

**Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC) Volume 14 No. 2 September 2025**  
**pp.193-208 [ersc@mandela.ac.za](mailto:ersc@mandela.ac.za)**  
**ISSN: 2221-4070**  
**DOI: <https://10.17159/2221-4070/2025/v14n2/a13>**

## **Multilingual Pedagogies as an Enabler in Creating and Fostering Learner Engagement in English Second Language Literature Classrooms<sup>7</sup>**

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### **Abstract**

Research on multilingual pedagogies in English Second Language (ESL) classrooms is gaining momentum globally and in South Africa. However, more studies focus on the higher education context, universities in particular. Basic education and technical and vocational education and training are mostly ignored. This study explored translanguaging and code-switching as pedagogies of choice for ESL teachers, particularly in teaching literature. Literature teaching has been challenging ESL teachers for decades. The study sought to explore the use of translanguaging and code-switching as a relevant response in ESL literature teaching classrooms. It was grounded in the interpretivist paradigm to explore the teachers' experiences of using these multilingual pedagogies. This qualitative case study employed ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy as an epistemic lens because it grounds pedagogy in African philosophy and humanity, and because it sought to understand the teachers' premises in using these pedagogies in the context of South Africa. Four high school ESL teachers were purposively sampled and interviewed. Each teacher was observed teaching a lesson based on prescribed literature for Grades 10–12. In thematically analysing data, the findings were that translanguaging and code-switching enhance learner engagement and positively impact formal and informal assessments. There was also a view that school management typically discourages using such pedagogies out of fear that learners may lose a good grasp of English. Therefore, multilingual pedagogies should be intellectually infused in planning literature lessons. Furthermore, teacher training and language policies should be diversified to embrace the multilingual realities within the ESL classrooms. There is also a need for further research on how the use of multilingual pedagogies impacts other language skills such as reading and writing.

**Keywords:** multilingualism, multilingual pedagogies, code-switching, translanguaging, literature, English second language

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<sup>7</sup> Ethical clearance number: HSS/0606/019M

## **Introduction and Background**

Internationally and in South Africa, multilingualism is perceived as a resource and not a barrier to learning and teaching, especially in English second language (ESL) classrooms (Baker, 2011; Kwon et al., 2025; Ngubane & Ntombela, 2024; Rezaee et al., 2025; Zano & Mpiti, 2025). South African second language classrooms are largely multilingual due to the country's multilingual nature (Makalela, 2018). The country has 11 official spoken languages and a South African sign language. Learners in the ESL classrooms bring the wealth of their mother tongue and other official languages into the classroom. The classrooms' multilingual nature is also tied to the rich and diverse cultures that learners bring into the classroom (Makalela, 2015, 2018). Initially, multilingualism was perceived as a threat in the ESL classrooms, but now it is clear that multilingualism is a resource (Burton, 2025; Zondi & Mncube, 2024). In such classrooms, teachers must often navigate the complexity of teaching literature in English to second language speakers. Multilingualism is therefore an important resource in teaching literature in the linguistically and culturally diverse South Africa.

In South African high schools, literature includes novels, drama or plays, short stories and poetry (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2011). These components are embedded into the English subject or curriculum. Teaching literature in English to such a diverse group of learners can provide an opportunity and a challenge for ESL teachers (Hussein et al., 2021). Literature is known to be resourceful in developing learners' creative thinking skills, writing skills, vocabulary, social awareness, and shaping worldviews, among others. However, second language learners of the English language commonly struggle with understanding literature and seeing its usefulness in the curriculum (Hossain, 2024; Rai, 2025). This has brought some challenges for teachers in the ESL context. Learners typically lack the motivation to study extensively, and only read literature for assessment or examination purposes. This defeats the purpose of the inclusion of literature in the ESL classroom.

