Educational Research for Social Change (ERSC) Volume 14 No. 2 September 2025
pp.302-315 ersc@mandela.ac.za
ISSN: 2221-4070
DOI: https://10.17159/2221-4070/2025/v14n2/a19

Student's Ontological Journey Towards Academic Success: Indigenous Languages as Empowering Tools for Lifelong Learning

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Abstract

In the South African higher education context, the marginalisation of Indigenous languages perpetuates epistemic inequities and undermines students' academic success. This conceptual paper explores the ontological journey of students, framing Indigenous languages as empowering tools for lifelong learning and academic achievement. Drawing on decolonial theories and multilingual pedagogies, the paper argues that Indigenous languages are not merely mediums of communication but vital resources for epistemic access, identity formation, and knowledge production. It critiques the dominance of colonial languages in curricula and institutional structures, highlighting how neoliberal ideologies further entrench linguistic hierarchies that disadvantage students from marginalised backgrounds. The paper proposes a decolonial framework that centres Indigenous languages as catalysts for transformative education, fostering inclusivity, equity, and social justice. By engaging with various studies, the study reimagines higher education as a space where multilingualism and translanguaging practices disrupt existing power dynamics and empower students to reclaim their linguistic and cultural heritage. Ultimately, this paper advocates for the integration of Indigenous languages into pedagogical practices and institutional policies, arguing that such an approach is essential for fostering lifelong learning, academic success, and a more equitable educational landscape in South Africa.

Keywords: academic success, empowering, equity, Indigenous languages, lifelong learning, transformation

Introduction

Notwithstanding the democratic South Africa that has a constitution, which affirms that all its citizens are equal in the eyes of law, the Indigenous languages continue to be ostracised in the South African higher education learning spaces (Albertyn, 2019). Their ostracisation is perpetuated by the persisting hegemony of English as a medium of instruction. Further, the imposition of English as medium of instruction continues to inculcate the Western worldview in the education (Razmjoo Moghadam & Barani, 2025) of the native South African students. This kind of academic administration skews equitable access to knowledge and knowledge creation among the native students. In so doing, this system of education demotivates the effective participation of students in their learning, heralding the deterioration of success rate and the upswing of the attrition rate. Furthermore, this system comprises students' ontological academic rigor given that a student's being is shaped by factors like their identity, which is intrinsically linked to their Indigenous languages. Therefore, students' Indigenous languages inform us as to who the students in the learning environment are, inclusive of the nature of their worldviews. The interface between the students' epistemological and ontological journeys results in their holistic development (Paul & Quiggin, 2020). This paper views students' academic journey as a transformative process, aligning with Miller's (2011, p. 8) perspective on transformation:

> Transformation means death and rebirth. A holistic approach to higher education is one that supports our students in their transformational journey from youth to adulthood, from dependency to independence, from a self-contained identity to one that assimilates societal roles and responsibilities.

Against the above backdrop, this conceptual paper's objective is to explore the students' ontological journeys towards academic attainment, framing the Indigenous languages as resources that help empower students for lifelong learning, academic rigour, and academic success. The paper draws from decolonial theories, Indigenous knowledge systems, and inclusive pedagogies (da Silva et al., 2024) to support the authors' argument that Indigenous languages are not merely mediums of communication but vital resources for epistemic access, identity formation, students' onto-epistemological development, and knowledge production (Kayumova & Dou, 2022). Furthermore, the paper critiques the supremacy of colonial languages, such as English, in curricular design and interpretation, contending the devastating effects of monolingual practices (Namakula et al., 2025) and colonial education system on native students' learning and their ways of being during their holistic development and transformational journey. Transformative educational practices thus, push the boundaries that perpetuate the marginalisation of the native students in their own milieus. As one of the resources for disrupting the monolingual practices in higher education (Namakula et al., 2025), the Indigenous languages promote equity and social justice for the native students. The authors' arguments, premised on scholarly works, demonstrate that linguistic multiplicity helps empower students to reclaim their linguistic and cultural heritages, with the aim of curbing linguistic loss (Galla, 2016). Ultimately, the paper concludes that the integration of Indigenous languages into pedagogical practices and institutional policies potentially valorises the Indigenous students' worldviews. Hence, the students can be empowered for equitable academic success and lifelong learning. To advance this argument, the paper's structure begins by delineating the link of coloniality and language hegemony in the South African higher education context and outlining its decolonial theoretical underpinnings. It then examines language as an indispensable part of identity and the ontological journey, arguing for the recreation of knowledge and Indigenous wisdom through Indigenous languages. Subsequently, it positions these languages as catalysts for transformative education, before concluding with a discussion on the study's implications for pedagogical practice and institutional policy.

