






The English Language Limits Me! Connecting Third Space to Curriculum Transformation in a South African University, Expanding Epistemological Landscapes?

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The English Language Limits Me! Connecting Third Space to Curriculum Transformation in a South African University, Expanding Epistemological Landscapes?

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Abstract

Many studies were conducted on conventional colonial heritage; however, less attention examines the developing concept of curriculum decolonisation in South African universities. This paper advocates for a hybrid literacy between traditional conceptions of academic literacy and instruction for students' sociohistorical lives, affluent and less affluent. I discuss and illustrate the hegemony of English in high-learning institutions and the post-apartheid mainstream education system. Alongside my previous work in the language field, I interrogate the impasse of language policy in high education and South African schools. This paper is an ethnographic study congruent with the interpretivism paradigm, employing the semi-structured interview for data collection. The third space supports it as a theoretical framework. It affords the provision and guidance for classroom instruction and autonomous learning modes balance, where developing new knowledge is heightened, allowing students' voices. It is a response to the 2015-2016 student protests on South African university campuses, where several were perplexed on how to respond to the demands of the students to end violent protests against western disciplinary norms that devalue non-centre practices and themes. Biliteracy and translanguaging are empathised as the concepts against ownership of language and culture, and its territorialisation, challenging the traditional contrast of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers and its connection to a particular nation-state.

Keywords: Biliteracy, Curriculum, Decolonisation, Essentialist view, Hybrid Literacies, Language Policy in Higher Education- South Africa, Third Space, Translanguaging

Introduction

A fourth-year B.Ed. student's comment: "The English language limits me!" triggered the writing of this paper as she nostalgically uttered those words. Her comment arose after a seminar on curriculum decolonisation held at one university in South Africa. Perhaps ironically or sentimentally, her comment arose ostensibly at a favourable moment. Although astounded, I immediately connected to her sentiment; therefore, a question instantly fondled to my mind and was—how I can afford this student and others like her in a similar situation with a provision and guidance for classroom instruction that Adamson and Coulson (2015) call 'autonomous learning modes balance' (p. 4) where the development of new knowledge is promoted allowing students' voices? Connecting students like her and others to what Gutiérrez (2008) called the 'third space' (pp. 148–164).

The third space, in Gutiérrez, Baquedano-Lopez, and Tejeda's (1999) earlier edition is,

the use of multiple, diverse, and even conflicting mediational devices or zones of development, therefore expanding learning, in particular, learning inherently hybrid contexts where conflict, tension, and diversity are intrinsic to learning space" (p. 287).

What Gutiérrez et al., (1999) suggest from the above quotation is relevant to this study because it seeks to connect third space as a transformative learning pedagogy, a commonplace to "build new identities" through "collective problem-solving" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.159) to curriculum transformation in a South African context, moving from one literacy situation and language identity to another expanding Epistemological landscape so to speak. Hornberger and Link (2012), note that such an attempt involves situating oneself in transitional social spaces and drawing from the values and practices of diverse cultures to constantly reconstruct one's identity and social belonging. In doing so, I also attempt to integrate some comments into this 'final' draft distinctly to acknowledge the contributions participants have made as we were interacting in a translingual process in what Nunn (2011) calls method-in-use.

Through the lenses of Gutiérrez (2008), in this paper, I support my argument with two notions, one is biliteracy, suggested by Hornberger and Link (2012), and the second is the translingual process proposed by Lee and Canagarajah (2018). I empathised with these ideologies because at the core of this study is a determination to combat against ownership of language and culture, its regionalisation, challenging the traditional paradox of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers and its connection to a particular nation-state (Gutiérrez et al., 1999).

Alongside my previous work in the language field, I interrogate the impasse of language policy in high education. And this is a sentiment also shared by Professor Ahmed Bawa, CEO of USAF, speaking alternately with Dr Mabizela in a colloquium on 20 September 2021, held at Universities South Africa (USAF) as a joint project with USAF's Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL) and Stellenbosch university, the sponsor and host institution. Bawa asserted that South Africa Africa's revised Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions commits to the study and development of all official South African languages, especially those which were historically marginalised and that university students with a mother tongue other than English should not be at a disadvantage compared to those who do speak English at home.

