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Transformation and Inclusivity in Translanguaging Through Transliteration: Perspectives of isiZulu Home-Language Students on Discipline-Specific Terminology in isiZulu[6]

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Abstract

African students in South Africa, Africa, and the diaspora exhibit a multiplicity of linguistic repertoires. This multiplicity is captured, at macro level, through applying a translanguaging approach to the use of African languages as languages of learning and teaching. To capture this multiplicity at a micro level, University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) employs translanguaging by transliterating English academic concepts into discipline-specific terms in isiZulu. Transliteration creates a phrase that a bilingual isiZulu home-language (L1), English second-language (L2) speaker can understand in both languages. Moreover, transliteration exhibits a transformational and inclusive manner in responding to the academic needs of multilingual African students. Thus, the objective of this paper is to explore isiZulu L1 students' perspectives on the transformation and inclusive aspects of the transliterated terms. The study is situated within the interpretive paradigm and employs a qualitative approach. Using focus group interview data (n = 28), the perspectives of isiZulu L1 students on transliterated terms in isiZulu found in the UKZN discipline-specific terminology lists were analysed thematically. The findings from the data endorse the use of transliteration in developing terminologies in isiZulu as a transformative and inclusive approach to the use of African languages in South African higher education. For bilingual isiZulu/English students, transliteration affords invaluable cognitive benefits and confidence in their academic endeavours.

Keywords: transformation, linguistic repertoire, terminology development, translanguaging, transliteration

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Introduction and Background

Students of African descent in South African bring varied and multiple linguistic repertoires into their classrooms (Chaka, 2024), emanating from numerous factors. Among other factors, the multilingual landscape of the country and the language-offering system at Basic Education level in South Africa contribute to the multiple linguistic repertoires of students of African descent. This multilingual landscape is also reflected in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (RSA, 1996), in which 11 languages were accorded official status, namely, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, and isiZulu. The recognition of South African Sign Language as the 12th official language was formalised on July 19, 2023 when President Cyril Ramaphosa signed the South African Sign Language Bill into law (RSA, 2023). Even though the Constitution advocates equitable use of all official languages, English has, by default, a hegemonic status in the higher education sector in South Africa (Ndlangamandla & Chaka, 2022). At Basic Education level, in accordance with the Language in Education Policy (RSA, 1997), any of the official languages may be offered either at home language (L1) level, at First Additional Language (FAL) level, or at Second Additional Language (SAL) level (Sibeko & van Zaanen, 2021). Despite the constitutional and policy directives, English is the preferred language of learning and teaching (LoLT) and has a hegemonic status over the rest of the South African official languages (de Wet, 2002).

The hegemony of English downplays the multiplicity of linguistic repertoires that African students whose second language (L2) is English possess. The repercussions of this hegemony permeate the academic performance of these African students. In South African universities, the hegemony of English negatively impacts throughput rates, contributes to high dropout rates, and hinders epistemological access for English L2 students (Ndebele, 2024). Amongst numerous teaching and learning strategies to support English L2 students, translanguaging is purported to mitigate the gaps in English functional proficiency that African students may have developed. The gaps in English functional proficiency result from differing educational experiences at Basic Education level as well as different offerings of English as a subject at this level. African students are not a homogenous group, particularly isiZulu L1/English L2 bilinguals (Sibisi, 2022). Within the group of isiZulu L1/English L2 bilinguals, four subgroups can be identified: proficient bilinguals who are competent in both isiZulu and in English, isiZulu-inclined bilinguals who are more competent in isiZulu than in English; English-inclined bilinguals who are more competent in English than in isiZulu, and mediocre bilinguals who are competent neither in isiZulu nor in English. As Wildsmith-Cromarty and Turner (2018) argued, the functional proficiency of African students in the English language results from the experiences that they are exposed to at school level. Those who have been sent to multicultural schools that use English de facto as a medium of instruction have diminished exposure to the African language in the academic domain and so for them, the use of an African language as LoLT at tertiary level remains a challenge (Madlala & Mkhize, 2019). These bilingual students become more inclined towards English and less inclined towards their African home language. In contrast, Maseko and Mkhize (2021) argued that for those students who have been sent to township schools, English, compared to isiZulu, is not easily accessible. These bilingual students become more inclined towards their home language and less inclined towards English. This gap in functional proficiency in English is transposed to their academic endeavours. Therefore, translanguaging through transliteration helps bridge the challenges posed by the differing language exposures of African students in the South African higher education domain.