Delineation of Coloniality and Language in the South African Higher Education Context

The dominance of colonial languages in the South African education system continues to perpetuate both epistemic injustice and violations of Indigenous sovereignty (Maddox & Morton Ninomiya, 2025), disregarding students' academic success and their ontological journeys and identities. This stems from South Africa's history of the apartheid regime where education was purposefully segregated according to racial lines. The apartheid system of social engineering ensured that the majority of non-Whites were denied access to White academic institutions and quality education (Nyagope, 2023). Moreover, the linguistic architecture and epistemic hierarchy was institutionalised under apartheid through the Bantu Education Act (Government of the Union of South Africa, 1953), which was a set of infamous education policies that consequently legalised racial segregation and a strict and specific education curriculum in apartheid South Africa (Eybers, 2019; Gallo, 2020). Other notable portions of this Act included the stripping of all control of education from the provinces and provincial councils, placing it all in the central government (Molobi, 2024).

Most importantly, the Minister of the newly created Bantu Education Sector was given the power to prescribe what courses could be taken in Bantu schools, what language these courses were taught in, and how much funding Bantu schools received (McKenzie, 2021). Notably, this section of the Bantu Education Act gave the government complete control over the education curriculum of all Black South African students in the Union of South Africa, which resulted in the creation of a special curriculum for Black South African students (Nkabinde, 2016). The education curriculum under Bantu Education was created to teach and train Black South African students for job opportunities related to unskilled labour (Masinire, 2020).

One of the notable events that sparked language as a site of resistance in South Africa was the 1976 Soweto Uprising. While the immediate catalyst for the protest was the apartheid government's mandate to impose Afrikaans as a medium of instruction, the rebellion was a definitive rejection of the entire Bantu Education system and its foundational goal of linguistic and intellectual oppression. Rooted in this broader context, the policy was met with fierce opposition as students rejected Afrikaans as the paramount symbol of colonial domination, and demanded the right to be taught in their mother tongues (Reagan, 2019). Even though the protests were brutally suppressed, they nevertheless exposed the intersection of language, power, and epistemic violence—galvanising global condemnation of apartheid and reaffirming education as a battleground for liberation (Kamanga, 2019). Therefore, the enforcement of Afrikaans as a tool of linguistic oppression not only stripped Black students of their right to education in their mother tongues, but also weaponised language as a means of intellectual deprivation, reinforcing apartheid's broader agenda of epistemicide (Hall & Tandon, 2017), which is an act of killing and devaluing the knowledges of the marginalised population groups in societies.

The apartheid regime's deliberate suppression of Indigenous languages was not merely an educational policy but a tool of subjugation that has endured in post-apartheid South Africa through the hegemony of English—a language forcibly entrenched as the superior medium of instruction despite its alienating effects (Sekiwu, 2025) on Black students. The language of instruction in African schools remains a contentious issue despite an abundance of policies and frameworks that advocate for an egalitarian society with linguistic equity. In support of this view, Madiba (2012) explicitly noted that Africa stands out as one continent where students are mainly educated through foreign languages. Historically, this has always had an adverse impact on students' epistemological access and academic success. Hence, higher education has experienced high attrition rates amongst students. Prah (2018) argued that African education systems fail to be inclusive and supportive because they alienate students through Eurocentric

languages that are bestowed upon them as the only judicious mediums of instruction. He further emphasised that mother-tongue education is crucial for cognitive development and academic success. Academic success thus, is according to this paper's authors, a corollary of an education system that premises its practices on the prerequisites of academic rigour such as inclusive learning content that is open to multiple perspectives, criticality and reflectivity, varied identities, conducive and engaging learning environments, ontological development, and lifelong learning. Undoubtedly, the authors argue that the afore-stated prerequisites for academic rigour can be maintained through recognising the Indigenous languages given that they too, are repositories for learning that students bring with them to the learning environments. The asserted superiority of English as a foreign language causes harm to the education of the native students and their worldviews. On that note, Ndebele and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2019) made the point that the hegemony of English in South African universities continues to alienate African-language-speaking students, particularly those from rural and township schools where English proficiency is often weaker. In addition to the argument made by Ndebele and Ndimande-Hlongwa (2019), Makalela (2019) critiqued the monolingual bias in African education, showing how rigid English-only policies create barriers to comprehension and critical thinking. As way of combating this linguistic barrier, Makalela (2016, p. 189) advocated for ubuntu translanguaging, which he described as a

> "translingual framework that is based on the African Ubuntu value system of *motho ke motho ka batho* [I am because you are; you are because we are."