To Lin and Martin (2005), 'global capital' has enhanced English as an indispensable resource that several postcolonial nation-states and governments seek for themselves and their children in their respective socioeconomic contexts. This economic drive has arisen under the disguise of economic development, technological and material modernisation, and human-resource capital investment for current and future successful participation in the new global economic order. English communication skills, information technology, business management and commercial expertise are at the centre of this expedition.

For Lin and Martin (2005), decolonisation in the main entailed resisting English domination worldwide, but globalisation renders such efforts by nation-states foraminous by placing back the importance of the English language. Canagarajah (1999) cited in Lin and Martin (2005) empathise with non-western countries that are undergoing the 'project' of decolonisation, suddenly

overtaken by another 'project', that of globalisation. This view resonates with Dr Cole, Nicki Lisa's article (2021, February 16), titled: The Critical View on global capitalism who describes global capitalism as a free and open economic system that rallies people from around the world collectively to encourage innovations in production, facilitating the exchange of culture and knowledge and jobs to struggling economies worldwide, providing consumers with an abundant supply of affordable goods. Yet, she criticizes global capitalism for being anti-democratic (Cole, 2021), citing Robinson's essay where the author criticizes it as profoundly anti-democratic because a small group of the world's elite decide the rules of the game and control the overwhelming majority of the world's resources. (Robinson, 2017). Hence in postcolonial governments and local communities, there is an increasing nostalgia for English for both national and personal interests, schools included.

South Africa is not immune. Despite its Language in Education Policy/ LiEP Section 3(4)(m) of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 promising linguistic diversity and multilingualism, research shows otherwise as the proponents of English still advocate for the earlier introduction of English as a medium of instruction. In African countries such as Tanzania and Kenya, the policy of maintaining English as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) from primary onwards also poses immense difficulties to several learners and teachers, especially those living in rural and poor urban communities (Probyn, 2002). This is exacerbated by the agonising cost paid by learners in private English-medium institutions, who despite the exorbitant charges often fail and repeat classes without learning anything (Lin & Martin, 2005). This is common in Asian countries like Turkey, where one university installing English as a medium of instruction in most courses competes with private English-medium institutions as is the case in middle-class South Africans and Iranians in which parents send children to private English tutorial schools to acquire more global, marketable communicative competencies in English which the public schools' old English curricula cannot provide. Likewise, in Singapore, English varieties that drive Western norms tend to surpass localised 'Singlish' or Hong Kong; in my ethnic language, isiXhosa, mirroring the South African context 'Xhosalising-English' is seen as an offence to English (Kepe, 2017). In this way, English become preeminent for socioeconomic advancement, and the globalised knowledge-intensive job market, consequently beguiled as a vehicle of social stratification (Lin & Martin, 2005).

As said, elsewhere, Asian countries such as Japan, Malaysia, Turkey, Hong Kong, Singapore, Iran, India, Malaysia and Vietnam are currently experiencing a reborn expedition to the English language as a medium of instruction (MOI) in the education system even postcolonial context, camouflaging in what Lin and Martin (2005) calls the 'Empire strikes back', doing so impalpably under the mirage of global capitalism. Most parents, particularly in India, Malaysia and Iran like South Africa favour English over L1 as a MOI in both higher and basic education for the apparent needs of economic, technological modernisation and globalisation (Lin & Martin, 2005). Hence, Foley (2002) suggests that for indigenous languages to be utilised as MOI there is a need to convince parents about the instrumental value of the heritage languages in South Africa.