At University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN, 2014), translanguaging is supported by the university's bilingual language policy, which advocates the intellectualisation of isiZulu and promotes the use of isiZulu as a LoLT alongside English. To operationalise the policy, UKZN has, to date, developed discipline-specific

terminology lists in isiZulu for a total of 23 disciplines (Khumalo, 2017; Sibisi, 2022). A number of studies have investigated the development of terminologies in isiZulu at UKZN (see for example, Bethke, 2021; Khumalo & Nkomo, 2022; Zungu, 2021), including students' attitudes towards the use of isiZulu and terminologies in isiZulu (see for example, Chetty, 2013; Madlala & Mkhize, 2019; Mthombeni & Ogunnubi, 2020; Sibisi, 2022). In the studies on attitudes towards terminologies in isiZulu at UKZN, isiZulu L1 students indicated ambivalence, particularly towards the accessibility of the "pure" terms in isiZulu (Chetty, 2013; Madlala & Mkhize, 2019) and indicated a preference for transliterated terms in isiZulu (Sibisi, 2022, p. 227). As an augmentation of the latter study, the objectives of the current paper are as follows:

- To investigate isiZulu L1 students' perceptions on the transformative nature of transliterated terms in isiZulu.
- To determine the extent to which isiZulu L1 students perceive inclusivity in isiZulu transliterated terms in the discipline-specific terminology lists.

Thus, this investigation seeks to address the following questions:

- In what ways do isiZulu L1 students perceive the element of transformation in the transliterated terms in isiZulu?
- To what extent do isiZulu transliterated terms in the discipline-specific terminology lists encompass inclusivity as perceived by isiZulu L1 students?

The paper draws from translanguaging theoretical perspectives to argue that translanguaging purposely validates and integrates all learners' languages, and further views linguistic repertoires as singular, integrated entities that include a variety of modalities. It adopts García's (2009, p. 45) conceptualisation of translanguaging as "multiple discursive practices in which bilinguals engage in order to make sense of their bilingual worlds." To answer the main questions posed, first, a detailed literature review focusing on scholarly perspectives about the transformative potential of translanguaging and the views of both teachers and students about translanguaging is provided. This is followed by a description of the translanguaging theoretical tenets that inform this study. Thereafter, the findings of the study are presented followed by the conclusion.

Literature Review

The transformative potential of translanguaging has generated interest in the education sector and has seen growing scholarship across the globe. It is, however, important to put transformation in the South African context in order to appreciate the impact of translanguaging pedagogy on learners. South Africa's transformation agenda is captured in a sequence of policies developed to address this need, resulting in the *Education White Paper 3: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education*, which expresses this need as follows:

> [Higher education] must lay the foundations for the development of a learning society which stimulate, direct and mobilize the creative and intellectual energies of all people towards meeting the challenge of reconstruction and development. (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 1997, p. 7)

The abovementioned need emanates from a background of colonial and apartheid legacies of inequality and injustices, hence the need to ensure "increased and broadened participation, responsiveness to societal interests and needs, and cooperation and partnerships in governance" (DBE, 1997, p. 10). These requirements include the need to "increase access for Black, women, disabled, and mature students" and to develop "new curricula and flexible models of learning and teaching, including modes of delivery" (DBE, 1997, p. 10). In the context of language, it has become an undeniable fact that language is critical to higher education transformation because it impacts on access and success and further affirms diversity, while the

use of Indigenous African languages as media of instruction in the higher education sector was affirmed in the language policy for higher education (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2020). In this context, multilingual pedagogies such as translanguaging have become a necessity rather than an option, based on empirical evidence across the globe.

The transformative potential of translanguaging has been acknowledged by various scholars. Anwaruddin (2018) asserted that translanguaging has the likelihood to transform power relations between learners and educators, and to build students' capacity to critically engage with different worldviews. Canagarajah (2018, p. 32) also alluded to the transformative potential of translanguaging in his observations regarding the pedagogy's ability to challenge "understandings of language as regulated or determined by existing contexts of power relations." Additionally, Wei (2024) argued that translanguaging creates opportunities to disrupt institutionalised monolingualism among linguistically diverse learners not only by introducing flexible translingual practices and multifaceted transemiotic flows but also by allowing learners to bring their perspectives, individual trajectories, and voices into learning and classroom activities. This promotes social responsiveness to the historical backgrounds and out-of-class lives of students, thereby providing a rich space for the curriculum, in which all identities and histories are presented and celebrated (Wei, 2024). Further, García and Wei (2014, pp. 92–93) viewed translanguaging as "capable of calling forth bilingual subjectivities and sustaining bilingual performances that go beyond one or the other binary logic of two autonomous languages."

Numerous research studies have demonstrated the transformative potential of translanguaging pedagogy across various educational settings (e. g. Esquinca et al., 2014; Hamman et al., 2017 Stewart & Hansen-Thomas, 2016). Further, De Los Ríos and Seltzer (2017) explored the translanguaging phenomenon by analysing the writing of two students who participated in this practice as a way of challenging coloniality in English classrooms. The findings of their study revealed that the translanguaging pedagogies employed by teachers helped to disrupt the innately monolingual and colonial practices of English classrooms through curricula that valued metalinguistic reflections and awareness about own cultural and linguistic identities and incorporated students' diverse language practices to disrupt colonialist ideologies. On a similar note, Infante and Licona (2018) investigated translanguaging in an English-Spanish dual-language middle school science classroom in the context of engagements in scientific argumentation related to issues of biodiversity. Their results showed translanguaging as a linguistically responsive approach that provided emergent bilinguals with an opportunity to gain access to scientific content and practices of the curriculum intervention. In that regard, the relevance of scientific education can be achieved both conceptually and linguistically in relation to learners' discursive language practices beyond the school environment. Additionally, García-Mateus and Palmer (2017) explored the construction of identities of emergent bilingual children in which the teacher employed translanguaging in the classroom. Their findings revealed that translanguaging offered empowering and equitable opportunities for language learning among minoritised bilingual children. Further, it resulted in the development of bilingual identities and creation of metalinguistic awareness. Ritchie (2023) also conducted translanguaging practitioner-based research with a multilingual class of Grade 10 learners during the teaching of one of Shakespeare's works, *Macbeth*. Her study revealed that translanguaging facilitated learners' comprehension of *Macbeth* while simultaneously giving them the capacity to interpret the play from their own cultural and linguistic perspectives and further enabled them to comprehend the plot, themes, and characters of the play.