Hussein (2025) and Rai (2025) emphasised that integrating literature in the ESL classroom is essential and presented a justification. However, the comprehension, analysis, and vocabulary of literary texts such as novels, poetry, drama, and short stories have been challenging for most ESL teachers (Taye, 2025). Therefore, multilingual pedagogies offer a reasonable and conducive space for learners to learn literature using languages they understand better. Higher education institutions have embraced multilingualism and translanguaging as pedagogy (Madiba, 2014; Makalela, 2014, 2016; Ngubane, 2025). However, there is still a gap in the use of and clear policies on how multilingual pedagogies are used, and how they can be used in high schools in South Africa. This paper looks at how ESL teachers in Pinetown District high schools use code-switching and translanguaging as a resource to enhance learner engagement and sound understanding of literature in their classrooms.

Learner engagement then becomes a central issue in teaching literature in multilingual classrooms. Learner engagement is a broad phenomenon but, in this paper, it refers to curriculum structuring and pedagogies that are used in the classroom to ensure that there is active interaction in the learning environment (Bender, 2017). Davies et al. (2018) emphasised that learner engagement enhances the learning experience, which may be inclusive of physical and intellectual activities.

## **Literature Review and Theoretical Framework**

### **The Relevance of the Language in Education Policy and Mother Tongue-Based Bilingual Education**

South African schools are linguistically and culturally diverse. However, monolingualism and the exclusion of some languages have been a part of its history for decades. The dawn of democratic South Africa aimed to bring a change through the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Language in Education Policy (LiEP; Department of Education [DoE], 1997),

which both promoted multilingualism and cultural diversity in society and schools. LiEP advocated that learning more than one language should be accepted as practice and principle in South African schools. This policy further asserted that learners benefit intellectually and emotionally from the bilingual education system. The main aims of LiEP are to promote complete involvement in society and economy through access to education, to establish additive bilingualism as an approach to language in education, to promote and develop all the official languages, to support the teaching and learning of all other languages needed by learners in the Republic of South Africa, and to do away with disadvantages brought by the gaps between home languages and languages of learning and teaching (DoE, 1997). August-Mowers' (2025) critique was that practitioners at basic and higher education levels have not intentionally and sufficiently implemented the aims of the LiEP. Furthermore, this scholar argued that the current intentional implementation of mother tongue-based bilingual education (MTBBE) is a gateway for schools to embrace diverse languages in order to eventually deal with language alienation and enforce social justice and equity. Thus, teachers in basic education must ensure that multilingual practices are not just on paper but a reality in the classroom given that the policies provide these opportunities. MTBBE does not necessarily include teaching English as a subject, but using more than one language as a resource (Makalela, 2015) would be a win for language teachers because these would be fluidly used in the classroom; translanguaging and code-switching would be intentionally used and embraced in the classroom.

#### **Multilingualism as a Resource in the ESL Classroom**

Heugh (2015) posited that multilingual pedagogies are a response to the traditionally monolingual and Eurocentric approaches of teaching English. The traditional English teaching methods are teacher-centred, monolingual, and not always responsive to diversity within the ESL classrooms. Matiso (2023) and Rai (2025) posited that using multilingual pedagogies in the classroom improves ESL learners' awareness of language structures as they use multilingual repertoires to compare and contrast ideas. This becomes a source and a strength for language development. Using languages they understand better improves motivation, communicative competence, and engagement in the classroom.

Multilingual pedagogies present a necessary shift because they uphold and consider the learners' language repertoires as assets and not threats in the ESL classroom (Hossain, 2024; Makalela, 2016; Maseko & Mkhize, 2021; Mijima & Makalela, 2016). Failure to use pedagogies that learners better understand, results in learners failing to engage in literature classrooms. Farah Mahmood et al. (2024), Rai (2025), and Zondi and Mbatha (2024) argued that the effective use of pedagogies such as code-switching and translanguaging pedagogy in ESL literature classrooms enhances learner engagement, deeper understanding, cultural awareness, tolerance, and a positive classroom culture. Motteram and Dawson (2025) confirmed that there is growth in multilingualism within the ESL classroom across the globe. In particular, the multilingual literacies and biliteracy aim to enhance inclusion and cater for learners' linguistic and culturally diverse backgrounds.

