorporating translanguaging into teaching practices, educators can create more inclusive and equitable learning environments that validate students' linguistic identities and support their academic success. Such an approach aligns with the constitutional and policy-driven goals of multilingualism, offering a practical pathway to realizing linguistic equity in education.

Language Barriers to Teaching and Learning

Language continues to pose a significant barrier to effective teaching and learning in South Africa (Mulaudzi, 2016). Although English functions as the primary language of instruction in both schools and higher education institutions and serves as a global lingua franca, its dominance presents considerable challenges for students whose home languages differ from English. As Woldegiorgis and Chiramba (2024) emphasize, many students are systematically excluded from equitable access to higher education due to disparities in the quality of their early schooling, particularly in the acquisition of foundational language skills. The early and often premature introduction of English as the medium of instruction before students have achieved sufficient proficiency further exacerbates these inequalities. Consequently, linguistic inequity becomes embedded within the educational trajectory, where language proficiency, rather than intellectual potential, often determines success in the academic field.

Even for those who progress to university, the struggle with academic English remains persistent. Many students face challenges in comprehending complex academic texts, engaging critically in class discussions (Curiel et al., 2024), and articulating ideas effectively in written and oral assessments. These linguistic barriers not only limit their cognitive engagement but also undermine their academic confidence, leading to reduced participation and lower performance outcomes. Moreover, the continued privileging of English within educational institutions reinforces historical patterns of exclusion and perpetuates a monolingual ideology that marginalizes indigenous languages and identities. Recognizing multilingualism as a pedagogical resource rather than a problem is therefore crucial. Embracing translanguaging practices in teaching and assessment could bridge

linguistic divides, validate students' linguistic repertoires, and foster a more inclusive, equitable, and contextually relevant higher education system in South Africa.

METHOD

A qualitative case study research design was employed for this study, as it offers a comprehensive and in-depth exploration of complex phenomena within their real-life context (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This design is particularly well-suited for investigating educational settings, where multiple variables, such as language, culture, and pedagogy, interact in dynamic and nuanced ways. The qualitative approach enables the collection of rich, descriptive data through methods such as interviews, observations, and document analysis, allowing the researcher to capture participants' lived experiences, perspectives, and interpretations (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2010). The case study component, in particular, facilitates a focused examination of a specific group, institution, or context, allowing for the uncovering of patterns, relationships, and meanings that might be overlooked in broader quantitative studies. This design was chosen to gain a deeper understanding of the language practices and challenges faced by learners and educators in a multilingual educational environment. It also supports the exploration of how translanguaging and other learner-centered strategies are implemented and experienced in practice.

This study was conducted at a selected TVET college campus in the North West Province of South Africa. Using purposive sampling, six lecturers and six students were selected for in-depth interviews based on their direct involvement with English as the medium of instruction. Additionally, a classroom observation involving fifteen students from the National N4 Certificate in Office Administration program, along with a focus group discussion with six students, provided further insights into language use and learner engagement. Although the sample size was small relative to the total campus population, it was appropriate for a qualitative case study, which emphasizes depth over generalizability. Participants were selected for their relevance to the research focus and their willingness to contribute, ensuring that the data collected was rich, meaningful, and contextually grounded.

To ensure a credible and comprehensive understanding of the research problem, the study employed multiple qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, non-participant classroom observations, and document analysis. Interviews with lecturers and students followed a flexible guide, allowing for a deeper exploration of their experiences, while classroom observations provided insights into the natural dynamics of teaching and learning. A focus group comprising six students provided collective perspectives, and all sessions were audio-recorded with participants' consent for accurate transcription. Document analysis complemented primary data collection by reviewing both policy documents and institutional records such as portfolios, attendance registers, and student scripts. This integration of diverse data sources enabled triangulation, enriching the study with a holistic view of the educational environment and the role of language in shaping learning outcomes.