In addition to demonstrating the transformative potential of translanguaging, research on translanguaging pedagogy has also focused on the perspectives of both teachers and learners on this strategy. In relation to teachers' perspectives, research has shown that on the one hand, most teachers view translanguaging as a positive pedagogic strategy that has multiple benefits while on the other hand,

their views reflect the influence of monolingual ideologies and concerns about policy space for its implementation. In this regard, Cenoz et al. (2024) investigated teachers' perceptions of translanguaging and its role in addressing anxiety in the classroom. The results of this study revealed that teachers believed that students were less anxious and more confident in lessons where translanguaging was employed than in other classes. They also reported that levels of participation, engagement, and comprehension in classroom activities improved and that this improvement was linked to reduced anxiety. In the same vein, Kao's (2023) study explored teachers' perceptions and practices about the translanguaging approach in content and language integrated learning in elementary and secondary school contexts in Taiwan. The results revealed the use of semiotic resources and gestures among elementary English teachers and the use of the first language to reinforce subject learning. The respondents indicated that translanguaging expanded their linguistic practices and promoted the use of other meaning-making signs that are valued less in the school environment.

In another study, Yuvayapan (2019) examined English language teachers' perceptions of translanguaging in Turkey's state and private schools. The findings of that study showed that English as Foreign Language teachers' perceptions did not necessarily align with their practices. While they held positive views about translanguaging in some situations, they indicated that they did not frequently employ this pedagogy because of the expectations of their institutions, colleagues, students, and students' parents. However, most of them employed translanguaging to enable them to devote less time to clarifying lesson content and managing the classroom, and to promote interaction. They believed that the strategy was not instrumental in achieving the long-standing goal of learning English in their teaching. Similarly, Ralushai et al. (2024) in their study on teachers' perceptions of their use of translanguaging pedagogy in teaching English FAL among Grade 7 learners in Vhembe District, Limpopo Province, revealed two differentiated strands of the teachers' perceptions of the translanguaging approach. Firstly, most Grade 7 teachers had a positive attitude towards translanguaging pedagogy in the teaching and learning of English FAL, indicating that the alternation and flexible use of Tshivenda L1 and English were instrumental in acceleration and scaffolding of second-language learning. Secondly, the study revealed that some of these Grade 7 English FAL teachers preferred an English-only approach to accelerate the learning of English, and opposed the use of translanguaging in their second-language classrooms. Their position was that Tshivenda L1 and English FAL must be taught in isolation, citing their distinct linguistic systems. Further, the Sefotho (2025) study, which also examined teachers' perception on translanguaging at selected bilingual primary schools in Soweto, Johannesburg, South Africa, showed that teachers were reluctant to allow the use of multiple languages at the same time in their classrooms. This reluctance was based on biased monolingual ideologies that associate the use of more than one language with language contamination.

In the context of student perceptions, translanguaging was to some extent viewed both positively and negatively by different student groups. Liu et al. (2024) investigated students' perceptions and experiences of translanguaging pedagogy in teaching English for academic purposes in China. Their respondents revealed the value of being able to shift from English to Chinese to enable more effective group discussion, when translating for information purposes, when considering academic concepts and when answering teachers' questions, which led to more efficient and effective classroom interactions. That study also highlighted that teachers' translanguaging practices promoted and facilitated student inclusion and classroom "safety," lessened learner anxiety, and generally assisted co-learning in the classroom, thereby promoting greater learner autonomy. In the same vein, Mbirimi-Hungwe (2021) investigated the views from a linguistically, culturally, and ethnically heterogeneous group of South African multilingual students who were exposed to translanguaging during a group discussion whose goal was to discuss and understand a given academic text. The findings of that study showed that although participants formed a

linguistically diverse group, it did not hinder their understanding of the reading material that they were discussing. Rather, this group of students perceived itself to be related as human beings. For them, it was not about which language was used for discussion; instead, they valued their comprehension of the reading material. Wang and East (2024) explored how beginners in an L2 performed on, and perceived, an online writing test that was designed based on the notion of translanguaging. Their survey found that most students supported the creative design that integrated digital multimodal composition and translanguaging, replacing the monolingually focused handwriting-based test tasks. However, some students were sceptical of the translanguaging approach and found it unexpected, unnecessary, and inauthentic.