For Paran (2006), literature is helpful for language learning, cultural expression, and identity in ESL contexts. However, monolingual linguistic approaches stifle literature engagement in learning environments where learners struggle to relate to English texts due to limited proficiency or cultural awareness (Banda, 2018). Multilingual pedagogies such as translanguaging and code-switching become an enabler in bridging this gap (García & Wei, 2014; Lee, 2025; Nguyen, 2025). Lee (2025) and Nguyen (2025) specifically distinguished between translanguaging and code-switching. These multilingual pedagogies enhance or develop learners' access, interpretation, and emotional connection with literary texts, thus

enhancing learner engagement and critical reasoning. I argue for the integrated use of multilingual pedagogies, blending the learner-centred, teacher-centred, learning-centred, and content-centred. In the ESL literature classroom, code-switching can be used initially as a teacher-centred pedagogy. Translanguaging is mostly learner-centred, which is more impactful.

### **Code-Switching as an Enabler in the ESL Classroom**

Code-switching is a natural phenomenon in classrooms where learners and teachers speak fluidly, moving within two or more languages or dialects within one conversation or discussion (Naseer & Ahmed, 2025; Ramaila, 2025). Therefore, it is a phenomenon that naturally occurs in the diverse and multilingual South African classrooms. However, it is mainly perceived as a foreign element in the English classroom (Zondi & Mncube, 2024), where it yields more advantages. Some perceive it as a resource in the classroom, while others perceive it as laziness and a hindrance to linguistic and communicative competence (Saligumba & Barcelona, 2023). Contrary to these views, it is effective in enhancing language learning and communicative competence, and a trusted approach in developing learners' creative thinking and engagement (Naseer & Ahmed, 2025). Jabbar (2025) and Seabela and Ncanywa (2024) viewed code-switching as a scaffold, a tool to enhance learner understanding, and a strength in building a connection between the mother tongue and the target language. It further assists in lessening learner anxiety, and it assists teachers in simplifying complex concepts and creating a supportive learning environment. Some scholars argue that code-switching is not without disadvantages. It can promote overreliance on languages other than English; it may be challenging to manage the classroom with buzzing sounds of different languages, and some teachers have a negative perception, saying it is a waste of time and has no positive impact on assessments and examinations (Ramaila, 2025).

### **Translanguaging as a Pedagogical Resource in the ESL Classroom**

Cen Williams coined the term translanguaging from the Welsh term *trawsieithu*, referring to the pedagogical practice of using Welsh and English (García & Wei, 2014). It differs slightly from code-switching because it views languages as internally or inherently multilingual and multimodal, as García & Wei (2014) and Li (2022) asserted. Furthermore, translanguaging advocates for integrating various languages and diverse meaning-making tools in a dynamic teaching and learning environment. Therefore, it is not like code-switching, which clearly shows the separation of codes; translanguaging presents languages as a unified linguistic repertoire (Li, 2017, 2022). Cenoz and Gorter (2020) and Ngubane (2025) further emphasised that translanguaging pedagogy enhances learner comprehension and engagement during class discussions. It transcends linguistic boundaries and creates an environment where learners respond through their linguistic repertoire to communicate while bridging the gap between various languages and cultures (Javaid et al., 2025). For Cenoz and Gorter (2020) and García and Wei (2014), as a pedagogy, translanguaging should be used as an intentional and strategic tool to enhance critical thinking, vocabulary development, linguistic tolerance, and awareness of diverse linguistic repertoires. According to Sharmin (2025), the fluid use of languages in the ESL classroom develops vocabulary, expression, confidence, and communicative competence. Translanguaging effectively can also lessen anxiety and improve learner engagement with the content and expressing themselves in the target language. In the ESL classroom, translanguaging serves as a linguistic resource that enables the achievement of teaching objectives and learning outcomes (Nguyen & Tran, 2025).

Despite these linguistic benefits, translanguaging still faces resistance from some teachers and other stakeholders (García & Lin, 2017). Some teachers are sceptical because learners might develop overdependence on translanguaging, which may hamper linguistic competence in English. For many other teachers, however, translanguaging is a valuable resource in the ESL classroom because it enhances comprehension and reduces linguistic and affective barriers such as anxiety and fear of failure (Nguyen & Tran, 2025).

