Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC) Volume 14 No. 2 September 2025
pp.52-66 ersc@mandela.ac.za
ISSN: 2221-4070
DOI: https://10.17159/2221-4070/2025/v14n2/a4

Challenging Monolingualism: A Global South Perspective on Translanguaging in Teacher Education[3]

Mariyeni Mtanha-Matariro
ORCID No: 0000-0003-2673-6449
University of the Witwatersrand
mariyeni.matariro@wits.ac.za

Leketi Makalela
ORCID No: 0000-0001-6375-5839
University of the Witwatersrand
Leketi.makalela@wits.ac.za

Abstract

The increasing use of translanguaging approaches in the past two decades has actively contributed to the constant disruption of monolingual educational paradigms. While translanguaging's potential to challenge prevailing language ideologies is widely acknowledged, a significant gap exists in understanding its application and impact within Global South contexts, particularly beyond its use as a mere scaffolding tool. This study seeks to fill this gap by investigating the practical implementation and impact of translanguaging instruction within a Master of Education postgraduate programme at a university in Johannesburg, South Africa. Employing a case study approach, this research examines how translanguaging, strategically framed through the lens of the African philosophy of ubuntu, cultivates a cohesive and integrated approach to meaning making. For the purposes of data collection, participants were first introduced to translanguaging pedagogy and then tasked with applying these practices in a teaching context. Thereafter, they were asked to write reflective essays on the impact of using translanguaging within their classrooms. The investigation specifically analyses these reflective essays on conceptualising and applying translanguaging in Johannesburg schools. The findings of this research reveal that ubuntu translanguaging has the unique capacity to transcend the seemingly contradictory nature of socially defined language boundaries. It achieves this by fostering a holistic understanding of linguistic repertoires, thereby promoting a sense of interconnectedness and shared understanding. Consequently, this study advocates for the implementation of comprehensive curricular reforms that prioritise cultural relevance and interconnectedness within comparable Global South educational contexts. By centring the experiences and perspectives of the Global South, this research contributes to a more nuanced and equitable understanding of the transformative potential of translanguaging.

Key words: monolingualism, multilingualism, translanguaging, ubuntu translanguaging, pedagogical translanguaging, linguistic repertoire

[3] Ethical clearance number: H20/05/23

Introduction

The 21st century is characterised by an unprecedented increase in human mobility, leading to heightened linguistic complexity across the globe (Canagarajah, 2013, 2021; Sah, 2017; Simpson, 2017; Vertovec, 2022; Zou et al., 2025). While this mobility is often perceived through a Global North lens, focusing on migration from less developed countries, its reality is far more universal and multifaceted. Indeed, the concept of "superdiversity," developed to capture the complexities of heightened migration in the Global North, reflects a reality long understood in non-Western contexts, where multilingualism is the norm (Brock-Utne, 2024; Makalela & White, 2021). Research consistently demonstrates that translingual communication is a fundamental aspect of global language use, with a significant portion of the world's population engaging in multilingual practices (Flores, 2024; Makoni & Pennycook, 2023). However, the dominant educational paradigm, often rooted in monolingual ideologies, continues to marginalise and misrepresent the onto-epistemological realities of the Global South (Flores, 2024; Makoni & Pennycook, 2023; Ndhlovu & Makalela, 2021). Despite growing evidence highlighting the superior learning outcomes associated with strategies that leverage learners' full linguistic repertoires (García, 2020; Makalela, 2019; Probyn, 2019), monolingual teaching practices persist, disproportionately disadvantaging multilingual ways of knowing and being (Fallas Escobar, 2019; Jonsson, 2019).

Translanguaging, as an alternative strategy, offers cognitive advantages for multilingual learners' meaning making (García, 2018). While much research has explored its application in basic education and undergraduate contexts, often through Western sociolinguistic frameworks, a critical gap remains: the exploration of how translanguaging strategies can transform teacher education programmes at the postgraduate level, particularly when interpreted through Global South epistemologies. This study addresses this gap by investigating the efficacy of employing translanguaging toolkits in a Master of Education course. The study's methodology involved introducing in-service teachers, who were enrolled in the course, to translanguaging pedagogy and then tasking them with applying it in their teaching practices. The current research then examines the impact of this pedagogical tool on their teaching. By centring Global South perspectives, this research aims to disrupt the persistent monolingual bias within postgraduate education and contribute to the development of culturally relevant pedagogical practices. The application of ubuntu-informed translanguaging in a Master of Education course offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate its disruptive power in fostering multilingual induction of graduate students, challenging traditional Western conceptions of language and learning. This paper will proceed by first outlining the theoretical framework grounding our approach, focusing on ubuntu translanguaging and its relevance to disrupting monolingual bias. Next, we will describe the methodology employed in our case study, detailing the design and implementation of the Master of Education course. Following this, we will present and analyse our findings, highlighting the impact of Global South interpreted translanguaging on student learning and engagement. Finally, we will conclude with a discussion of the implications of our research for teacher education and offer recommendations for future research in teacher education.