Another interesting study is Carstens' (2016) exploration of the use of translanguaging as a strategy to support bi-/multilingual students in acquiring academic literacy in English while promoting the terminologisation of African languages through exploratory scientific talk. With participants drawn from different South African language groups, a mixed bag of perceptions was revealed. Second-language speakers of English from all the represented language groups found the strategy of translanguaging to be beneficial, with cognitive gains featuring as the most prominent benefit to students. The majority believed that translanguaging scaffolded their understanding of the concept of waste management (and its sub-concepts) by painting the bigger picture, simplifying complex concepts, helping them to differentiate among related concepts, and enabling them to express conceptual content. However, the IsiXhosa L1 group members were of the opinion that using their first language complicated instead of simplifying their understanding. The Afrikaans L1 group was more homogeneously in favour of translanguaging than the English L1 group. A possible explanation was that the exposure of the Afrikaans group to English as a scientific language had been limited because all higher cognitive level activities had been performed in Afrikaans prior to enrolment at the university. Despite reservations among some students in the English group, two thirds expressed support for L1 terminologisation. The primary support included social cohesion among speakers of different African languages (ubuntu) and social cohesion among speakers of the same language (identity).

Theoretical Framework

Translanguaging as a theoretical framework is linked to the development of the field of bi-/multilingual education. The term "translanguaging" was coined in 1994 by Cen Williams and his colleagues in their study of Welsh-English bilinguals in Bangor, North Wales. Critically, the most important point is that it was a learner initiative that emerged out of their instinct as bilinguals to resist the imposition of monolingual instructional policies (Wei, 2024). Since then, the concept has gained prominence internationally in the field of education as scholars investigated the theoretical and empirical dimensions of translanguaging as both the "complex practices of plurilingual individuals and communities as well as the pedagogical approaches that use those complex practices" (García & Wei, 2014, p. 3). Numerous definitions of translanguaging and its potential affordances have thus been advanced, challenging the politically and socially defined boundaries of languages and the traditional monolingual approach to teaching that favours English in most parts of the world (García, 2009; García & Wei, 2014; Lewis et al., 2012). One of the most comprehensive definitions of translanguaging was provided by Mazak (2017) who combined features of this strategy from the perspectives of various scholars. Translanguaging is thus defined as a complex phenomenon that has the following characteristics:

> (1) a language ideology that sets bilingualism as the norm, (2) a theory of bilingualism that perceives that bilinguals draw from one integrated linguistic repertoire to navigate their bilingual worlds, (3) a pedagogical stance that allows

> people to learn and teach by drawing from their linguistic and semiotic resources, (4) a set of practices that are drawn from linguistic and semiotic resources of bilinguals, and being (5) transformational as it transforms the traditional notion of languages themselves and their practices along with the lives of bilinguals. (Mazak, 2017, pp. 5–6)

It is clear from the above assertion that translanguaging scholars acknowledge that translanguaging practices can be employed in multilingual classrooms as a pedagogical strategy, which Cenoz and Gorter (2017) referred to as *pedagogical translanguaging*. Such a strategy is planned by the teacher in order to encourage learners to maximise their linguistic repertoires. In addition, García and Wei (2014, p. 92) argued that employing translanguaging in the classroom is more than a pedagogical strategy but is rather a "transformative pedagogy" for language-minoritised learners that summons the bi-/multilingual subjectivities, thereby intentionally leveraging their language practices.

In the context of the above, García et al. (2017) provided four goals for translanguaging pedagogy. These include, firstly, supporting students as they engage with and comprehend complex content and texts; secondly, providing opportunities for students to develop linguistic practices for academic contexts; thirdly, making space for students' bilingualism and ways of knowing and; finally, supporting students' bilingual identities and socio-emotional development. Although these goals are not exhaustive, they provide a framework through which we can view the benefits of this strategy in bi-/multilingual contexts. However, it should be noted that translanguaging may not serve the same purpose in all contexts, as García (2017) postulated. On the one hand, it may serve the purpose of scaffolding learning in monolingual educational settings, while on the other hand, it can be used for minority language preservation (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017). What is important is that it should address the needs of learners of the local community in which it is implemented by advancing social justice and providing language-minoritised learners with equal educational opportunities (Toker & Olğun-Baytaş, 2022). Translanguaging in this article therefore, refers to a pedagogical approach that intentionally employs and validates a variety of languages that learners bring to the classroom and views learners' repertoires as single, integrated entities that include numerous modalities (Ritchie, 2023).