### **Ubuntu Translanguaging Pedagogy as an Epistemic Lens**

This paper used ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy as an epistemic lens. This theoretical stance is based on the philosophy of ubuntu, an African concept from the Nguni tribes. It is commonly expressed with the Nguni saying “*Umntu ngumuntu ngabantu*” loosely translated as “I am because you are” (Letseka, 2012; Makalela, 2016, 2018). Ubuntu emphasises the values of interdependence, solidarity, community life, and compassion. Ubuntu pedagogy is a lens deeply embedded in this understanding of humanity and community life (Choane, 2025). This expression, therefore, challenges the individualistic and Western approach to life and understanding of language. In the context of South African classrooms, the ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy brings in a sense of unity, mutual respect, and tolerance, as well as values of sociocultural and linguistic realities within the classroom. This brings a shift from one language being superior and others being inferior. Instead, language dependence is emphasised. This means that in the multilingual classroom, one language is incomplete without the other languages, and they are fluidly used without being named or labelled (Makalela, 2016; Sefotho, 2022). The following conceptual equation better expresses how this lens is conceptualised in this paper:

Ubuntu + Translanguaging + Pedagogy = Ubuntu Translanguaging Pedagogy

Ubuntu pedagogy fits well with multilingual approaches, promoting inclusivity and communicative and culturally appreciative learning environments (Ngubane & Makua, 2021). This paper explores ubuntu pedagogy as a lens through which ESL multilingual classrooms can be perceived in South Africa. In the classroom context, ubuntu pedagogy can be seen as a pedagogical approach that promotes unity, tolerance, and community rather than individualism and competing with others (Choane, 2025). The emphasis on interconnectedness in ubuntu aligns closely with multilingual pedagogical practices, particularly translanguaging and code-switching, emphasising that language use is a fluid, dynamic, and socially constructed process (Garcia & Lin, 2017). Learners should be encouraged to tap into their linguistic repertoires in multilingual classrooms for easy knowledge construction and reconstruction access. Therefore, ubuntu and ubuntu translanguaging come into play as they advocate for collaborative meaning-making and mutual respect, among others (Maphalala, 2017; Ngubane, 2025). This pedagogy is relevant to the South African ESL classroom context, where monolingualism usually takes precedence, neglecting the multilingual realities and the diversity of the learners.

### **Methodology**

This qualitative case study sampled four teachers from four neighbouring schools in Pinetown District, Durban. The interpretivist paradigm was used as a lens, and the ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy as a theoretical stance. A small sample of ESL teachers was conveniently sampled due to their proximity to the researcher (Cohen et al., 2018). These schools in the same district serve communities with similar sociocultural and economic factors. The chosen schools were in the north of Durban, with many learners speaking isiZulu and some isiXhosa, but were fluent in isiZulu. Two teachers were teaching Grades 10–12, and the other two were only teaching Grades 11 and 12.

Semi-structured interviews and classroom observations were used to generate qualitative data. The data were thematically analysed to deduce themes. Data coding was done manually without the use of any software. The researcher followed the guidelines by Braun and Clarke (2006) to analyse themes. All four teachers were interviewed using the interview schedule with 11 questions; follow-up questions were also asked. All four teachers were also observed in Grades 10 and 11, one observation per teacher. Grade 12 classes were intentionally not observed to avoid disturbance as the principals had requested during the authorisation or permission period.

The university and the provincial department granted permission to do the study. The study was explained to the participants, who were informed of ethical processes before signing the consent forms

(Edwards & Holland, 2013). The researcher knew the participants because they worked in the same district, which may have presented a response bias. To minimise bias, the researcher explained that the process upholds anonymity and confidentiality and that they could withdraw at any time if they felt uncomfortable. Furthermore, observations assisted the researcher in triangulating data and seeing differences and similarities in semi-structured interview data and classroom observations.