The study employed a qualitative thematic analysis approach to interpret and make sense of the collected data. This method is particularly well-suited for identifying,

analyzing, and reporting patterns or themes within qualitative data, allowing the researcher to uncover meaningful insights grounded in participants' experiences and perspectives. (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis began with meticulous transcription of all audio-recorded interviews and focus group discussions, ensuring verbatim accuracy to preserve the richness of participants' responses. Identifying details were anonymized to maintain confidentiality. The researcher then immersed themselves in the data through repeated readings to gain a deep understanding of participants' narratives. During the organisation phase, open coding was employed, enabling descriptive codes to emerge inductively from the data. These codes were examined for patterns, similarities, and differences, which were then grouped into broader themes aligned with the research questions. This thematic analysis offered a structured yet flexible approach to interpreting complex qualitative data, ensuring credible, contextually grounded findings that authentically represented participants' voices.

Ethical clearance for this study was formally obtained from the University of South Africa (UNISA) College of Education Ethics Committee, ensuring that all research activities adhered to established ethical standards and protocols, and a certificate was granted with reference number: 2022/07/06/63250381/20/AM. Prior to data collection, written informed consent was secured from all participants involved in the study. This included six (6) lecturers and six (6) students who voluntarily agreed to participate in interviews and other data collection processes. Participants were fully briefed on the purpose of the study, the nature of their involvement, and their rights, including the right to withdraw at any stage without any negative consequences. Confidentiality and anonymity were guaranteed, and all data were handled with strict adherence to ethical research practices to protect the dignity, privacy, and well-being of the participants. As researchers, we maintained a neutral stance throughout the study, consciously avoiding any form of bias or influence over the data collection and analysis processes.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Translanguaging has emerged as a transformative pedagogical approach within multilingual education, offering a powerful framework for understanding how language practices can bridge communication gaps, enhance learning, and promote inclusivity in higher education. In South Africa where linguistic diversity is both a cultural asset and a pedagogical challenge the concept of translanguaging holds particular significance. The country's post-apartheid education system continues to grapple with the dominance of English as the primary language of instruction, often at the expense of students' home languages, which represent rich linguistic and cultural resources. Within this context, translanguaging enables both lecturers and students to draw upon their full linguistic repertoires to facilitate comprehension, express complex ideas, and construct knowledge collaboratively. Rather than viewing multilingualism as an obstacle, translanguaging reframes it as a dynamic and productive resource that supports deeper engagement and critical thinking. This study, therefore, investigates how translanguaging is perceived and practiced by lecturers and students in South African higher education, exploring its role in shaping classroom interaction, learning outcomes, and academic identity formation.

Through this lens, the research aims to contribute to the growing body of scholarship that positions language as central to epistemic access, equity, and pedagogical innovation in multilingual contexts. The documentation that shows language translation in learning which usually occurs in the lecture or learning process, one of which can be seen Figure 1.



Figure 1. Translanguaging in Teaching and Learning.

Figure 1 shows how the learning process is usually carried out to share knowledge and takes place continuously. Specifically, in this research, the researcher only made observations on six lecturers and six TVET university students who actively participated in this research and served as research references. The themes that emerged were English as a language of learning and teaching (LoLT), Comprehension of English, language-based student assessment, and Translation in classroom teaching. The characteristics of the participants in this case amounted to 6 students which can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1. Characteristics of Student Participants

Participants	Gender	Age	Education Level
S1	Male	20	N4
S2	Male	21	N4
S3	Female	19	N4
S4	Male	20	N4
S5	Male	22	N4
S6	Male	23	N4

The study included six (6) N4-level students enrolled in a TVET College, specifically studying Office Administration (OA). This group was selected to represent the student perspective within the vocational education and training context. The gender imbalance may reflect broader enrollment trends in the OA program or institutional demographics and could be relevant when analyzing gendered experiences or participation in administrative education. The age range places the participants in the early adulthood stage, typically associated with career exploration, identity formation, and skill acquisition. Their views are especially valuable in understanding how young adults engage with vocational education and prepare for administrative roles in the workforce. Students are the primary recipients of the curriculum and teaching strategies. Their feedback offers valuable insights into the effectiveness, relevance, and accessibility of the OA program.

The characteristics of the lecturers. The characteristics of the lecturers. The participants in this study were 6 people, as can be seen and can be observed in detail in Table 2.