Translanguaging as a Global South Sociolinguistic Reality

Translanguaging is a normal multilingual strategy used for meaning making and for the affirmation of multilingual identities (Almashour, 2024; Wei, 2018). As a pedagogical strategy, it entails a planned alternation of the languages of input and output in spoken and written work to enhance understanding of learned content and improve epistemic access for multilingual learners. Through the translanguaging lens, language is seen as an ongoing "process" rather than a "thing"—a verb rather than a noun, as in the notion of "languaging" (Wei, 2018). In this way, the focus shifts from a simple inventory of the separate languages an individual speaks to how they flexibly and dynamically deploy their full range of linguistic resources to

achieve their communicative purposes (Probyn, 2019). Through translanguaging, multilingual individuals have the advantage of achieving all their communicative needs more effectively because it allows them to engage all their linguistic resources in the act of communication. Perhaps the analogy that fully explains translanguaging can be found in García's (2012) description of an all-terrain vehicle, which makes movement forward possible even on uneven ground. The all-terrain vehicle moves forward even when the ground is uneven because of its ability to bend, turn, and flex to help movement forward. This means that when given the space to fully employ all their linguistic repertoires in a classroom situation, no matter how complex the explanation or the information the learner needs to communicate, the student will successfully do this.

Through translanguaging, teachers and learners can engage fully with teaching and learning content because they are allowed to use all the linguistic repertoires at their disposal (Hornberger & Link, 2012; Makalela, 2016). In support of the notion of a linguistic repertoire, translanguaging challenges the conventional understanding of language boundaries between culturally and politically labelled languages, and goes beyond the linguistic system itself to incorporate doing language (Makoni & Pennycook, 2023). This includes assembling the linguistic and multimodal practices that speakers have acquired through social interaction, as well as their embodied cognition (García & Wei, 2014). Since the speaker's lexical and structural resources constitute only a small part of this assemblage, translanguaging not only posits a single linguistic system, a single set of linguistic resources, but also goes well beyond it to encompass a communicative repertoire that is often seen as outside of what traditionally is defined as the "linguistic" (Makoni & Pennycook, 2023; Pennycook, 2017). This means that translanguaging goes beyond understanding language as simply what we have traditionally called linguistic, which may include, among other things, like-named languages or their components, for example, lexicon, morphology, and phonology. It incorporates an understanding of how different modes, including our bodies, our gestures, our lives, and so forth, add to the semiotic meaning-making repertoire that is involved in the act of communication (García, 2020). Translanguaging acknowledges the entire range of multimodal resources that make up the speaker's full communicative repertoire, and this may include gestures, gazes, posture, visual cues, and even human–technology interactions. Thus, the concept of translanguaging also pays attention to the multimodal ways in which learners make meaning both with their bodies and outside of their bodies (Kress, 2015; Wei, 2018, 2022). Thus, through translanguaging, an individual's entire linguistic ethnography, including their bodies, place, and things, is acknowledged as a tool for effective communication (García & Otheguy, 2020). In corroboration, Wei (2018) wrote that the act of translanguaging is transformative; it creates a social space for the multilingual language user by bringing together different dimensions of their personal history, experience, and environment, their attitudes, beliefs, and ideology, their cognitive and physical capacity into one coordinated and meaningful performance—and transforming it into a lived experience. This is a comprehensive view of translanguaging that is disruptive of the one-ness ideology that so far predominates many schooling contexts.

To frame this study, we focused on current translanguaging debates, specifically the discussion on whether languages are internal "I" or external "E" (MacSwan, 2017). Internal languages refer to the languages that are known to the speaker and have become part of their identity. External languages refer to languages as they are socially named. Other scholars have attacked this notion, advocating for a differentiated view of linguistic repertoires in line with socially named languages (MacSwan, 2017). Others have also argued that translanguaging valorises linguistic repertoires and ignores embodied repertoires like gestures, gaze, tone, and so on (Burton, 2023; Takaki, 2023). Our stance is that all these debates are based on a discrete separation of the speaker from the hearer, on the one hand, and these interlocutors' holistic performance, which is inclusive of each other as well as the spatial contexts they occupy, on the other hand. Rather, we choose to explain this complexity through a Southern theory-derived model of translanguaging named ubuntu translanguaging, which is based on the African cosmic view of interdependence as found in the "I am because you are" to demonstrate an infinite relation of dependency

(Makalela, 2016, 2019). This framework is seen as resonating with Global South epistemologies and value systems. This means that there is no terminal endpoint between languages where one language always remains the empirical being that is incomplete without the other in the process of complex meaning making. We posit that meaning making is continuous, a state of being where identities are constantly disrupted and built at the same time for effective communication, as contained in the discontinuous continuity tenet of ubuntu translanguaging (Makalela, 2016). Put differently, multilingual learners have an unlimited capacity to disrupt old discourses and recreate new ones simultaneously for effective meaning making.

Disrupting Monolingual Bias

As highlighted earlier, debates on the efficacy of translanguaging in disrupting monolingual ideologies and practices that predominate schooling systems globally, show that the practice has the power to enable effective teaching and learning at all levels in education (García, 2020; Makalela, 2019; Probyn, 2019). In this regard, therefore, there is a need for the preparation and production of teachers who are prepared to teach in ways that acknowledge and legitimise the language practices of the complex multilingual populations that make up the bulk of the student population in contemporary classrooms (Musanti & Rodríguez, 2017). However, there is a limited number of studies that have explored how in-service teachers pursuing postgraduate degrees can be prepared adequately to deal with multilingual learners. A close review of the available literature shows that studies are concentrated on the attitudes and experiences of pre-service teachers on translanguaging and not much on their future stances as postgraduate practising teachers (Iversen, 2020; Musanti & Rodríguez, 2017).