Methodology

This study is framed by an interpretivist research paradigm (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017), which seeks to understand the viewpoints of the subject participants being observed. As Ugwu et al. (2021) asserted, for an interpretivist paradigm, reality is relative, knowledge is subjective. In addition, a qualitative research approach was employed because it facilitates the understanding of beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions (Pathak et al., 2013). In this study, the perspectives on transliterated terms in isiZulu of isiZulu L1 students enrolled in first-year modules at UKZN were solicited through focus group interviews. The participants (n = 28) were purposefully sampled using maximum variation sampling (Nyimbili & Nyimbili, 2024, p. 95). The sampling criteria allowed for targeting relevant participants, albeit, bringing their varied experiences. Two criteria were used: they had to be L1 speakers of isiZulu, and had to be enrolled in a first-year module at UKZN. The participants were recruited from eight disciplines across the four colleges of the university: Agriculture and Engineering Sciences, Health Sciences, Humanities, Law and Management Sciences. The participants were enrolled in the following disciplines: anatomy (n = 4), physiology (n = 2), law (n = 5), management (n = 2), physics (n = 6), chemistry (n = 2), architecture (n = 2), and community development (n = 5). Even though the sample participants were not a representative sample of the student fraternity, recruiting participants from different disciplines allows for balanced findings on the subject under investigation. Before the study began, ethical protocols were observed as

prescribed by the UKZN Human and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Each participant gave informed consent to participate, and anonymity of participants was upheld through the use of unique identifiers as code names. During focus groups interviews, the participants shared their perspectives on transliterated terms in isiZulu from the point of view of their respective academic disciplines. The interviews were recorded (with the consent of the participants), coded, transcribed, and the transcripts were verified by three independent research assistants. The data excerpts were numbered consecutively, and thereafter organised and analysed according to themes using NVivo 12 Pro software. The themes were generated focusing on the students' perspectives on the transformative and inclusive aspects that translanguaging may embed in the transliterated discipline-specific terminology in isiZulu.

Findings

Data generated in the focus group interviews are presented below in response to the two research questions underlying this investigation: "In what ways do isiZulu L1 students perceive the element of transformation in the transliterated terms in isiZulu?" and "To what extent do isiZulu transliterated terms in the discipline-specific terminology lists encompass inclusivity as perceived by isiZulu L1 students?"

The Transformation Element in the Transliterated Terms in isiZulu

The idea of the transformative role of translanguaging was affirmed by García and Wei (2014, p. 92) who stated that translanguaging in the classroom is more than just a pedagogical strategy but is rather a "transformative pedagogy" particularly for marginalised languages learners, which allows them to leverage their everyday language practices in order to access knowledge. In this regard, students articulated how they perceived the terms in isiZulu to be transformative. This transformative feature in transliteration is an enabler for isiZulu L1 students. Transliterated terms allow for epistemological access to the discipline content. When transliterated, terms presumably assist students to perform better than they would have if the terms were in "pure" isiZulu. Two participants asserted:

> TT/P2: I think transliterated words are helpful because as much as we can use isiZulu but "hard core" Zulu is very challenging.

The participant admits to using isiZulu. However, the admission indicates a challenge in decoding pure isiZulu. To mitigate this challenge, the participant opts for transliterated terms as "helpful." In the same vein, the next participant added:

> TT/P4: I agree with TT/P2 about transliterated words, if words are not transliterated they become difficult just as it would be difficult to find a term in isiZulu for "velocity."

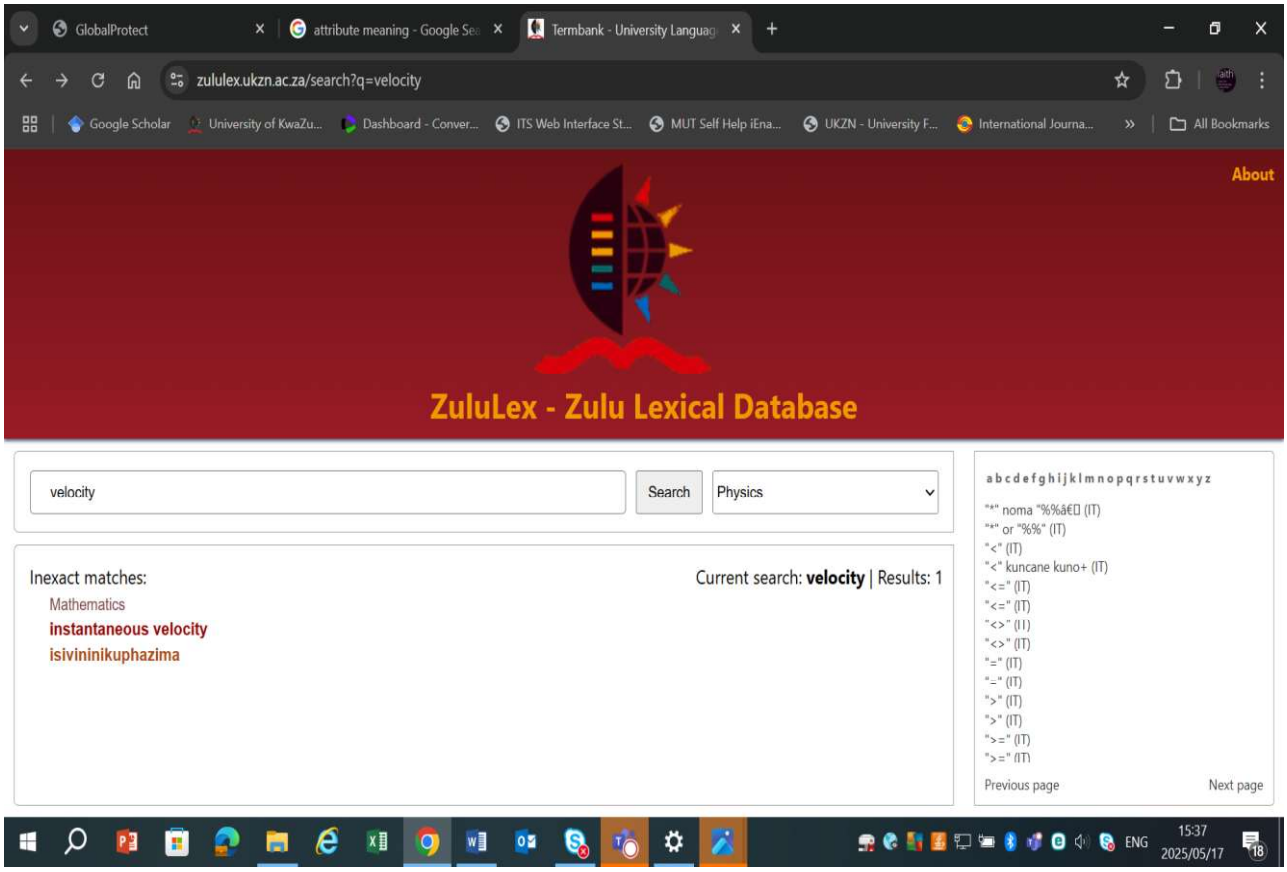
The participant concurs on the level of difficulty of terms in pure isiZulu and, by extension, the difficulty in decoding discipline-specific content. Two perceptions are evident in the above assertions.