Table 2. Characteristics of Lecturers Participants

Participants	Gender	Age group	Qualifications	Teaching Experiences
L1	Female	45	MED	20 years plus
L2	Female	35	BED	5 years plus
L3	Female	34	BED	10 years plus
L4	Female	56	MED	30 years plus
L5	Female	44	BED(HONS)	2 years plus
L6	Male	43	Diploma	10 years plus

The study involved six lecturers specializing in Office Administration (OA), who were selected for their direct involvement in teaching content subjects within the discipline. This purposeful sampling ensured that the insights gathered were grounded in practical experience and pedagogical relevance. The gender composition reflects a predominantly female representation in the OA teaching cohort, which may mirror broader trends in administrative and educational roles within the field. The range of qualifications suggests a diverse academic background among participants, with a strong presence of postgraduate-level expertise. This diversity enriches the study by incorporating perspectives from both foundational and advanced pedagogical training. The broad span of experience encompasses both novice and seasoned lecturers, enabling a nuanced understanding of how teaching practices and perceptions evolve. It also highlights the potential generational differences in approach, adaptability, and engagement with curriculum changes or technological integration. The age range indicates a mature group of professionals, likely to have witnessed significant shifts in educational policy, curriculum design, and institutional expectations. Their insights are therefore critical in understanding long-term trends and the sustainability of current practices.

Theme 1. English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT)

English is considered the dominant language for communication, business, and as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) in education. Therefore, students indicated that it was the most important language to learn, as proficiency in English is often associated with academic success, social mobility, and access to broader professional and global opportunities. For many learners, mastering English is not merely a linguistic goal but a necessary means of empowerment and participation in both national and international spheres. However, this perception also reinforces linguistic hierarchies, where indigenous languages are undervalued, and multilingual competence is often overlooked in formal education settings.

“Learning in English is the best way to learn, in my opinion, because English is the most spoken language in the country and the world. In my experience, English is the easiest language to learn and understand because it is everywhere”. (S1).

Similarly, another participant asserted that it is easier to learn the English language and understand academic concepts, as it is the language one encounters every day through

media, social interactions, and educational resources. The participant added that constant exposure to English in various contexts such as movies, online platforms, and classroom discussions makes it more familiar and accessible, thereby facilitating both comprehension and practical usage. This continuous engagement, according to the participant, not only enhances linguistic competence but also fosters a sense of comfort and confidence in using English as a medium of learning and communication.

“Learning and teaching in English has always been a pleasant experience because I was first taught by native speakers while learning the language. So, I find it easier when concepts and content require cognitive skills. English is everywhere, I see and hear the language every day, so it becomes easy to teach things to students and teach”. (L6)

A further participant explained how the transition to learning through the medium of English was challenging, but perseverance paid off as he developed greater language proficiency, confidence, and adaptability over time. He shared that although understanding lectures and completing assignments in English initially felt overwhelming, consistent effort, active participation in class discussions, and interaction with peers gradually improved his comprehension and communication skills, ultimately enabling him to engage more effectively in academic and social contexts.

“Using English as a First Additional Language as a language of teaching and learning was a problem at first because I was used to using my mother-tongue language, but as time went by, I finally understood the benefits of English being used as a language of learning and teaching. It makes every person understand better, even if he/she is not of the same language as you, but at least with English, we stand on the same level of understanding, and it also makes teaching easy”. (L5)

The above responses clearly indicate that English remains an accepted and common language of understanding and communication. The use of English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) remains a central feature of many educational systems, particularly in multilingual contexts like South Africa. While debates around linguistic inclusivity and equity continue, some educators and students strongly support English as the primary medium of instruction, citing its global relevance and accessibility. Sah (2024) affirms that English remains the dominant global language, serving as the primary medium of communication, instruction, and learning. The perspectives of participants S1, L5, and L6 illustrate the positive experiences and practical benefits associated with English as the LoLT. Their views affirm the role of English in enhancing cognitive engagement and preparing students for the global stage. However, to ensure equitable learning outcomes, educational institutions must strike a balance between the advantages of English and inclusive strategies that support all learners, regardless of their linguistic background.