Although recent literature from the Global North has started to address this gap by focusing on the crucial shift in teacher attitudes, studies show that deeply ingrained institutional policies favouring English-only instruction and a lack of professional training often prevent the widespread adoption of translanguaging (Cenoz et al., 2024; Wong, 2024). This is because a teacher's personal and biographical experiences are crucial for their acceptance of translanguaging, highlighting a need for a critical stance that examines power dynamics and personal positionality. A qualitative case study exploring translanguaging practices of pre-service bilingual teachers in academic writing found that Latina pre-service bilingual teachers creatively leveraged their Spanish and English linguistic repertoires to produce meaningful Spanish writing (Musanti & Rodríguez, 2017). In a study that examined the language ideology and identity practice shifts among 20 Mexican-Latinx pre-service bilingual teachers exposed to a semester-long translanguaging space, it was found that teachers developed better understandings of their language ideologies and new stances not only as language users but also as language teachers (Caldas, 2019). Moreover, the participants agreed that speaking without borders was liberating and provided a model of what being bilingual teachers could be, while legitimising those practices. The study further demonstrated how a translanguaging space can disrupt the language barrier between stigmatised linguistic practices and the formal discourses of the university, empowering bicultural voices to emerge and challenge linguistic subordination. All the participants in the study agreed that the language policy they would enforce in their future classrooms would resemble the open language policy in the research site because they had experienced its benefits firsthand. Thus, exposure to a translanguaging space enabled the adoption of a teacher stance that would promote translanguaging within their future classrooms (Wei, 2011).

In the same vein, Makalela (2015) reported on the shifts experienced by university learners who were expected to learn Sepedi as a new language. The study highlighted two significant findings: firstly, that translanguaging strategies are effective in increasing the vocabulary levels of multilingual learners, and secondly, that reflective accounts from participants reveal that breaking down language boundaries creates a positive schooling experience and helps learners develop identities that support educational success. Through exposure to translanguaging, these teachers developed attitudes that would significantly question the discourse rooted in nation-states, language, and language standards ideologies (Iversen, 2020). In other words, through their experiences of what translanguaging afforded them, these teachers

were prepared to acknowledge multilingualism within their classrooms and leverage it for effective teaching and learning. This research, along with other recent studies, demonstrates that there are infinite relations of dependency between the languages a multilingual speaker has, and that one language is incomplete without the other. By implication, multilingual speakers need the full use of all the communicative competencies available to them.

In South Africa, despite ample evidence demonstrating the positive impact of translanguaging on multilingual learners' academic performance, there is a notable paucity of research reporting on its implementation within South African institutions of higher education, particularly those responsible for training teachers for the nation's diverse linguistic landscape. While recent scholarship in higher education contexts has begun to explicitly link translanguaging to decolonising classroom practices and challenging the marginalisation of indigenous languages (Madiba, 2024; Mbirimi-Hungwe & Matariro, 2024), there is a distinct lack of studies focusing on sensitising pre-service teachers or in-service teachers pursuing postgraduate degrees to effective multilingual pedagogies for the diverse South African context. It is against this critical backdrop, characterised by a scarcity of research in universities actively preparing in-service teachers for these challenges, that the current study aims not only to fill this specific knowledge gap but also to foreground a Global South perspective of translanguaging—a perspective often obscured by Western hegemonic conceptions, which frequently relegate marginalised languages to mere steppingstones for acquiring dominant languages.

The Study

This was a participatory action research project grounded in the logic of the participants as both researchers and participants at the same time. In this research paradigm, there is co-construction of research instruments, co-collection of data, and joint analysis between the researchers and the participants. When framed in this light, the boundary between the researcher and the researched is blurred as metaphorically valorised within the ubuntu injunction: "I am because you are." Participants for this study were seven students registered as part-time Master of Education students at a university in Johannesburg, where both authors were lecturers. These participants were therefore, conveniently sampled to participate in this study. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the university's Human Research Ethics Committee. All participating students were provided with comprehensive information about the study's objectives, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time, and all of them gave their informed consent to participate. The authors were acutely aware of their position as lecturers for this master's course and implemented measures, such as ensuring anonymity in data handling and involving an independent researcher for initial data classification, to mitigate any potential influence on students, data collection, or analysis. All the participating students were part-time Master in Education degree students and full-time teachers in various schools in Johannesburg—a world-class African city characterised by both horizontal and vertical multilingualism (Brock-Utne, 2024). Five of these students were female and two were male, with a mean age of 26 years and 4 months. They were all multilingual and spoke a variety of South African official languages. Two of them also spoke African languages that are found predominantly beyond the borders of South Africa.

As part of the course, students underwent a 12-week induction on translanguaging and post-methods lessons, which allowed for debates and application of their ideas as they evolved throughout the course. In the end, they participated in metacognitive reflections about how they viewed multilingualism before the class and how they were after the class. The purpose of the induction into multilingualism and multilingual teaching strategies was twofold: firstly, it was meant to raise the student teachers' awareness of monolingual biases entrenched in the curriculum, and secondly, to prepare them to challenge the traditional method of teaching which privileges one language at the expense of effective teaching and learning for multilingual learners.