### **Discussion of Findings**

The data presented and discussed in this section were drawn from the semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The recordings from semi-structured interviews were transcribed and thematically analysed. The observation sheet was used to record observations and analysis. This section presents the occurrences in the observed lessons and verbatim transcriptions under relevant themes. All four teachers were interviewed and observed. Only Grade 10 and 11 classes were observed; Grade 12 was intentionally excluded as per the agreement with the teachers and the principals. The four teachers were observed teaching short stories and poetry. The study aimed to explore the teachers' experiences of multilingual pedagogies in teaching literature to ESL high school learners. The participants taught Grades 10–12 Pinetown District, KwaZulu-Natal. The key themes that emerged from the interview and observation data include: the use of multilingual pedagogies to enhance learner engagement, the use of multilingual pedagogies and their perceived effect on performance in assessments, multilingual pedagogies help in creating a conducive classroom environment, and policy implications. The study sought to respond to two research questions:

- What are the ESL high school teachers' experiences of multilingual pedagogies in teaching literature to second language learners?
- How do ESL high school teachers use multilingual pedagogies to develop learner engagement in literature classrooms?

#### **The Use of Multilingual Pedagogies to Enhance Learner Engagement**

You can only notice that the learners need guidance or clarification if you know their abilities better. Good teachers who know and understand their learners can detect confusion from physical gestures such as withdrawal of the body and facial expressions, which create quiet and boring classrooms. Literature teachers ideally should be interactive and engaging given that literature is about life in general. The findings reveal that English-only classrooms may limit engagement, but multilingual pedagogies create an environment that allows learners to share their thoughts (Rajendram, 2023). Rai (2025) also emphasised that multilingual pedagogies enhance learner engagement by efficiently communicating about their experiences and worldviews (Ramaila, 2025).

Teacher A: You notice by the learners' facial expressions and responses to specific questions you ask that there may be a lack of understanding. Therefore, you have to adjust to that while in the classroom. What works is asking them questions so that they engage. If I strictly ask them to speak in English, only a few would respond to literature discussions.

Teacher C: Ha ha ha, [laughing] the learners; they do not understand because you can see your learners if they do not understand, and you know your classes again. So it just happens; I know learners will not understand this, so let me explain in isiZulu, and then it becomes better.

Teacher D: It works, but my problem sometimes is that it causes the class to be chaotic. I like order in my classroom. I feel like it works better in some classes but not in all classes.

Notably, teachers have to know the strengths and weaknesses of their learners. This quality assists the teacher in probing them to engage. It also assists in managing the classroom and minimising misbehaviour. It is a reality that most learners are passive and sometimes uncontrollable because the lesson does not make sense to them (Pang & Cai, 2023). Teacher B believed that multilingual pedagogies may enhance learner engagement but could cause chaos in the classroom if it is overused. The concern about chaos was observed in Teacher A's class when she was teaching the short story *Her Three Days* in Grade 10. She asked learners to discuss the theme of patriarchy regarding Noumbe's suffering from Mustapha's way of life. There was a heated debate, and the teacher had to come in and bring them to order. However, the learners seemed to enjoy the discussion, and they were able to deduce themes from the discussion eventually. The discussion took up 15 to 20 minutes of the lesson. Without knowing or realising it, the teacher unknowingly practised ubuntu philosophy, where learners negotiated meaning through sensible discussions alluding to culture, religion, unity, mutual respect, and others (Maphalala, 2017). This was ubuntu translanguaging at play and, as Sharmin (2025) asserted, real-life engagements and language learning are intertwined and important in translanguaging because an inclusive and safe environment is created. Notably, during the discussion of emerging themes, the teacher alluded to how these may be asked in the assessments and how learners would be expected to respond. So, assessment insights were integrated during discussions.

### **The Use of Multilingual Pedagogies and Their Perceived Effect on Performance in Assessments**

There were various views on the contributory factors of multilingual pedagogies on formal and informal assessments. These were perceptions and experiences from the teachers. There was no follow-up or checking of the actual performance of learners. The researcher only wanted to understand their perspectives and the rationale. Teachers must work towards improving learner performance in their daily practices. The participants raised the importance of this performance issue during the interview process. Everyone agreed that any professional teacher should work towards improving learner performance while striving for quality education. Teacher B views that the use of multilingual pedagogies had a negative impact on assessments:

The issue is that they may enjoy using isiZulu or isiXhosa, but when it comes to tasks, they fail dismally because there is no code-switching or translanguaging there. They have to interpret and analyse the question without the teacher's or peers' presence; when they cannot, they fail the examination because of this code-switching.