In contrast, while some parents can afford to send their children to private schools to acquire globally marketable communicative competencies in English that the state schools fail to offer some are unable to do so, particularly in rural and urban-rural South African schools. In Turkey,

for example, private institutions that teach in the English-medium multiply and compete with state universities which struggle to offer a balance of local languages and English (Lin and Martin, 2005).

This study intends to cordage policymakers and curriculum pedagogy designers who often cascade the national development agendas at the behest of the government to reform their former structure- through drill-based English curricula, to introduce communicative, task- and function-based pedagogies (Blommaert, 2008). And to develop what Lin and Martin (2005) call the kinds of English interactive/ productive competencies required of new generations of the workforce in economically modernising contexts. To support this notion, I share similar sentiments with Hornberger and Link's (2012) biliteracy; Lee and Canagarajah's (2018) translingual practices. These notions resonate with Lin and Martin (2005) who call for planning that is backed up by concrete institutional changes in the state's policy giving a place to all languages, not just the globally valued standard languages like English. The authors propose, and I agree with them, a construction of the positive policy, pedagogical and curriculum sound alternatives that will do more than just argue for essentialist, culturalist identity/ regionalism and linguistic rights. They advocate for institutional changes that can result in a re-shaping of what Bourdieu, Passeron, de Saint Martin, Baudelot and Vincent (1994) call the social selection fields in a postcolonial society, accommodating people who due to family's way of life, excel more in indigenous than global languages to have a chance for socioeconomic mobility, a rationale for this paper. The revised Language Policy Framework enacted in (2017) and published on 30 October (2020) for Public Higher Education Institutions following the original language policy document established in 2001/2002 defines languages belonging to the African language family as indigenous languages which must be equally recognised as a medium of instruction in the mainstream and higher education.

Lin and Martin (2005) on the other hand, argue that in any postcolonial society, more likely, the English-educated middle classes who have had the closest links with their former colonial masters have the best cultural advantages that influence them to excel in an education system that privileges global, standard forms of languages and literacies. For this reason, this study intends to reconnoitre the potential of biliteracy as suggested by Hornberger and Link (2012) and translingual processes suggested by Lee and Canagarajah (2018) to narrow the gap between colonial languages and indigenous languages in the education sector.

This study is an attempt to seek a cutting-edge pedagogical breakthrough to help rural or poor urban working-class schoolchildren acquire global, standard languages and literacies like English for wider communication and socioeconomic mobility.

Such an attempt as stated above resonates with the notion of a 'third space' proposed by Gutiérrez, although in a distinctly American context but the latter is a purposeful use of hybridity and diversity that stimulates the transformation of the mind during studying focusing on the concrete and material practices of a transformative learning environment (Gutiérrez, 2009). A useful term in my observation that allows [us] to explore literacies around, engaging with hybridity, blended learning spaces and learning literacies. Simply put, the experience of being in two or more places at once and this, for me, is a reading leading to a third space like the one Sivasubramaniam (2017) proposes, which advocates for the natural basis for a plurality of

response and love of reading and dispels the one 'right reading' fixated with normative orientation as was suggested by the cognitivism from the late forties to the end of the last millennium. My recently published project, titled "It Starts With a Story! Towards extensive reading" is a case in point. It is a literacy intervention project in one primary school called Bulembu Lower and Higher Primary School located in the village around King Williams Town, South Africa. In the project I advocate for liberating reading, reading for the love of it without the pressures of tests. This innovative literacy project aims to improve learners' reading and writing capabilities in a marginalised school. In the initiation phase of this literacy project, I had an interview with the school principal about the state of reading in his school. His comment is marked 'P', he conceded that:

- P. the school had no library/corner classrooms libraries. Our pupils are from poor backgrounds. Yes, pupils have a problem with English as the medium of instruction. It is difficult to manage the situation. This can be attributed to the fact that our learners are taught in their mother tongue language during the early years of schooling (from Grade R/1 to 3), then somewhere along the way when they enter the intermediate phase [at Grade 4], English is introduced. But the main problem here originates from a Peter Morkel Model of distributing educators, which puts us at a disadvantage as ours is 1:35, as per the post-provisioning of 2019. Your extensive reading project has exposed them [pupils] to a variety of teaching techniques, terminology, vocabulary, exposure to library skills, the importance of Journal writing, etc. I think they [pupils] will never be the same again. To us as teachers, the project has also been a morale booster.