Premised on the tenets of ubuntu translanguaging, which foregrounded infinite relations of dependencies and transversal incompletion of one language without others, the course was one semester

long, approximately four months. The lectures occurred once a week for two hours every Tuesday, from 4–6 pm. The postgraduate student participants were exposed to two weeks of a broad introduction to translanguaging and 12 weeks of induction to translanguaging theory and practice. They were asked to choose readings and hold mini lectures where they could use all the linguistic skills at their disposal. Throughout the sessions, data were collected through weekly reflections and analysis with one seasoned and independent researcher and the two lecturers. The participants were also encouraged to critically engage with each other's work. Participants were further invited to attend a conference with lesson demonstrations by actual teachers from schools that have adopted translanguaging as an approach for learning and teaching. They used this modelling exercise as a resource for data collection and learning sets aligned with the course offerings. To effect change in their classrooms, the students were asked to carry out action research at their schools to practise and research the disruptive potential of translanguaging. At the end of the semester, participants submitted a written reflection of 2,500–3,000 words assessing their epistemic beliefs and stances towards translanguaging as a pedagogical tool. As data sets, the submitted essays were analysed, first by an independent researcher, who had been involved with this class for all the lectures, then by the authors, using a universal reductionist approach in which the data were re-read several times and classified into themes until saturation points were reached. These themes were supported by prototypical extracts from the essays, which are presented and discussed in the following sections.

Results

Results were drawn from the students' reflections on the kind of teacher they became after the 12-week induction into translanguaging theory and practice. This is discussed below under the following six themes:

- Awareness of systemic monolingualism.
- Teachers as perpetrators of linguistic genocide.
- Translanguaging as a catalyst for language maintenance.
- Translanguaging for epistemic access.
- Inflicting the same pain.
- Teacher's future multilingual stances.

Awareness of Systemic Monolingualism

The results of the study revealed that the induction through translanguaging theory and the opportunities to do action research in their classrooms heightened the teachers' awareness of monolingual dominance that prevailed in the entire schooling sector. The excerpt below is typical:

A wall I had not anticipated hitting was that the learners are not comfortable in using their mother tongues in class. Many of my learners were conformers rather than reformers, and they could not fathom disobeying the constructs of language learning that had been enforced so thoroughly in their own schooling.

In this excerpt, the participant notes that they were not aware that the dominant use of English as the only language of learning and teaching had led to learners having less appreciation of their own languages. Due to their resistance to using their own languages, the participant views them as conformers who comply with systemic monolingual bias that has been ingrained "so thoroughly" in the whole schooling sector. The sense of discomfort in using languages other than English is found in the phrase, "not comfortable in using their mother tongues in class." Here, the curriculum system has been infested with the ideology of one-ness, where only one language is considered the optimal condition for successful learning and teaching. This realisation on the part of the in-service teacher participant implies that the translanguaging course structure had an impact on heightening consciousness of monolingual bias, which

was subliminally conditioned as the only norm for schooling. In line with García (2020), critical pedagogy of translanguaging is effective in disrupting the ideology of one-ness and the power of monolingualism. In the same vein and in extending the realisation of the negative effects of systemic monolingualism in the learning of multilingual learners, another participant reflected thus:

I was unaware that by asking them to use English only I am actually taking away their identity and giving them what I thought was "valid" identity, however, now that I am aware that language carries culture . . . I allow them to be who they are by allowing them to use their language to make sense of the subject matter and still help them gain content knowledge.

The participant reveals that they were not aware that asking learners to use English only was asking them to let go of their being. This is evident in the statement, "taking away their identity." The participant further explains that the course has made them conscious that language is one's culture and, as a result, they allow the learners under their care to be who they are by enabling or allowing them to use their own languages in learning. The participants also realised that by so doing, the learners still "gain subject content." Thus, through exposure to the class, the teacher will now be able to create a safe translanguaging space for their learners to practise their being and, in the process, learn effectively. Similarly, other scholars identified three components of translanguaging educational practices that teachers who work with multilingual learners need to develop, and these are stance, design, and shifts (García et al., 2017; Kleyn & García, 2019). The stance refers to the teachers' awareness and acknowledgement of the learners' ways of knowing, which will inform the teachers' ways of designing the classroom experiences that are inclusive of their learners' ways of being.

Heightened Content Access

Another important finding that came out of the current study is that the teachers realised that the use of translanguaging as a pedagogical tool enabled learners to develop deeper understandings of subject content. This is exemplified in the following extract:

Multilinguals, because of their personal language experiences and histories, are already equipped with capital as they enter the classroom. The capital is the funds of knowledge, the learners' language knowledge and skills, which can be used in the classroom to enhance understanding of concepts.

The participant explains that learners who speak multiple languages walk into classroom contexts already with resources in the form of their lived experiences and language skills that teachers can leverage for effective teaching. The participant calls these "funds of knowledge," which they argue can be used to "enhance understanding of concepts." This means that the course enabled the participant to realise that if spaces are opened and learners are allowed to use all the resources they bring to the learning environment, they understand concepts better. In support of this view, Moll et al. (2005) argued that the language skills learners bring into classroom contexts should be seen as funds of knowledge that can be used for comprehension of subject content. On another level, this excerpt echoes what García (2020) highlighted, arguing for the repositioning of the teachers' focus when teaching reading to speakers of multiple languages and positing that the learner must be the central focus of the reading activity. This means that the student and all the skills they bring to the reading process must be leveraged for effective reading. Thus, the student's history, languages, and experiences should be acknowledged so that the learners are able to read themselves in the texts they read in classroom settings for effective comprehension.