Teacher B is of the view that the use of multilingual pedagogies creates dependence on peers or teachers. He believes that is why learners fail assessments. He believes that code-switching, in particular, did not assist much with written tasks because the learners needed help understanding and answering the set questions. The views of the other participants, Teachers A, C, and D, differed. It is generally believed that the classroom environment created during teaching and discussions leads to better understanding, which funnels to better expression and analysis when responding to written questions.

Teacher D: The first thing is for them [learners] to understand whatever concepts you teach. Once they know, then they can try to answer. So they are most likely to respond if they understand me using some isiZulu or code-switching to isiZulu. In that way, when they answer correctly, they will pass, which benefits them. If your learners pass, you know you have good or better results as a teacher.

Teacher C: Sometimes, it is what you want to see happen; sometimes, it is not, because you know when the question paper comes, and the learner has to answer it. When you were teaching that part, they understood, and when the question came, they wished

it would be code-switched again, but now, exam time does not allow that. So sometimes it works, sometimes it does not work.

Teacher A: More especially those who are struggling, they benefit when I switch between languages. It helps me when I am teaching because it is hard to leave the class knowing very well that the kids you teach are passive. Even more helpful is allowing them to read the poem or drama and interpret it in their own words during small group discussions. I have seen that this has a positive ripple effect on assessments.

Teacher A further explained that multilingual pedagogies likely improved learner performance in her literature classes. Learners are motivated and engage with the text and other learners. This is noted by Naseer and Ahmed (2025) as an advantage of using multilingual pedagogies in the classroom:

My Grade 10 learners are more motivated to discuss and express ideas, even in their performance in literature tasks and exams. It positively affects the learners' performance; if they understand the content, they can reproduce it when writing formal or informal assessments. . . . For informal assessment, if you are code-switching, it is easier for the learners to participate in the lesson actively. Therefore, if you ask questions, they will quickly respond to you because they understand what you are talking about.

Jabbar (2025) revealed that multilingual pedagogies assist teachers in scaffolding and explaining complex concepts; if the complex concepts are understood during the lesson, the assessment will be easy for the learners. Matiso (2023) and Rai (2025) also emphasised that multilingual pedagogies enhance better comprehension of the target language and the texts. The arguments differed when it came to the question of learner performance enhancement. When considering their experience, some participants were convinced that code-switching and translanguaging improved the learners' performance because they eradicated many barriers to learning. At the same time, some participants did not deny the positive effects of code-switching but were adamant that it did not necessarily assist the learners in improving their results. Algarin-Ruiz (2014) argued that code-switching improves learner performance, especially on literary tasks. One may conclude by stating that the effect of code-switching on learner performance depends on how it is used and how much of it is used in the English as Foreign Language classroom. Shinga and Pillay (2021) revealed that code-switching had no adverse effect on second language proficiency and did not threaten learners' language development. When teachers were asked about how the subject advisors and school management felt about the use of multilingual pedagogies, they shared similar sentiments:

Teacher B: Fortunately for me, I am a department head and have no problem. However, our subject advisor is totally against it, and it is always emphasised during workshops. There is a sense that teachers use isiZulu or isiXhosa because they do not know English well. Also, there is a worry that learners will fail assessments.

Teacher C: My SMT [school management team] is against English teachers using languages other than English. Which is crazy because the content subject teachers code-switch a lot, and learners use this translanguaging every day. At least for us, it is only when we see the need, especially in teaching literature.

The education officials and school management teams still seem to be against multilingual pedagogies in the English classroom. However, the teachers use these pedagogies because they see their effectiveness, especially in literature classrooms. English is a medium of instruction for content subjects, but those teachers understand that using the mother tongue to explain concepts would lessen anxiety and

improve comprehension (Nguyen & Tran, 2025). The English subject classrooms should not be an exception, especially literature classes. However, these pedagogies should be used sparingly and not overused so that learners still master the proficiency in the target language. These teachers understand that the language of power should be used to develop the inherent languages (Wang et al., 2025).