Theme 2. English language comprehension

Participants alluded that their low proficiency in English is attributed to past and present barriers encountered within their courses of learning. They perceived that having attended poorly resourced and disadvantaged schools contributed to their limited English

language proficiency. The situation is exacerbated by the fact that the mother tongue is not allowed in teaching and learning. The following views from participants reveal these sentiments. Lecturers also preferred to use the LoLT.

“I would prefer learners to be assisted in the language that is used in class for better learning and understanding, though there will be challenges. The preferred language is chosen to prepare learners for the workplace, as it is the most widely spoken language in the country. Yes, they will come across learning barriers, but they should learn and practise the language to overcome those barriers”. (L3)

Meanwhile, a more experienced participant emphasised that it is essential to practice the language in order to excel in communication, noting that consistent use of English in daily interactions, academic discussions, and written tasks helps build fluency, confidence, and a deeper understanding of linguistic nuances. The participant further explained that language proficiency does not develop overnight but requires continuous exposure, active engagement with authentic materials, and the willingness to make and learn from mistakes. In their view, regular practice not only improves speaking and writing abilities but also enhances listening and critical thinking skills, which are crucial for academic and professional success.

“Practice makes perfect. They should, in the end, know how to express themselves. There should be a variety of methods to accommodate all students in a lesson. It is also tough for students to understand the only language of instruction”. (L6)

Furthermore, it is worth considering that the situation was exacerbated by the fact that the mother tongue was not permitted in the teaching and learning environment. Globally, English is extensively spoken and understood. By learning English as a First Additional Language (EFAL), students can communicate with a broader audience and access the abundance of material available in English. English language proficiency opens the door to opportunities for higher education, overseas scholarships, and international exchange programs and is a gateway to unlocking knowledge.

In multilingual educational contexts, English language comprehension plays a pivotal role in shaping students' academic success. As English continues to serve as the primary Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in many institutions, learners are expected to engage with complex content, express ideas, and participate in assessments using a language that may not be their mother tongue. Mastery of the language opens doors to international academic opportunities, such as scholarships and student exchange programmes, and remains a prerequisite for many careers in the globalized economy. Fluency in English enables students to engage with a wide range of scholarly materials and communicate effectively with a broader audience (Procel et al., 2024). The insights from L3 and L6 affirm the need for a balanced approach, one that prepares students for the demands of the workplace while ensuring that learning remains accessible, meaningful, and equitable. However, this linguistic advantage is not without challenges. Students who arrive at the TVET (Technical and Vocational Education and Training) level without

adequate proficiency in English often face significant obstacles. The transition to English-medium instruction can be particularly demanding for learners whose first language is not English (Macaro et al., 2020). Teaching such linguistically diverse learners poses a pedagogical challenge, as instructors must navigate varying levels of language comprehension among students. These disparities hinder effective communication and understanding in the classroom, affecting students' ability to articulate their ideas clearly and engage fully in the learning process.

Theme 3. Language-based student assessment

One of the key factors of teaching and learning is the assessment of students. As with the teaching and learning process, assessment is conducted through the LoLT. It stipulates that the content should be taught in English, which is the language being used for teaching and learning. All formal assessments should be done in English. Assessment should be clearly defined in terms of what exactly is to be assessed; this means that the focus of the assessment should be on the content.

“It is unfair to assess students based on language fluency and grammar, as they are naturally disadvantaged. In their view, lecturers should assess students’ understanding of the subject content, rather than their language proficiency. Our students fail not because they do not know, but because they are disadvantaged in expressing themselves in the English language”. (L3)

The academic underperformance of students in Office Administration is not necessarily a reflection of their lack of knowledge or understanding of the subject matter. Instead, it stems from a significant barrier in their ability to articulate that knowledge effectively in English, which is often the medium of instruction and assessment. Another lecturer contended that.