Perpetrators of Linguistic Genocide

Linguistic genocide is where the number of speakers of a language variety is decreased until there are either no speakers of the language variety or there are no fluent speakers of the language. Through being inducted during the 12-week translanguaging theory, the participants came to realise that their attitude or treatment of languages in their classrooms was tantamount to linguicide. This was in line with the way they treated the languages brought into their classrooms by the learners under their care. The following excerpt exemplifies this:

I can fully say I was the translanguaging nightmare, a perpetrator of linguistic genocide with ideologies that were informed by monolingual and monoglossic practices, informed by Eurocentric views on language.

This excerpt narrates the sudden realisation by the participant that they were the main barrier to the use of multiple languages within their classroom. The participant uses the words "translanguaging nightmare" to show the extent to which they would not accept the use of other languages within their classroom before exposure to the master's class. The participant views themself as one who contributed to the extinction of the learners' languages. This is clearly captured when the participant describes themself as a "perpetrator of linguistic genocide"—one who contributes to the death of another language. The participant now views their actions as some sort of crime, as carried in the meaning of the word "perpetrator." The participant also realises that their view of languages is not locally orientated, as it is influenced by foreign policies set for a different context. The participant uses the phrase "Eurocentric view of languages" to emphasise this. This, they realise, led to their contribution towards linguistic genocide. They had been contributing to the death of the languages brought into their classroom by the learners by not allowing their use in teaching and learning.

Catalyst for Language Maintenance

One other important finding of this study was that it raised the participants' awareness of the important fact that, besides being a powerful pedagogical tool for teaching multilingual learners, translanguaging was pivotal to the preservation of previously endangered or disempowered languages. The following extract is a typical example:

Translanguaging seems to be a worthwhile resource in maintaining and revitalising all languages.

Here, the participant notes that they realised that translanguaging helps maintain and enrich all languages. Thus, translanguaging is seen as a tool that can be used for empowering languages at risk of being killed by other languages. The more a language is used, the more it becomes important and valuable. If the students' languages are not used in state institutions, such as schools, they might end up extinct. The participant realises that using the students' languages is not only important for effective teaching and learning experiences but also for empowering the languages themselves (Lewis et al., 2012).

Inflicting the same pain

Through this course, the participating students realised that instead of giving education, they were giving pain by repeating the old ways of teaching, which were not helpful academically to them during their schooling time. The extract below is a good example of this realisation:

It dawned [on] me that I have been doing exactly what my teachers were doing to me, teaching me in a way that was confusing and one that I could hardly communicate efficiently in.

The student uses the word "dawned" to indicate that the realisation was new, like a new day signifying new beginnings. The student acknowledges that, as a school child, using one language or the school language was difficult because as it posed challenges in communicating effectively or with meaning and consequently, the learned material was confusing. Thus, the participant realised that subject content was confusing during their schooling time because they were taught differently from how they were used to accessing knowledge. They were used to accessing knowledge multilingually, but the school expected them to access knowledge monolingually and, as a result, they struggled to walk on the path of knowing or becoming knowledgeable (García, 2020). In support of this view, Guzula et al. (2016) wrote that for as long as Anglo normative tendencies and views persist, multilingual learners will continue to be positioned as deficient, deviant, or at risk of failing. This resonates with García (2020), who explained that not allowing learners to use their languages for learning means that they would never walk on the path of coming to know, and this positions them as learners at risk of failing. In most cases, these learners eventually fail or are asked to repeat a grade. In some cases, they drop out of school. This effect has several disadvantages, including other violations like social justice, where these learners are excluded from civic engagements beyond school. The participants acknowledged that exposure to translanguaging teaching pedagogies

raised their awareness that if learners are to learn successfully, they needed to use their languages for negotiating meanings in subject content. This is because their languages depend on each other for effective or successful communication or comprehensive engagement with curriculum content (Makalela, 2016).

Translanguaging and the Language in Education Policy (LiEP)

On realising that most educational practices are monolingually orientated, some participants problematised the interpretation and the extent to which South Africa's language in education policy, which accords official status to 12 official languages and adopts multilingualism, is implemented in institutions of learning. The next excerpt highlighted this:

We cannot claim to have moved from apartheid and its legacy if we do not actively seek to change the policies it put in place in as far as language use in classrooms is concerned.

In this extract, the participant explains that apartheid is still alive and gripping the nation because the policies that were put in place during the apartheid era on how languages must be used in education are still, to a greater extent, being enforced or practised. Through exposure to multilingual pedagogies, the participant began to question the language policies that govern classroom practices 30 years after the dawn of democracy in South Africa. Although a multilingual LiEP was adopted at democracy, the use of English or Afrikaans as languages of learning and teaching (LoLT) or mediums of instruction (MOI) prevailed. Alexander (1999) observed that even after democracy, the dead hand of apartheid continued to have a stifling grip on how languages were used in education. To date, local Indigenous languages remain marginalised, and they are not used as LoLTs or MOIs. There is still systemic monolingualism at all levels in education in South Africa. In corroboration, another participant noted:

The LiEP has regrettably not been realised in our South African schools, and English as the predominant language of instruction is currently dominating our multilingual classrooms, and educators play an integral role in bridging the gap as pedagogical choices which promote multilingualism serve South African learners far more than prohibiting their funds of knowledge.