### **Multilingual Pedagogies Help in Creating a Conducive Classroom Environment**

Three of the four participants felt that using a multilingual pedagogy or pedagogies was helpful in creating an environment where learners could easily share ideas and express their feelings with the teacher or amongst themselves. This echoes the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS; DBE, 2011), which emphasises that language is aimed at providing learners with rich and deeply rooted ideas that they can use to shape their worldviews and social realities. This implies that there should be co-creation of knowledge in multilingual classrooms, and this should not be constrained to a specific language.

Teacher A: More especially those who are struggling, they benefit when I switch between languages. It helps me when I am teaching because it is hard to leave the class knowing very well that the kids you teach are passive. Even more helpful is allowing them to read the poem or drama and interpret it in their own words during small group discussions.

Jabbar (2025) believed that code-switching is an asset in the ESL classroom and should not be seen as a sign of deficiency. The multilingual teacher can create a conducive environment for multilingual learners and enhance the language being learnt. The multilingual status of the teacher and the learner allows for a conducive teaching and learning environment. The teacher will know when there are gaps and fill them with the minimal use of isiZulu.

During the teaching of a Grade 11 poem, "Cattle in the rain," Teacher C asked learners to discuss gender roles and whether they are still relevant in the 21st century. Learners seemed to enjoy the discussion and shared views freely. Themes such as women's empowerment, mutual respect, and independence emerged from them. These were discussed using the mother tongue and English, and the teacher noted the themes in English on the chalkboard. It was noted that learners could easily relate and share ideas using terms they better understand. After reading the text, Teacher C asked the learners to write the summary points on the chalkboard. The researcher concluded that Teacher C could easily build rapport with learners, and the learners felt comfortable sharing thoughts and ideas.

In Teacher B's Grade 10 poetry lesson on "Handcuffs" by Mbuyiseni Mtshali, the teacher came with handcuffs into the classroom. He introduced the lesson by revising the previously learned poem, "The Clothes." He then told them that they would be learning and analysing another poem. He grabbed the handcuffs and asked:

What do I have in my hands, and what do you think it symbolises?  
Moreover, what do you think the poem is about?

Learners responded verbally, some without raising their hands:

Ozankosi . . . Iziboshwa . . . Ukuqedwa kwecrime. . . . Sir . . . I think it is about Nelson Mandela and freedom. . . . Maybe it is about the police and what is happening in America. . . . I think inokwenza ne poem esiyenze last week le ye the clothes and now justice will prevail . . .

The teacher then consolidated and narrowed the responses to what he wanted the learners to identify. He allowed learners to code-switch, but he presented the lesson in English with minor switching, especially to emphasise or ask for confirmation

Kuyezwakala [is it clear], hhayi njalo [reprimanding: do not do that].

In Teacher D's observed Grade 10 short story lesson, she taught the story *The Late Bud*. This was a 2-hour lesson on a Saturday. She gave them handouts of the poem and asked them to identify words they

did not understand and translate them. This is another pedagogy (translation) that seemed to help learners understand concepts. Some learners had bilingual dictionaries that were moving around the classroom. Thereafter, learners were divided into groups to discuss the terms, read the story, annotate, and discuss what they thought the story was about. The focus was on characterisation and themes. The learners could identify Maami as a strict character, and Yaaba as a naive and irresponsible child. Learners identified themes of conservative culture, responsibility, childhood, and tough love. This was done using English and the mother tongue fluidly and interchangeably. For example:

UYaaba ingane that is irresponsible, but she is a child, shame. . . . Ma'am, I think Maami is over strict. . . . No, I think umnika tough love and that will make her a strong and independent woman in future. . . . I do not think ukumncisha ukudla is the best punishment, remember this is in Africa where there is poverty vele. . . . What kind of food is Fufu, Ma'am?

This was a translanguaging pedagogy, without the teacher knowing it. The classroom was buzzing with discussion, and you could hear the fluid use of languages and meaning-making (Makalela, 2018; Rajendram, 2023). These findings show that learners who freely use any language easily engage in the classroom. Some learners constantly responded and asked questions using English only, but this was not enforced. It was also noted that even when the teacher kept on with English, they could engage because the introduction created a safe space for them. These classes portrayed the philosophy of ubuntu because they put the learners first. What was more interesting was that the poems studied were South African poems discussing life during apartheid times and sensitising learners to appreciate democracy. This is the pure essence of ubuntu pedagogy.