Firstly, the participants acknowledge that terms in pure isiZulu are inaccessible even for self-proclaimed isiZulu L1-speaking students. By using "hard core Zulu is very challenging" and "they become difficult," the participants indicate inaccessibility of academic content if terms in pure isiZulu are used. Secondly, participant TT/P4 acknowledges the possibility that some discipline-specific terms are not available in pure isiZulu and mentions the concept velocity, a physics term. If the terms are available, they may nevertheless be incomprehensible to the end-users, namely the students. Whether the terms are available in pure isiZulu or are incomprehensible, the participants reckon that transliteration is a viable

option. This aligns with Wei's (2024) argument that translanguaging moves a step further from multilingualism by challenging racio-linguistic and ethnic-linguistic ideologies that view bi-/multilingual learners as having separate languages and language behaviour. Instead, racial/ethnic identities and linguistic practices should be viewed together as part of the learner's translanguaging being and linguistic behaviour (Wei, 2024). The quandary on the unavailability and inaccessibility of pure terms in isiZulu is illustrated using the term "velocity," which is available in two terminology databases developed at UKZN. In the UKZN Term Bank, the term is displayed as in Figure 1.

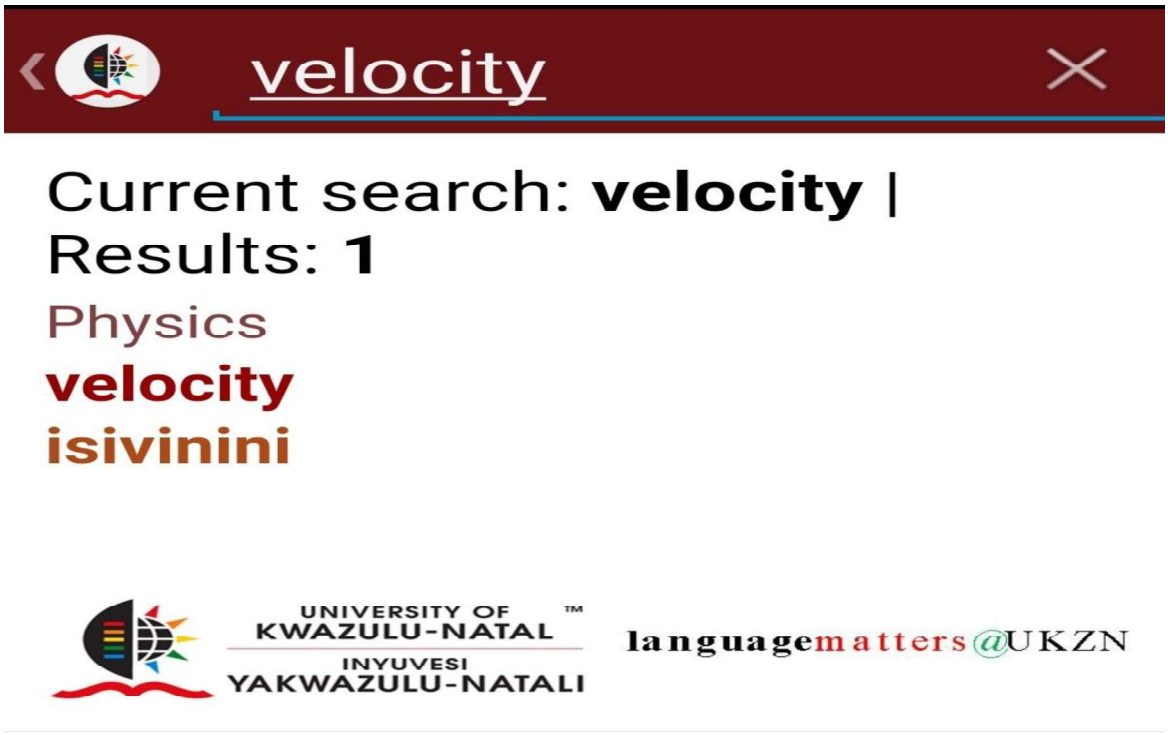
Figure 1

The Term "Velocity" in the UKZN Term Bank (https://zululex.ukzn.ac.za/search?q=velocity)