The participant bemoans the failure of the LiEP to address the issue of language use in education. They use the word "regrettably" to describe the dismal failure of the implementation of the multilingual policy as English still enjoys dominance in classrooms everywhere in South Africa. They go on to explain that teachers have the power to correct this by choosing to teach using multilingual teaching pedagogies. This is in tandem with the view that the stances that teachers take can help them design lessons that are inclusive of the learners' multiple ways of being (Kleyn & García, 2019).

Multilingual Stances

The current study was an intervention that set out to assess if prolonged exposure to multilingual strategies would impact teacher multilingual stances in teaching multilingual learners. The teachers indicated a willingness to be agents of change from the monolingual teaching practices to a full embrace of translanguaging in their classrooms. Another three excerpts from participants are good examples of this shift:

I believe I have a duty to uphold and maintain the diverse linguistic practices and cultures brought about by learners.

Here, the participant takes it upon themselves to make sure they value their students' multiple linguistic practices and cultural diversities. The participant makes this declaration as one making a pledge, as highlighted by the statement "I have a duty to uphold and maintain." This indicates a high degree of commitment to change and signifies a complete revolution in the participant's attitude towards how languages will be treated in their classroom. The participants view themselves anew. They see themselves as playing an important role in engaging with the learners multilingually. Another observes that:

The teacher plays an integral role in bridging the gap and [engaging] their class into pedagogical choices that promote multilingualism by choosing to move from being a linguistic villain to a linguistic hero.

In this excerpt, the participant realises that as the teacher, they should play a pivotal role as an agent of change, encouraging multilingual practices within their classrooms. They use the phrase “from linguistic villain to linguistic hero” to indicate a deep understanding of the effects of adopting monolingual stances when working with multilingual learners. The participant views monolingual approaches as equal to the acts of villains and those who adopt multilingual stances as heroes. The student realises that they have a significant role—the ball is in their court to turn the situation around by making a conscious decision to promote multilingualism within their classroom for enhanced achievement among the learners. They see allowing learners to use all their language skills as a heroic act. In corroboration, a third participants notes:

I want to be the kind of teacher who chooses to build learners’ identities, allow[ing] learners to access their linguistic rights and experience academic success.

In this excerpt, the participant admits they are prepared to change from being a teacher who teaches using monolingual practices and chooses to acknowledge the learners’ ways of being, preserve their language rights, so they too can achieve at acceptable academic levels across the curriculum.

Implications for Translanguaging in the Global South

In this study, we modelled how an intentional orientation of translanguaging can be used to disrupt the marginalisation of local languages and multilingual speakers and how postgraduate student teachers as both subjects and objects of research can bring about tangible changes. For this, we drew on the tenets of a Southern theory of multilingualism: ubuntu translanguaging, which includes the logic of discontinuous continuation and the orchestra of the “I and we” denoting transversal incompletion of languages in the process of meaning-making. The current study proposed to address whether prolonged intervention or induction with postgraduate student teachers’ epistemic beliefs and practices would change. The results demonstrate that this was an effective strategy to motivate practicing teachers to shift their practices. The students’ metacognitive reflections display a new stance in how they intend to teach—a stance burning with a desire to change the status quo of language use within their classrooms. The study shows that exposing teachers to pedagogical practices that encourage the use of multilingual teaching pedagogies is essential in breaking down traditional teaching methodologies, which were influenced by the “one-ness ideology” that advocates for the separation of languages in learning environments.

One thing that stands out in the results is that translanguaging was not interpreted by the postgraduate student teachers as a scaffold to realise the linear acquisitional goals for a Global North named language, that is, English (Makalela, 2016; Otheguy et al., 2015). Another finding from this study is that multilingualism is a norm in African classes, yet teachers are not fully equipped to teach learners with diverse multilingual profiles. The study has shown that if exposed to ubuntu methods of reflexivity and co-construction of knowledge to effectively teach multilingual learners, teachers have the willingness and capacity to adapt to the new pedagogies that are in line with the linguistic profiles of learners in the Global South classrooms where fluid and horizontal multilingualism is a constant norm in every day encounters (Brock-Utne, 2024; Makalela, 2022; Sah, 2017; Simpson, 2017). In line with this finding, institutions of higher learning must respond by preparing teachers who are fully equipped with skills on how best to teach these learners. It appears that teachers lived realities need to be affirmed through structured learning training on how to use pedagogical practices they already have with their learners, as modelled in this postgraduate class. In this regard, translanguaging thus becomes a tool to help decolonise classroom practices by enabling learners to walk on the path of becoming knowledgeable and knowledge creators (García, 2020; Madiba, 2024; Wong, 2024).

Conclusion

This study sought to investigate whether postgraduate student teachers' epistemic beliefs about translanguaging would change, specifically through a Global South lens. The findings demonstrate that an intentional translanguaging intervention effectively empowers teachers to fundamentally shift their epistemic beliefs and become proactive agents for change within their classrooms. This transformative process directly addresses the critical gap identified in the literature regarding the preparation of postgraduate teachers to effectively navigate and leverage multilingualism in diverse educational settings. The intervention proved instrumental in fostering a heightened awareness of pervasive systemic monolingualism, leading participants to critically reflect on their prior practices, which some candidly described as contributing to "linguistic genocide." Most importantly, this shift extended beyond mere recognition, cultivating a deep appreciation for translanguaging as a powerful tool for language maintenance, ensuring epistemic access for multilingual learners, and ultimately alleviating the "pain" inflicted by traditional monolingual approaches. Participants developed robust multilingual stances, expressing a strong commitment to integrating learners' full linguistic repertoires and advocating for culturally relevant pedagogical choices.