This reflects the idea that human completeness relies on interconnectedness. Similarly, languages derive their fullness through engagement with other linguistic systems that exist in the society. Thus, the use of Indigenous languages in higher education transcends pedagogy; it propels an ontological journey towards academic success, enabling students to think, engage, and respond with intellectual, cultural, and existential wholeness. When students learn in their mother tongues, they are not merely acquiring knowledge but reclaiming their epistemic sovereignty, a right denied by the history of linguistic oppression that fragmented the connection between language and selfhood, as well as scholarly achievement.

Theoretical Underpinning

The ontological inquiry and transformational learning lenses frame this study. Carey (2023) defined ontology as an activity that looks closely into the being of a human being in a particular context. For this study, the context that is referred to is a higher education learning context. The being of a human being is characterised by inquiry. According to Carey (2023), to inquire is to seek out or investigate the being of a human being in an educational context.

Ontological inquiry is undoubtedly a process that is part of lifelong learning. This is because a typical human life is imbued with an array of activities that propel them to discover and rediscover the realities pertaining to their being as a distinctive method that unveils the nature of a human being. Ontological inquiry investigates human beings' ways of being, premised on their cosmological relationship with their world, their cultural experiences, and their traditions. In other words, human beings' ways of being are shaped by what they inherit from their natural and social worlds. Most importantly, ontological inquiry fosters the holistic development of a human being. In the context of this study, the holistic development of a student encapsulates a variety of factors such as identity, critical thinking, creativity, civic engagement, and lifelong learning capacity. These factors have a bearing on epistemological access, knowledge interpretation, and creation. In this sense, before the student accomplishes the expected learning outcomes, they must fully understand who they are, what statuses and roles inform their practices, how they learn, what their values are, what opportunities they have, and what choices are available for them. Possibly, the ontological inquiry heralds informed decisions about whether to transform the prevailing realities or retain them. Therefore, ontological enquiry creates a platform for

transformational learning due to the human yearning for discovering and rediscovering in the realm of lifelong learning. Transformational learning thus paves ways for the stakeholders to realise that students bring with them multiple ways of being and knowing into the learning environment. Kayumova and Dou (2022) referred to multiple ways of being as *heterogeneity*, denoting, in the context of this study, that a learning setting encompasses perceived differences among individual students or group of students. Thus, education, in addition to its role of perfecting individuals in the process of their engagement with their history and culture, liberates individuals from the oppressive structures of the society that deny their existence as autonomous beings (Biesta, 2017).

Based on the above delineated theoretical foundations, the authors make the argument that students' ontological journeys that are attributed to identity formation, inquiry, discovery, and rediscovery (Carey, 2023) are critically navigated through their Indigenous languages. Undeniably, compelling students into monolingual education systems stunts their ontological and epistemological development, including their academic rigour and success; their Indigenous languages are part of students' ways of being. Thus, students' holistic learning experiences are inseparable from their identities, of which Indigenous languages are part. Therefore, enabling students to utilise their Indigenous languages decolonises the alienating monolingual learning spaces, and serves as an eye-opener, leading to their realisation that Indigenous languages are empowering tools for academic success and lifelong learning (Chikuvadze et al., 2025). Furthermore, the authors argue that the Indigenous languages liberate students from oppressive societal structures, such as the colonial hegemonic education systems, which impose their worldviews through the medium of their languages. Consequently, liberation opens up opportunities for transforming prevailing and historical realities in relation to which, students are as human beings in a particular learning context. Paul and Quiggin (2020) maintained that transformative experience changes a person epistemically and personally. The recognition of Indigenous languages in higher education learning spaces can transform the way teachers and students affirm the colonially imposed languages of instruction as the only languages of epistemological access and knowledge creation (Seehawer, 2018). Hence, the Indigenous languages can be valued as significant vehicles for the attainment of academic access and success and holistic human development in the journey of the quest for the being of a human being.