In the Zulu Lexicon mobile application, it is displayed as in Figure 2.

Figure 2
The Term "Velocity" in the Zulu Lexicon Mobile Application



The terms *isivinini* and *isivininikuphazamisa* are designated equivalents of the term "velocity" in the physics and mathematics disciplines, respectively. The term *isivinini* also appears in the information technology list as an equivalent of the terms "download speed" and "upload speed." In this list, the equivalents are phrased as *isivinini sokulanda*/(1) *sokuthululula*/(2) *sokudawunlodwa,* and *isivinini sokulayisha*, respectively. Thus, *isivinini* may be used to refer either to velocity or to speed. This double meaning may not be welcome because students are rushed for time when studying. In the case where the pure terms are not comprehensible to isiZulu-speaking students (and, by extension, inhibit the discipline episteme), and in the case when the available terms are inaccessible, a transliterated term is a welcome choice.

Transliteration bridges the divide between English and isiZulu. The intermediary attribute in transliterated terms is transformative. The following participant attests to this transformative feature:

> TT/AT4: Another challenge that could arise with these terms is that there are no isiZulu equivalents for the discipline-specific concepts in English. As a result, we could end up transliterating like saying *i-khaphi* for carpi.

The term "carpi" is vernacularised into isiZulu for ease of access to the discipline content and to recall the discipline concept. This vernacularisation is innovative and transformative. Carpi appears among other terms that have been developed in isiZulu for the anatomy discipline. From the terms listed in Figure 3, where the variants of carpi appear, the standardised equivalent for carpi is *sihlakala*. In the Zulu Lexicon mobile application, *isihlakala* appears in a singular form as "carpus" in the anatomy list. In the mobile application, the term has been vernacularised to fit the noun class system of the isiZulu language (*i-*

singular/-*sihlakala* wrist). The discipline episteme is not transposed in the term *isihlakala*, a wrist in English. In anatomy, carpus/carpi refers to a group of bones that form what, in layperson's language, is referred to as a wrist. Participant TT/AT4 reckons that a transliterated term *ikhaphi* would be a welcome choice because there is no exact equivalent for carpi in isiZulu as illustrated in Figure 3, and *isihlakala* does not do justice to the discipline episteme. Such transliteration is transformative and innovative in that it allows for flexible translingual practices and complex transemiotic flows by design, and further prioritises the learners by incorporating their personal experiences, perspectives, and voices into classroom activities and learning (Wei, 2024).

Figure 3

The Term "Carpi" in the UKZN Term Bank

Anatomy
flexor carpi radialis
isigobisisihlakala serediyasi
Anatomy
extensor carpi ulnaris
iselulisihlakala ethanjeni lengalo elingaphakathi
Anatomy
extensor carpi radialis brevis
iselulisihlakala esifushane ngokweredіyasi
Anatomy
extensor carpi radialis longus
iselulisihlakala eside ngokweredіyasi

Anatomy
flexor carpi ulnaris
isigobisisihlakala i-alna

The Inclusivity Aspect in the Transliterated Terms in isiZulu

Students regard the transliteration of discipline-specific terms in isiZulu as an indication of inclusivity in South African higher education. The aspect of inclusivity in transliterated terms may be understood as an accommodation strategy that allows for the varying competencies in isiZulu among students. This accommodation aspect of inclusivity is evident in the assertions below:

> TT/PL1: I think transliterated terms are most welcome. If we were to use isiZulu "proper," most people will be at a disadvantage—most people have lost touch of their home language already. This will make things difficult.

This participant acknowledges that not all isiZulu L1-speaking students have high competencies in isiZulu. With "most people will be at a disadvantage" and "lost touch of their home language," the participant alludes to the different levels of competencies in isiZulu that may have resulted from the varied subject offering of isiZulu at school level. To concur on the varied subject offering of isiZulu, the next participant asserted:

> TT/PL2: I also agree. Some people are not proficient in isiZulu. Some have learnt isiZulu as L1, some as an FAL, and some as an SAL. This then would make it difficult for most people to learn through isiZulu. However, if transliterated terms are used, everybody—no matter the level of proficiency in isiZulu—will be accommodated.