Therefore, it is demonstrably possible to work with teachers and effectively break the entrenched boundaries of monolingualism. Grounding translanguaging as a disruptive pedagogy against the "one-ness ideology" is not merely beneficial but is key for Global South contexts, where multilingualism is the norm rather than the exception. To truly tease out the complexities of multilingualism, teachers must be able to see language from the view of the user (the learner) in tandem with ubuntu translanguaging. This framework, positing infinite relations of dependency where one language is incomplete without another, offers a profound and holistic understanding of linguistic interaction. It challenges the Western hegemonic view that often positions indigenous languages as mere scaffolds to dominant languages, usually colonial languages, instead of valorising the rich, integrated linguistic tapestry that learners bring to the classroom.

The implications of this study are far-reaching for teacher education programmes, particularly in the Global South. We advocate for comprehensive curricular reforms that move beyond superficial acknowledgements of multilingualism to embed critical translanguaging pedagogies, informed by Southern theories like ubuntu, at their core. Such reforms should prioritise practical training and reflective practices that enable teachers to develop a confident and agentive translanguaging stance. Furthermore, policymakers and university administrators must recognise and actively support these pedagogical shifts, ensuring that institutional frameworks foster, rather than hinder, the implementation of inclusive multilingual practices. More critical courses and research documenting achievements of locally conceived and interpreted versions of translanguaging are needed to advance translanguaging as a theory and practice from the Global South perspectives. Future research could explore the long-term impact of such interventions on student outcomes, investigate the scalability of ubuntu translanguaging across different educational levels, and examine the role of collaborative professional development models in sustaining these transformative practices.

References

Alexander, N. (1999). An African renaissance without African languages? *Social Dynamics*, *25*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.1080/02533959908458658

Almashour, M. (2024). Bridging worlds with words: Translanguaging and its impact on identity formation among Jordanian graduate students in Ontario. *Frontiers in Education*, *9*, 1464741. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2024.1464741

Brock-Utne, B. (2024). Globalisation, education, policy, and curricula issues: The transformative role of universities—making the world a better place to live in embedding Maori thinking and concepts such as Ubuntu, Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, and Chikyu Minzokushugi. In J. Zajda (Ed.), *Fourth international handbook of globalisation, education and policy research* (pp. 585–606). Springer Nature.

Burton, J. (2023). *Spoken word poetry with multilingual students in an English for Academic Purposes class: Translanguaging and emotion for critical practice* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Toronto.

Caldas, B. (2019). To switch or not to switch: Bilingual preservice teachers and translanguaging in teaching and learning. *TESOL Journal*, *10*(4), e485. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.485

Canagarajah, S. (2013). *Translingual practice: Global Englishes and cosmopolitan relations*. Routledge.

Canagarajah, S. (2021). Rethinking mobility and language: From the Global South. *The Modern Language Journal*, *105*(2), 570–582. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/modl.12726

Cenoz, J., Santos, A., & Gorter, D. (2024). Pedagogical translanguaging and teachers' perceptions of anxiety. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *27*(9), 1234–1245. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2021.2021387

Fallas Escobar, C. (2019). Translanguaging by design in EFL classrooms. *Classroom Discourse*, *10*(3/4), 290–305. https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1628789

Flores, N. (2024). *Becoming the system: A raciolinguistic genealogy of bilingual education in the post-Civil Rights era*. Oxford University Press.

García, O. (2012). Multilingual pedagogies. In M. Martin-Jones, A. Blackledge, & A. Creese (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (1st ed., pp. 249–263). Routledge. García, O. (2018). The multiplicities of multilingual interaction. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *21*(7), 881–891. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2018.1474851

García, O. (2020). Translanguaging and Latinx bilingual readers. *The Reading Teacher*, *73*(5), 557–562. https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1883

García, O., Johnson, S., & Seltzer, K. (2017). *The translanguaging classroom: Leveraging student bilingualism for learning*. Caslon.

García, O., & Otheguy, R. (2020). Translanguaging, language contact, and power. In M. C. Pires (Ed.), *Language contact, language change, and language policy* (pp. 1–20). De Gruyter Mouton.

García, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: A theory of language, contact and education*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Guzula, X., McKinney, C., & Tyler, R. (2016). Languaging-for-learning: Legitimising translanguaging and enabling multimodal practices in third spaces. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, *34*(3), 211–226. https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2016.1250360

Hornberger, N. H., & Link, H. (2012). Translanguaging and transnational literacies in multilingual classrooms: A biliteracy lens. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *15*(3), 261–278. https://doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2012.658016

Iversen, J. Y. (2020). Pre-service teachers' translanguaging during field placement in multilingual, mainstream classrooms in Norway. *Language and Education*, *34*(1), 51–65. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2019.1682599

Jonsson, C. (2019). "What is it called in Spanish?": Parallel monolingualisms and translingual classroom talk. *Classroom Discourse*, *10*(3/4), 323–346. https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1631197

Kleyn, T., & García, O. (2019). Translanguaging as an act of transformation: Restructuring teaching and learning for emergent bilingual students. In L. C. de Oliveira (Ed.), *The handbook of TESOL in K-12* (pp. 69–82). John Wiley & Sons.