"I am of the view that lecturers should not judge grammar, but students' ideas. If there was a way to enable students to write in their mother tongue, no student would fail." (L1)

The emphasis on grammatical accuracy in student assessments often obscures the accurate intellectual contributions of learners, particularly those for whom English is not a first language. It is evident that translanguaging, if optimally utilised, can mitigate the performance differences between English-speaking and non-English-speaking students. Macaro et al. (2020) argue that translanguaging serves as a vehicle for liberating the voices of language-minoritized students, thereby achieving the goal of disrupting both the dominance of English and the traditional power dynamics in the classroom.

The practice of assessing students primarily through the lens of language proficiency, particularly in English, raises critical questions about fairness, inclusivity, and the true purpose of academic evaluation. Incorporating students’ home languages into assessment, where feasible, can enhance comprehension and allow for more authentic demonstrations of learning (Imbaquingo & Cárdenas, 2023). While formal assessments may still require English proficiency, scaffolded multilingual approaches can be used in formative tasks, group work, and classroom discussions to support learning and reduce linguistic barriers.

Theme 4. Translanguaging in classroom instruction

Lecturers should use translanguaging for directions, explanations, and dialogue, which provides interpretation or explanation in the relevant home languages. Students are better able to understand topics and draw connections between the subject matter and their cultural background when they use their own language. Translanguaging fosters a more inclusive learning environment, allowing students to access content and instruction in their native language. This can enhance comprehension as students can fully understand the material before transitioning to the target language. It also promotes engagement and active participation as students feel more comfortable expressing themselves in a language that they are proficient in. Translanguaging acknowledges the cultural and linguistic identities of students. It allows them to maintain and celebrate their native languages and cultures, fostering a sense of pride and belonging. By incorporating students' languages and cultural perspectives into the learning process, translanguaging promotes cultural preservation and affirms students' identities. Lecturer 2 alluded that.

“Home language will always be a better and much easier language to understand. Concepts will be easier to understand if the language used at home becomes the language of instruction at school. Use of native languages in education will promote good behaviour in the students because most of them will be more knowledgeable and understand the concepts and curriculum faster than English as a medium of instruction, and also, native language will give students more self-esteem”. (L2)

The research process also provides valuable insights, as Student 6 shared his feelings during this stage. He expressed that participating in the study allowed him to reflect on his own learning journey, challenges, and progress in using English as a medium of instruction. He mentioned that although he initially felt anxious and uncertain about expressing his thoughts in English, the continuous exposure and interaction with peers and lecturers gradually helped him gain confidence, improve his fluency, and develop a more positive attitude toward language learning.

“It creates comfort and comprehension for students who might not understand certain things when they are taught in one language. The issue of using more than one language in a single lesson has become increasingly accepted by students, lecturers, and researchers.” (S6)

The process of extracting in-depth information continues to be carried out to ensure that the data collected accurately reflects the actual conditions observed. In this research, Lecturer 4 added that the teaching and learning process becomes more meaningful when both lecturers and students actively engage in translanguaging practices. He explained that allowing students to use their home languages alongside English not only facilitates deeper understanding of complex concepts but also creates an inclusive learning environment where students feel valued and confident to express their ideas. This approach, according to him, bridges the gap between linguistic diversity and academic success, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience.

“Incorporating translanguaging in teaching and learning environments can benefit students by allowing them to draw on their entire linguistic collection. It promotes a sense of identity and belonging, strengthens language skills, and encourages critical thinking and creativity”. (L4)

To illustrate this point, translanguaging in the teaching and learning process helps build an inclusive society, where communication with one another plays a crucial role in connecting people from different cultural groups. This indicates that translanguaging remains an important part in connecting people, and, most importantly, the facilitation of translanguaging enhances the understanding of content material in multilingual learners (Almashour, 2024). Chen et al. (2021) assert that language teaching and learning require an interaction between what is to be delivered and how it is acquired. This means that the decision on the type of instruction, policies, and procedures employed in the classroom needs to be practiced. One such type of instruction is translanguaging. It is with translanguaging that students are allowed to use aspects of their language to assist in communicating.