The conditions related above as typically flagged in my PhD thesis — (2017) titled: *Building a reading culture among Grade 12 Learners in an English First Additional Language Classroom: The Case of One High School in King William's Town Education District*, Valencia -ISBN: 9788409120314 8409120313 made it possible for me to intervene as a reading coach with multifaceted reading approaches. Atwell sums it up nicely when she said: "For students of every ability and background, it is the simply miraculous act of reading a good book that turns them into readers. The job of adults who care about reading is to move heaven and earth to put that book into a child's hands" (2006, p. 144) — Nancy Atwell

Of importance, for the primary school is that the pupils were reading across media, included were: newspaper articles, and magazines, watching the news, adverts, sports, films/plays, and radio programmes. Note that 60% of the material read or listened to, or watched had to be in the vernacular, and 40% was in English. Whatever new knowledge gained from those affordances would be reflected upon in writing or through classroom dialogue by the participants to promote understanding and reading culture. This 'multimodal/media classroom discourse' resonates with (Thesen, 2014) and (Atwell, 2006) 'reading zone, where the students identifying with characters in the book would fictitiously escape the classroom and vicariously zoom into the book, laughing, weeping, and pitying with characters. Besides, what was also key in the process was not only providing plentiful reading resources but to ensure that there was progression in terms of reading skills and vocabulary. But doing so in cognisant of their cognitive abilities as others were reading more than others and so I needed to train the tutors to record the reading progress of learners as they also do in their journals. Although reading for joy was key, recording helped the tutors to see

that indeed reading was taking place, advancing excellence, and giving support to those who needed it. Krashen 1982) called this, the "comprehensible input" hypothesis, which suggests that learners acquire language by taking in and understanding the language that is "just beyond" their current level of competence.

Conducted in Bulembu Lower & Higher Primary School in the Eastern Cape (South Africa), the extensive reading (ER) project innovation I initiated convinces us that with enthusiasm and skill coupled with material support, English First Additional Language learners (EFAL)/ L2 studying in the most difficult circumstances can be encouraged to read age-appropriate, attractive, contemporary reading material across languages (Kepe & Weagle, 2021). It is an award-winning project which did not only bore fruit/yielded positive results but also attained pride of place in the sixth edition of English Scholarship Beyond Borders Volume 6, Issue 1. This was a one-year project from 2019 to 2020. Towards the end of it, I again interviewed the school principal who in his words noted:

an important point to flag about Dr Kepe's ER project is that he emphasised reading both the vernacular, being isiXhosa, the spoken language of the school and English. To this point, the learners were not limited to reading English only. He referred to this as biliteracy. He also advocated translanguaging during the learners' discussions, as he is an aficionado of bilingualism. We received reports from the parents that even during the COVID-19 pandemic the learners were busy reading, and writing book reports and pen-pals, something that was not existing before in our school.

The assertion raised above was the epoch of my extensive reading project, reading across languages because I believe reading English only literature/reading material defeats the very notion of bilingualism espoused in South Africa's LiEP Act 27 of 1996 and the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997) enacted in 2001/2002, but later revised regenerated into the Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions (30 October 2020) to expedite redress of language disparity and the implementation or lack thereof. The 'biliteracy' interventions such as the one mentioned previously at Bulembu L/H Primary School become instrumental in mitigating language deficit in rural-urban schools. As Foley (2002) notes, the dilemma currently is that English, and to a lesser extent Afrikaans (originating from Dutch settlers in the Cape colony), are the only languages in South Africa capable of functioning fully as languages of learning and teaching at higher education institutions; yet, most potential higher education students are neither sufficiently fluent in English nor in Afrikaans to be able to study effectively through these languages.