Language as Indispensable Part of Identity and Ontological Journey

To understand the nature of students and their educational needs, it is a wise undertaking to delineate them in accordance with their characteristics and aspirations. A student is therefore a human being who has been brought up in a specific milieu (Diat Prasojo et al., 2025; Peng & Abd Rahman, 2024). In this sense, the student's milieu shapes the student's identity. Identity comprises elements such as self-concepts, values, beliefs, and purposes. Thus, identity is a constellation of a human being's personal and social identities. The personal identity is, according to Neville et al. (2021) the belief a person has about the kind of behaviour they should engage in, or should not engage in. Such beliefs can emanate from the individual's cultural orientations regarding what is valued or not (Bakum et al., 2021). On the other hand, Haslam et al. (2022) defined social identity as a group-based identity through which an individual connects with other members of the community. Undoubtedly, cultural orientation and personal identity find expression in an individual's Indigenous language. In other words, as Chiblow and Meighan (2020) pointed out, language introduces a human being's identity to other people. Similarly, the connection of the individual with their social counterparts becomes a reality through a language.

The being of a student is an ontological journey of becoming the best person they can be. In support of such a journey, the stakeholders in higher education need to ascertain that students are empowered to be critical and reflective lifelong learners. The authors argue that lifelong learning is significantly moulded by the way in which individuals experience the world and its realities. Arguably, the worldview that students embrace hinges on their cultural identities and concomitant practices (Popescu

& Pudelko, 2024). Thus, the enablement of students to utilise their Indigenous languages in sharing and developing their personal and social identities empowers them in their journey of inquiry. This is because the student's wholeness as being incorporates their Indigenous languages, which help them make sense of the real world (Malcolm et al., 2016). Endorsing this assertion, were Barman et al. (2025) who made the point that modern classrooms feature a conglomerate of different Indigenous languages. Such classrooms should be responsive to the needs of a culturally diverse student body. In a culturally and linguistically diverse learning environment, equity and social justice are advocated for the empowerment of students. In support of this view, Ghaemi and Boroushaki (2025) maintained that learning environments that are culturally responsive to the diverse needs of students counter the marginalisation of the Indigenous students. In so doing, such an education system decolonises the monocultural hegemonies that impose their worldviews on the native students and deprive them of their full identities and ontological development. Empowering students by dignifying their Indigenous languages therefore counteracts language loss (Galla, 2016) and the fragmentation of their identities.

Recreation of Knowledge and Indigenous Wisdom Through the Medium of Indigenous Languages

By the utilisation of their Indigenous languages, students can delve into their worldviews. In multilingual and multicultural higher learning settings, students develop multiple identities due to their reciprocal relationship with one another. Potentially, in a multilingual setting, the students learn other languages. Razak et al. (2020) pointed out that while a student is learning other students' languages, they are simultaneously learning those students' cultures. In multilingual and multicultural learning environments, students' diverse backgrounds and wisdom allow for the creation of new knowledge through open dialogue. The authors assert that open dialogue serves as a trajectory for the development of new identities that emanate from the students' revelations about their worlds—revelations that are based on a multitude of human experiences from diverse perspectives. Such experiences are entwined with the Indigenous languages in which they manifest; the dialogical learning settings pave the way of transformational learning. Transformational learning forms the bedrock for critiquing the realities of the world people inhabit. Arguably, the students will become aware of the salience of utilisation of Indigenous languages as repositories for inquiring about the nature and relational interplay that exist between human beings and their ecological world. As a laboratory of awareness and action, learning environments that valorise Indigenous languages can help students realise that access to epistemology and knowledge creation influences effective learning. This will challenge the misguided practice of polarising Indigenous languages and cultural wisdoms or epistemologies.

Cultural wisdom is a vehicle for moulding the novice within a particular cultural milieu. Elderly people or parents are regarded as the custodians of culture and bearers of wisdom (Jacob, 2015; Khawaja, 2021). In the view of the authors, it is the responsibility of the higher education sector to ensure that the wisdom imparted by custodians of culture to young people permeates the curricula. In agreement with what authors have just articulated, Bakum et al. (2021) made the point that values are pivotal elements of education and related curricular activities. Undoubtedly, the education system that marginalises the cultural values that the native students bring to the classroom violates the principles of education equity and inclusivity. Indigenous languages should be recognised as veritable tools for expressing and sustainably preserving culture. Higher education therefore should not be a major contributor to linguicide, which Zwisler (2021) defined as the killing of languages through mandatory law that empowers the government to forcibly punish the use of marginalised languages in public or private spaces. Thus, this paper argues that the suppression of a language is akin to the suppression of a people given that language is often seen as the soul or voice of a community.