Translanguaging has emerged as a transformative pedagogical approach that enables students to utilize their full linguistic repertoire to construct meaning, engage with content, and express their understanding. The insights from participants L2, S6, and L4 strongly support the integration of translanguaging into classroom instruction, highlighting its benefits for comprehension, learner identity, and inclusive education (Curiel et al., 2024). Emphasizing understanding the linguistic resources and strategies students employ is crucial for developing more responsive and inclusive teaching practices. Translanguaging offers a valuable framework for this, especially in multilingual contexts, as it empowers students to use their home languages alongside English, enhancing comprehension and participation. The literature affirms the transformative potential of translanguaging in educational settings. Wawire and Barnes-Story (2022) argue that educators can employ a variety of translanguaging strategies to address the linguistic challenges faced by learners whose home languages differ from the medium of instruction. In this regard, translanguaging acts as both a scaffold and an inclusive pedagogical tool, enabling learners to engage more meaningfully with content while also supporting the development of English proficiency.

CONCLUSION

Translanguaging has emerged as a transformative pedagogical paradigm that redefines the boundaries of language use in multilingual educational contexts. By recognizing and leveraging students’ full linguistic repertoires, translanguaging fosters inclusive and equitable learning environments where linguistic and cultural diversity are not only acknowledged but actively valued as assets to the learning process. Integrating students’ home languages into instructional and assessment practices enhances comprehension, deepens conceptual understanding, and enables more authentic demonstrations of knowledge. To ensure its effective implementation, higher education institutions must establish clear policies that legitimize translanguaging as a credible and

evidence-based pedagogical approach. This requires sustained professional development for lecturers, the design of flexible and context-sensitive curricula, and the cultivation of positive attitudes toward multilingualism among both educators and students. Moreover, continued empirical research is essential to assess its long-term impact on academic achievement, identity formation, and linguistic equity. Ultimately, a systematic and research-informed integration of translanguaging can advance inclusive education, promote epistemic justice, and strengthen students' agency in multilingual classrooms positioning translanguaging not merely as a linguistic strategy, but as a cornerstone of transformative educational practice.

REFERENCES

- Adamson, L., Milligan, L. O., & Desai, Z. (2024). Exploring the injustices perpetuated by unfamiliar languages of learning and teaching: The importance of multi-angle, learner-focused research. *International Journal of Research & Method in Education*, 47(5), 438–453. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1743727x.2024.2315547>
- Almashour, M. (2024). Bridging worlds with words: Translanguaging and its impact on identity formation among Jordanian graduate students in Ontario. *Frontiers in Education*, 9. <https://doi.org/10.3389/educ.2024.1464741>
- Anthony, A. R. B. (2008). Output strategies for English-language learners: Theory to practice. *The Reading Teacher*, 61(6), 472–482. <https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.61.6.4>
- Banda, L. O. L., Liu, J., Banda, J. T., & Zhou, W. (2023). Impact of ethnic identity and geographical home location on student academic performance. *Heliyon*, 9(6). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e17482>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Cenoz, J., & Santos, A. (2020). Implementing pedagogical translanguaging in trilingual schools. *System*, 92. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102273>
- Chen, C. H., Hung, H. T., & Yeh, H. C. (2021). Virtual reality in problem-based learning contexts: Effects on the problem-solving performance, vocabulary acquisition and motivation of English language learners. *Journal of Computer Assisted Learning*, 37(3), 851–860. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcal.12528>
- Cioè-Peña, M., Linares, R. E., & Kangas, S. E. N. (2024). The expansive language access framework: An integrated approach to addressing oppression in language education. *Language Policy*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-024-09724-4>
- Crawford, J., & Ghuman, P. A. S. (2000). Integration at one level implies peaceful co-existence. At a higher level it implies active participation of language minority groups with the majority group inside. In *The care and education of young bilinguals: An introduction for professionals* (p. 163). Multilingual Matters.