The Language Policy Framework mentioned above, in line with the Higher Education Act (No. 101 of 1997 as amended); and the National Curriculum Statement: Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement/CAPS Grade R–12 (2012); Pan South African Language Board Act No. 59 of 1995; are all underpinned by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, Act 108 of 1996 (Section 29(2)).

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 (Section 29(2)) declares that the official languages of the Republic are Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda, Xitsonga, Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa and isiZulu. It thus places an obligation on the state to take practical and positive measures to develop, elevate the status and advance the use of indigenous

languages, recognising their historically diminished use and status to achieve the aspiration of Section 29(2) of the Constitution and ultimately ensure that “all official languages must enjoy parity of esteem and must be treated equitably,” (Section 6 [1], [2] and [4] (Higher Education Act: Language Policy Framework for Public Institutions (30 October 2020, p. 12). The challenge facing higher education in particular is to ensure the simultaneous development of a multilingual environment in which all our languages are developed as academic/scientific languages, while at the same time ensuring that the existing languages of instruction do not serve as a barrier to access and success' (Ministry of Education 2002:5). From the above, we draw two things: first, is to develop South African indigenous languages as academic/scientific languages for instruction at higher education institutions. The second is to develop students' proficiency in English (Foley, 2002).

Another project was a university translingual process that tested the students' beliefs about their translanguaging practices in a B.Ed. English Methodology class. This case study focused on five third-year students from the Bachelor of Education Undergraduate Class. It followed after I identified an academic literacy intervention in the B.Ed. Students I taught at the University of Fort Hare. I needed to help maximise the teacher trainees' linguistic resources in problem-solving and knowledge construction (Kepe, 2021). It dawned on me as I attempted to elucidate theories and their implications to teaching and to learn that the English language for these student teachers has become a deficit to most, particularly those from less affluent backgrounds/ areas required to learn the concepts in EFAL. The participants range in age from 18 to 35. The researcher is an insider, presenting English Methodology to these students. The study was conducted through the students' pre-writing process with the Gibbons Curriculum Cycle (2002) aid to collect data. Translatability theory as a theoretical framework informed the study. The study has revealed that when the translingual process is adopted, it accommodates cultural and linguistic practices of negotiation. It is informed by plurality to reflect a broad diversity of global settings while accommodating successful communication, including in our language classrooms (Kepe, 2021). As said previously, in acknowledging the participants' contribution I strive to integrate selective comments by participants, particularly as we used to engage in classroom translingual discourse. Below I present two observation remarks by two students referred to as S1 and S2 who participated in the study:

- S1 quite often, we use the existing language to decode and understand the new language, so, it is a teaching strategy that I would encourage my learners to use because it has worked for me even though I did not know what it was then, it can work for others too who wish to try it.
- S2 When I first heard about translanguaging, I thought it was about code-switching, but as I learnt more about it, my attitude changed, resulting in a different perspective on it. Now, I understand that translanguaging is about using the mother language as a resource to learn a new language, English in my case. As a prospective teacher, I imagine a classroom situation where learners are allowed to engage in a classroom discourse not limited to English only but also use their mother languages to brainstorm through exploratory talk. However, the subject matter discussed whether in pair work or group should be presented in the target language [English].

In a nutshell, what was evident to all the participants, particularly at the tertiary level in South Africa where students/ teacher trainees migrating from different diverse backgrounds/ provinces in the country, which most rural and urban-rural were battling with the application of new concepts written in English and their implications in teaching practice symptomatic of English language as a deficit even in higher education. Often, this situation speaks to the fact that most of these teacher trainees from primary school onwards frequently speak their vernacular at home and last speak English in class. Even at universities, commonly when interacting among themselves intermittently they blend their ethnic languages with English and therefore use the latter as a lingua franca. In this case, local and provincial languages such as Afrikaans, Setswana, isiZulu, and isiXhosa are the most commonly mixed with English on the campus at the university. Foley (2002) corroborates that the real solution, as this article suggests, rests in developing the indigenous languages, but at the same time providing quality access to English proficiency throughout the education system, society and teacher innovation in general.