Participant TT/PL2 realistically reflects on the outcomes of the varied levels at which isiZulu may be offered at school level. This variation impacts on students' competency levels in the language. Thus, terms in pure isiZulu may alienate the very people who are meant to benefit from the terminology in isiZulu. Expressing similar sentiments, the next participant asserted:

> TT/CD6: It is much better to use transliterated terms in order to accommodate everybody who uses the language from all backgrounds.

Participant TT/CD6 acknowledges that isiZulu-speaking students are not a homogenous group. The different subject offerings of isiZulu impact on the students' abilities to use the language for academic purposes.

The addition of transliterated terms in the terminology lists will allow for the use of isiZulu for academic purposes. Such use of isiZulu is inclusionary in nature. The participants below alluded to this inclusion:

> TT/CD2: The use of transliterated terms will be a beacon of hope to those who have dropped out of the school system due to challenges with English. Such people will be encouraged to continue with education since terminology will be more accessible with transliterated terms.

The inclusion of isiZulu through transliteration of terms will have far-reaching effects according to Participant TT/CD2. Students who may have been alienated by the use of English may find the inclusion of isiZulu agreeable and encouraging. In this way, transliterated terms will ensure the use of isiZulu for academic purposes. The participant below said:

> TT/A2: It will be of no use if "proper" words are used and nobody understands that concept. If this is done [inclusion of isiZulu], practicality should be considered on the choice/level of words to be used and transliterated terms have to be used.

Participant TT/A2 considers transliterated terms as practical. This may mean that such terms are more user-oriented in comparison to pure terms in isiZulu. The following participant concurred:

> TT/M4: We use a lot of transliterated terms; one is only able to use isiZulu "proper" if one has done isiZulu at home language level at high school. But in everyday language use, we use a lot of transliterated terms and thus if isiZulu was to be used in academic contexts to assist isiZulu L1 students; transliterated terms would be welcomed.

For Participant TT/M4, transliterated terms emulate the lived experiences of isiZulu L1 students. When a language that students use on a day-to-day basis is featured in the academic space, these students may feel included and acknowledged. Such use of isiZulu is inclusionary within the ambit of decoloniality.

The excerpts from the data indicate the perceptions that isiZulu L1 students hold towards transliterated discipline-specific terms in isiZulu. The availability of the transliterated terms serves the cognitive and socio-political needs of African students. In the South African context, serving the cognitive needs of students through translanguaging is a legitimate response to the *Education White Paper 3* (DBE,

1997) that advocated the use of flexible models in teaching and learning. According to this study, the advocacy for flexible models in teaching and learning through transliterated terms in isiZulu serves three purposes:

- It responds to the needs of the emergent bilinguals (García-Mateus & Palmer, 2017) who are actualising their bilingual identities.
- It levels the academic playing field by disrupting institutionalised monolingualism (Wei, 2024).
- It addresses the systematic differing competencies of isiZulu L1 students, thus enabling access to scientific content (Infante & Licona, 2018).

In accordance with the goals of translanguaging as envisaged by García et al. (2017), the availability and use of transliterated terms in isiZulu afforded the participants in the current study the necessary academic support. Such support opens an opportunity for isiZulu L1 students to thrive in an English-dominated academic space. While this support disrupts monolingual practices, it empowers the students to gain recognition and to assert belonging as they navigate the academic space. In this academic trajectory, the transliterated terms in isiZulu are precise in accessing discipline epistemes. In the example presented in Figure 3, the term “carpi” has been terminologised using semantic loosening as *isihlakala*. While *isihlakala* may be acceptable in layperson’s terms, it does not transpose the discipline episteme as required in anatomy. Thus, *ikhaphi* is transformative and responds to the cognitive needs of isiZulu L1 students.

The transliterated terms in isiZulu are also inclusive—inclusive in the use of isiZulu for academic purposes and inclusive of all the differing levels of competencies in isiZulu. In the latter case, the transliterated terms address the socio-political needs of isiZulu L1 students. The systematic differences in offering isiZulu at L1, FAL, and SAL levels account for the heterogeneity in the competency levels in isiZulu. Wei (2024) argued that translingual practices demonstrate the representation and celebration of all identities and histories. The transliteration of terms is a realistic depiction of the socio-political evolution of the South African education system

Conclusion

This paper argued that translanguaging through transliteration in discipline-specific terminology is a transformative and inclusive practice. This practice responds to the cognitive needs of African students, and it addresses the differing competencies in African languages that are socio-politically oriented. In addition, transliteration indicates the lived fluidity in the linguistic repertoires of African students. We position transliteration of discipline-specific terms in isiZulu against the backdrop of the South African education system yet on the basis of a world-wide phenomenon of translanguaging in bi-/multilingual societies. Monolingual education practices disempower bi-/multilingual students, disregard these students’ identities, silence these students’ voices, and deprive these students of a sense of belonging in academic spaces. Transliteration, we argue, reverses these monolingual practices for every bi-/multilingual student in academia. Even though the participant sample for this study is not representative, the perceptions shared provide insights into the needs of bi-/multilingual students, the challenges that they encounter, and the expectations that they have. More studies on translanguaging through transliteration might offer further insights into this phenomenon, its applicability, its strengths, and its weaknesses.

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