- Curiel, L. C., Ojha, L. P., Zang, L., & Chen, M. (2024). “The best way to get to know a student is to know their community”: Fostering pre-service teachers’ critical multilingual language awareness through linguistic community walks. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 18(3), 232–253. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2024.2326701>
- Delprato, M. (2021). Indigenous learning gaps and home language instruction: New evidence from PISA-D. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 109, 101800. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2021.101800>
- Duarte, J. (2018). Translanguaging in the context of mainstream multilingual education. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, 17(2), 232–247. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2018.1512607>
- Haidar, S. (2021). Designed for failure: English instruction as a tool for the perpetuation of students’ dependent and dominated status. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 15(4), 363–377. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2021.1928843>
- Imbaquingo, A., & Cárdenas, J. (2023). Project-based learning as a methodology to improve reading and comprehension skills in the English language. *Education Sciences*, 13(6), 587. <https://doi.org/10.3390/educsci13060587>
- Kulung, B. R. (2021). *English as a medium of instruction at secondary level education: Challenges and pitfalls* (Doctoral dissertation, Department of English Education).
- Lukianenko, N. (2024). Language and power: Linguistic imperialism. *International Science Journal of Education & Linguistics*, 3(5), 41–49. <https://doi.org/10.46299/j.isjel.20240305.06>
- Macaro, E., Tian, L., & Chu, L. (2020). First and second language use in English medium instruction contexts. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(3), 382–402.
- Mahalingappa, L. (2024). Development of linguistic critical consciousness of multilingual preservice teachers of color. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 18(3), 290–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/19313152.2024.2330817>
- Mulaudzi, N. O. (2016). Second language as a barrier to mathematics achievement in foundation phase schools of Vhuronga in South Africa. *Journal of Educational Studies*, 15(2), 162–179.
- Ojong, A. S., & Addo, E. H. (2024). Advancing inclusivity, equity, and diversity in English language education: Empowering underrepresented students in Africa. *Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 144–157. <https://doi.org/10.32996/jeltal.2024.6.2.16>
- Onwuegbuzie, A. J., Leech, N. L., & Collins, K. M. (2010). Innovative data collection strategies in qualitative research. *The Qualitative Report*, 15(3), 696–726.
- Orosoo, M., Raash, N., Treve, M., Lahza, H. F. M., Alshammry, N., Ramesh, J. V. N., & Rengarajan, M. (2024). Transforming English language learning: Advanced speech recognition with MLP-LSTM for personalized education. *Alexandria Engineering Journal*, 111, 21–32. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aej.2024.10.065>
- Peer, B. (2024). Inequality and access to education: Bridging the gap in the 21st century. *Review Journal of Social Psychology & Social Works*, 1(3), 155–167. <https://doi.org/10.71145/rjsp.v1i3.27>

- Phillips, A., & Genao, S. (2023). Transforming, translanguaging, and transcending identities: Developing culturally responsive educational leadership. *Intercultural Education*, 34(3), 305–323. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14675986.2023.2180619>
- Procel, G. J. O., Medina, M. L. F., Sánchez, D. J. S., & Tacuri, M. A. P. (2024). Using technology in English teaching. In *CID - Centro de Investigación y Desarrollo eBooks*. https://doi.org/10.37811/cli_w1048
- Sah, P. K. (2024). Teachers' beliefs and reproduction of language ideologies in English-medium instruction programs in Nepal. *International Journal of Bilingualism*, 28(4), 701–718. <https://doi.org/10.1177/13670069241236701>
- Tsai, S. C. (2022). Learning with mobile augmented reality- and automatic speech recognition-based materials for English listening and speaking skills: Effectiveness and perceptions of non-English major English as a foreign language students. *Journal of Educational Computing Research*, 61(2), 444–465. <https://doi.org/10.1177/07356331221111203>
- Wawire, B. A., & Barnes-Story, A. (2022). Translanguaging for multiliteracy development: Pedagogical approaches for classroom practitioners. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 26(2), 173–188. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2022.2094702>
- Wendimu, S. G., & Gebremariam, H. T. (2024). Teacher-students collaboration: Using guided-writing instruction to assist learners with writing difficulties and low motivation to write. *SAGE Open*, 14(2). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440241258020>
- Woldegiorgis, E. T., & Chiramba, O. (2024). Access and success in higher education: Fostering resilience in historically disadvantaged students in South Africa. *Journal of Applied Research in Higher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/jarhe-05-2023-0217>