The function of a language as a voice of the people was affirmed by Mohigul (2025) who attested that a linguistically diverse world could create an inclusive society in which cultures coexist. Therefore, depriving the students of utilising their Indigenous languages during curricular interpretation and knowledge production or creation is akin to killing students and their academic aspirations. It can be argued that the student's wholeness is also pillared by their Indigenous language. This is because the student's Indigenous language is the language through which they are orientated to their culture and its ecology. Moreover, the student understands their language better—to the extent that it can add immense value to their academic rigour. In this way, the Indigenous languages have a potential to promote students' academic success. Hence, depriving the students of their right to education in the medium of their languages adversely impacts on their ontological journey of discovering and symbiotically relating to the cosmological world. Further, the linguistic strictures cripple genuine lifelong learning and transformational learning. Therefore, the authors assert that the exclusion of Indigenous languages as repositories for knowledge access and knowledge creation is same as the exclusion of Indigenous education. It is unjust for colonial education policies to define educational excellence solely by academic outcomes while ignoring the importance of engaging with cultural variations in interpreting educational experiences (Hughes et al., 2025).

Indigenous Languages as Catalysts for Transformation

In the South African higher education landscape, Indigenous languages often serve as transformative tools that shape students' ontological journeys, which may include their sense of self, knowledge acquisition, and academic belonging (Makhanya & Zibane, 2020). Apart from the fact that these languages are used for communication purposes, they are also epistemic bridges, enabling marginalised students to access, internalise, and produce knowledge without being obstructed by colonial languages (Joubert & Sibanda, 2022). Moreover, Nyoni (2023) emphasised that when learners engage academically in their mother tongues, they not only absorb information but reclaim their cognitive and cultural wholeness, which is a foundation of lifelong learning. Therefore, this ontological shift, from linguistic alienation to epistemic empowerment, is crucial for academic success—especially in a system that is entrenched in colonial linguistic hierarchies.

Mother-tongue instruction is a key dimension of this transformation to enhance critical thinking. Consistent with this, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) argued that cognitive justice is consistent with exercising the rights to think, theorise, and interpret the world, while also developing one's own methodologies from an empowered position grounded in one's identity, free from Eurocentric constraints. Consequently, the dynamics of decolonisation of the curriculum, particularly through the utilisation of the mother tongue, warrants serious consideration and promotion by the post-colonial universities and surrounding societies (Oliver et al., 2019). Mawere et al. (2022, p. 19) criticised the practice of "starting with existing schools of thought developed elsewhere or different conditions and requirements" and "imposing them on local conditions." Curriculum transformation, particularly through the centring of Indigenous languages, is not only necessary but urgent in order to redress the imposition of externally derived frameworks on local educational contexts. This would ensure that justice and inclusivity were realised.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020) recognised multilingualism; however, systemic barriers persist, particularly in policy enforcement and implementation (Cakata & Segalo, 2017). Sokani (2024) argued that universities mainly cite issues of logistical constraints, but the underlying factor is neoliberal prioritisation of English as the language of global competitiveness. Therefore, this policy stagnation limits the role of Indigenous languages to transform education, creating a gap between official promises and ongoing linguistic exclusion. Without binding requirements, efforts to empower students through language remain incomplete. Moreover, material challenges contribute to the

exacerbation of this marginalisation through minimal academic resources such as textbooks and standardised terminology. Thus, this ultimately forces the students to rely on English, reinforcing epistemic dependency (Jackson, 2023) at the expense of the students' own ontological epistemologies. The lack of institutional investment and practical implementation perpetuates a cycle where Indigenous languages are symbolically celebrated but practically excluded from high-status academic domains (Ntentema, 2021). Accordingly, for South African universities to achieve meaningful transformation, they should centre Indigenous languages as legitimate mediums of knowledge production and instruction.

Most importantly, centring Indigenous languages in higher education is not just a pedagogical adjustment but the reimagining of students' ontological and epistemic paths. By addressing policy gaps, investing in multilingual resources, and embracing various transformational pedagogies such as translanguaging, South African universities can transform into spaces where linguistic diversity fuels academic success. This shift could affirm students' identities, deepen learning, and dismantle the colonial hierarchies that have long dictated educational operations, determining who can succeed and how. The result of such a shift could be a more equitable academic landscape, where the journey toward lifelong learning begins with the right to think, question, and thrive in one's own language.