### **The Policy Implications**

The CAPS (DBE, 2011) acknowledged language as a tool used to think and communicate. Also, it is embedded in aesthetic and cultural nuances that help learners better understand the world by gaining vast knowledge, expressing their identities, and expressing feelings and ideas. The policy acknowledges the richness and diversity of the classrooms, but does not provide clear guidelines on how to manage such classrooms and enhance such skills in the language classroom. The participants in this study were asked to reflect on what they draw from the CAPS in using multilingual pedagogies. It was found that teachers are better versed with the Annual Teaching Plan than with the actual CAPS document. However, they did announce that CAPS does not say much about their use of multilingual pedagogies.

Teacher A: Weeeh, do I even know what CAPS says? Honestly, I use the ATP [annual teaching plan]; CAPS is just in my file. But I do not remember seeing any specific details about code-switching or this trans . . . thing.

Teacher C: I know that our subject advisor always warns us against using isiZulu or isiXhosa for some of us. The argument is that learners will fail exams and quarterly tests. Concerning CAPS, I don't know. I will have to check.

Teacher D: I just use my discretion and embrace the use of isiZulu in my classroom because I know that when it comes to literature, my Grade 11 learners struggle. I have no idea what the policy says. But ke [anyway], if it does not say anything about this, that would be wrong because we live in South Africa, mos.

Teachers A and C were not very sure about the prescriptions of CAPS in terms of using other languages in the classroom; however, they use multiple languages to cater to learners' needs and ensure that learning and teaching are fruitful. What was noted was that teachers mainly consult the ATP, then CAPS. The ATP is more structured for day-to-day use, which may be why they stick to it. Teacher D also shared the same sentiments and emphasised that he uses code-switching in his literature classes because

he understands the learners' needs. However, he was also not sure of what CAPS stipulates. Teacher B held a slightly different view:

I believe CAPS wants me to teach only in English. I know there is something about different languages, but we do not worry much as English teachers. In fact, as much as I teach learners who are not native speakers of English, I try to enforce English only in my classrooms. I rarely allow them to use isiZulu. But I do switch every now and then.

Teacher B held a slightly different view; in her classroom, she is strict and encourages learners only to use English. However, she code-switches when necessary (Shinga & Pillay, 2021; Zondi & Mncube, 2024). She did not share much about whether her learners are more proficient and do well in literature. These findings also clearly show that teachers are primarily familiar with code-switching and its benefits and limitations. They were not familiar with the concept of translanguaging, but it was noted that they practise it without even realising. Teachers consider every linguistic exchange and fluidity as code-switching.

### **Conclusion**

Multilingualism and multilingual pedagogies in the ESL classrooms are a daily occurrence. Teachers use these pedagogies to create a safe space for learners to engage with literature because it is a challenging aspect of the curriculum. Teachers use these pedagogies to enhance comprehension, develop communicative competence, develop vocabulary, and analyse literature. Using multilingual pedagogies in the ESL classroom embraces ubuntu and ubuntu philosophy, which translates to ubuntu translanguaging pedagogy. Ubuntu pedagogy facilitates the embrace of ubuntu values in the classroom. However, there are opposing views on the prevalence and effectiveness of code-switching and translanguaging in the classroom, mainly from the management such as advisors and school management teams.

A limitation of this study is that only a small sample of teachers was interviewed and observed, so the results cannot be generalised. The learners' voices and experiences are also missing. This study recommends that multilingual pedagogies be intellectually infused into the planning of literature lessons. Furthermore, teacher training and language policies should be diversified to embrace the multilingual realities within the ESL classrooms. There is also a need for further research on how the use of multilingual pedagogies impacts other language skills such as reading and writing. Furthermore, the MTBBE should be expanded to language classrooms, and the aims of LiEP should be reintroduced, with the DBE closely monitoring this process. For future research, a larger study within and outside the district should be conducted and should include learners and teachers. Furthermore, it would be necessary to learn how the use of multilingual pedagogies impacts on reading and writing skills.

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