Kress, G. (2015). Semiotic work: Applied linguistics and a social semiotic account of Multimodality. *AILA Review*, *28*(1), 49–71. https://doi.org/10.1075/aila.28.03kre

Lewis, G., Jones, B., & Baker, C. (2012). Translanguaging: Origins and development from school to street and beyond. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, *18*(7), 641–654. https://doi.org/10.1080/13803611.2012.718488

MacSwan, J. (2017). A multilingual perspective on translanguaging. *American Educational Research Journal*, *54*(1), 167–201. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216683935

Madiba, M. (2024). Translanguaging as a decolonial pedagogic strategy for South African universities. *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning Journal*, *3*(8), 110–121. https://doi.org/10.70875/v8i3article9

Makalela, L. (2015). Moving out of linguistic boxes: The effects of translanguaging strategies for multilingual classrooms. *Language and Education*, *29*(3), 200–217. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2014.994524

Makalela, L. (2016). Ubuntu translanguaging: An alternative framework for complex multilingual encounters. *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, *34*(3), 187–196. https://doi.org/10.2989/16073614.2016.1250350

Makalela, L. (2019). Uncovering the universals of ubuntu translanguaging in classroom discourses. *Classroom Discourse*, *10*(3/4), 237–251. https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1631198

Makalela, L. (2022). *Not eleven languages: Translanguaging and South African multilingualism in concert* (Vol. 107). de Gruyter Mouton.

Makalela, L., & White, C. (2021). Translanguaging and superdiversity in the Global South: A decolonial perspective. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, *24*(10), 1837–1850.

Makoni, S., & Pennycook, A. (2023). Looking at multilingualisms from the Global South. In C. McKinney, P. Makoe & V. Zavala (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of multilingualism* (2nd ed., pp. 17–30). Routledge.

Mbirimi-Hungwe, V., & Matariro, M. (2024). Translanguaging as a socially just pedagogy in Zimbabwean higher education. *Education as Change*, *28*(1), 1–20. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1156438

Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N. (2005). Funds of knowledge for teaching: Using a qualitative approach to connect homes and classrooms. In N. Gonzálex, L. C. Moll & C. Amanti (Eds.), *Funds of knowledge* (pp. 71–87). Lawrence Erlbaum.

Musanti, S. I., & Rodríguez, A. D. (2017). Translanguaging in bilingual teacher preparation: Exploring pre-service bilingual teachers' academic writing. *Bilingual Research Journal*, *40*(1), 38–54. https://doi.org/10.1080/15235882.2016.1276028

Ndhlovu, F., & Makalela, L. (2021). *Decolonising multilingualism in Africa: Recentering silenced voices from the global south*. De Gruyter Brill.

Otheguy, R., García, O., & Reid, W. (2015). Clarifying translanguaging and deconstructing named languages: A perspective from linguistics. *Applied Linguistics Review*, *6*(3), 281–307. http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/applirev-2015-0014

Pennycook, A. (2017). Translanguaging and semiotic assemblages. *International Journal of Multilingualism*, *14*(3), 269–282. https://doi.org/10.1080/14790718.2017.1315810

Probyn, M. (2019). Pedagogical translanguaging and the construction of science knowledge in a multilingual South African classroom: Challenging monoglossic/post-colonial orthodoxies. *Classroom Discourse*, *10*(3/4), 216–236. https://doi.org/10.1080/19463014.2019.1628792

Sah, P. K. (2017). Using the first language (L1) as a resource in EFL classrooms: Nepalese university teachers' and students' perspectives. *Journal of NELTA*, *22*(1/2), 26–38. https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v22i1-2.20039

Simpson, J. (2017). Translanguaging in the contact zone: Language use in superdiverse urban areas. In H. Coleman (Ed.), *Multilingualisms and development: Selected proceedings of the 11th Language and Development Conference, New Delhi, India 2015* (pp. 207–223). British Council.

Takaki, N. H. (2023). Emotion, silence and meaning making in translanguaging towards social justice in strangers. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Alicada*, *23*(1), e22026. https://doi.org/10.1590/1984-6398202322026

Vertovec, S. (2022). *Superdiversity: Migration and social complexity*. Taylor & Francis.

Wei, L. (2011). Moment analysis and translanguaging space: Discursive construction of identities by multilingual Chinese youth in Britain. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *43*(5), 1222–1235. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.07.035

Wei, L. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, *39*(1), 9–30. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039

Wei, L. (2022). Translanguaging, multimodality, Southern theory, and pedagogical possibilities. *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, *17*(4), 408–412. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2022.2143090

Wong, C.-Y. (2024). "Translanguaging reminds me to stay humble": Impact of teacher candidates' pedagogical knowledge of translanguaging on professional identities. *Language and Education*, *38*(5), 818–837. https://doi.org/10.1080/09500782.2023.2221230

Zou, Y., Kuek, F., Feng, W., & Cheng, X. (2025). Digital learning in the 21st century: Trends, challenges, and innovations in technology integration. *Frontiers in Education*, *10*, 1562391. https://doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1562391