Implications of the Study

For South African higher education, this study implies that the embracement of Indigenous languages and ubuntu-based frameworks have a potential for creating hybrid learning spaces that view students' linguistic repertoires as assets—not as deficits. Importantly, the recognition and integration of Indigenous languages in curricular activities will lead to their empowerment as tools for epistemological access and ontological development. This will end the dichotomisation of local knowledge and colonial knowledge (Mignolo, 2011). In this way, the study responds to epistemic justice by centring Indigenous languages as vehicles of theorisation, not just translation.

This study further proposes that the integration of Indigenous languages in teaching and learning is not a concession but a restitution—a return of the epistemic and ontological sovereignty that was stolen by colonialism (Maddox & Morton Ninomiya, 2025). It is through restitution that higher education can truly become a site of transformative justice where students no longer navigate learning as outsiders but as whole beings characterised by their experiential ways of being. In such an onto-epistemic journey, the students can be empowered by the languages that support their histories, identities, and intellectual futures. Moreover, this has a potential of enhancing students' cognitive abilities. The journey towards academic empowerment and academic success, then, must begin with the right to learn, think, and confidently thrive in one's own vernacular (Jacob et al., 2019). Therefore, it is the duty of higher education practitioners to ensure that the policies and laws that promote the use of Indigenous languages in education are practically implemented. Ultimately, the authors recommend that it is high time for education practitioners to consider the significance of the Indigenous languages in preserving cultural knowledge through enabling the students to utilise them to prosper educationally.

Conclusion

This paper has critically examined the role of Indigenous languages in shaping the ontological and epistemic journeys of students in South African higher education. By interrogating the colonial roots of linguistic marginalisation and its enduring legacy in neoliberal educational policies, the authors have demonstrated how the hegemony of English perpetuates epistemic injustice, cognitive dispossession, and academic alienation. Centring Indigenous languages in learning environments emerges not merely as a pedagogical alternative but as a decolonial imperative—a decolonial imperative that affirms students' identities, enables epistemic access, and fosters transformative learning. The apartheid regime's deliberate suppression of Indigenous languages through the Bantu Education Act (Government of the

Union of South Africa, 1953) and the violent enforcement of Afrikaans (as epitomised by the 1976 Soweto Uprising) established an enduring system of linguistic oppression. Post apartheid, the uncritical adoption of English as dominant medium of instruction has reproduced these inequities. This seems to be the act of deliberately ignoring the reality of the South African past, which was infested with a variety of social injustices that compromised the equitable onto-epistemic development of the South African higher education students. The paper therefore has demonstrated alignment with the views of scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) and Makalela (2019) who argued that true transformation requires dismantling the coloniality of language where Eurocentric monolingualism is equated with intellectual legitimacy. The authors have argued that the recognition of Eurocentric monolingualism and concomitant worldview as the core for intellectual legitimacy is a fallacy that intends to psychologically manipulate Africans for Eurocentric gains and supremacy.

The Indigenous languages are not neutral channels of communication but repositories of worldviews, cultural memory, and cognitive frameworks. When students engage with academic content in their mother tongues, they experience what Nyoni (2023) termed "cognitive wholeness," which is a synergy between identity, critical thought, and knowledge production. This aligns with the ubuntu translanguaging framework (Makalela, 2016), which posits that multilingualism is not additive but a fundamental of human interconnectedness. By marginalising these languages, institutions deny students their right to think independently, which stifles both academic success and lifelong learning. While the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) and the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020) committed to multilingualism, the authors have argued that the implementation thereof remains superficial and elusive. Neoliberal pressures prioritise English as the language of global capital while logistical challenges, such as the lack of standardised terminology or textbooks, further entrench exclusion. Yet, as this paper highlights, transformative models involving translanguaging pedagogies, multilingual glossaries, and community-engaged curriculum design (Makhanya & Zibane, 2020) demonstrate how Indigenous languages can coexist with global demands without being subordinated to them. The coexistence of languages, therefore, has the potential of sustaining students' ontological beings in their journey towards attaining academic success. Students should be afforded the opportunity to integrate their inherited knowledge and traditions with global perspectives thus facilitating their holistic, transformative journeys.

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