The argument and my intentional interventions highlighted above verify a combination of my concerns, first, as a high school teacher with well over 23 years of experience and second, having been in academia for four years thus far, that if we miss out on closing and anchoring firmly a divergence that exists in literacy at school from the primary level right up to Grade 12, then will have a drawback at the university level. This is precisely why my 360 degrees turn to primary schools even when I am now teaching at the university level. I devised means to channel my love and passion for reading through literacy interventions to control the damage as I now experience it first-hand and no longer anticipation. For all the above reasons, this study will, in the findings, report prominently on the successes and benefits of the beneficiaries' stories, telling stories they tell since this is a follow-up to literacy projects conducted in a primary and one university in South Africa. I felt a strong need to revisit the findings of the two projects, discuss them briefly and derive recommendations based on them. I will return to this and others in the findings of this report. I believe that although I conducted my first project in primary school, it would clarify key aspects of the importance of the first language/ L1 in learning and acquiring L2 or EFAL as we call it in South Africa.

This paper affords the provision and guidance for classroom instruction and autonomous learning modes balance, where developing new knowledge is promoted, allowing students' voices (Adamson & Coulson, 2015). It is a response and a slight contribution to the clarion call of 2015-2016 student protests in South African universities to decolonise curriculum and dispel western disciplinary norms that devalue non-centre practices and themes. This resonates with Kohonen, Jaatinen, Kaikkonen and Lehtovaar (2001) calling for an "open dialogue" (also see Bakhtin, 1981; Gutiérrez et al., 1999 & Kepe, 2019)) through talk as an important mode of improving writing. This is a similar open discourse made by Professor Ahmed Bawa CEO of USAF, speaking in a colloquium on 20 September 2021, held at USAF, a joint project with USAF's Community of Practice for the Teaching and Learning of African Languages (CoPAL) and Stellenbosch university, asserting that,

"...need to interrogate the role of all our languages in teaching and learning as languages of official communication; examine the role of higher education in creating conditions for access and success and in facilitating the smooth flow of the 2nd curriculum (enabling our

students to engage and learn outside the classroom) [...] a whole social justice agenda that languages serve. (USAF colloquium, September 20, 2021)

Bawa calls it the 2nd curriculum as seemingly the current one does not assist in the ploy to decolonise curriculum. Hence, I am suggesting this cutting-edge ground-gaining construct of a 'third space' (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.159) in conjunction with the two notions of the biliteracy and translanguaging process, the former suggested by Hornberger and Link (2012), and the latter proposed by Lee and Canagarajah (2018) to help students, particularly the marginalised in South Africa, to acquire English language competence for professional mobility while building new local contexts and new identities. Nunn, Brandt and Deveci (2016) refer to this space as a commonplace with a transformative space and the potential for an expanded form of learning and developing new knowledge is heightened. The third space, as exhibited in my award-winning literacy project, helps students learn from each other through regular interaction and it is more important that they share a common interest than a spatial geographical location.

The Impasse of Language Policy in High Education

As my subheading suggests, this linguistic dilemma, as referred to it, concerns the transformation of the curriculum in higher education, specifically as it relates to the dominance of English above other languages even in the democratic era following the demise of colonial and apartheid education in 1994 in South Africa. Concerning language disparities in the South African context, Foley (2002) notes, as things stand, the functionality and capability of the two languages, English and Afrikaans as full languages of learning and teaching at higher education institutions at the expense of the nine official languages continues as if nothing untoward, yet several potential higher education students, particularly from less affluent families, are still not sufficiently fluent in English and Afrikaans to study effectively through these languages. The English language in high education has become a deficit in contrast to teaching and learning as a mediational device, and this is precisely the problem I am attempting to respond to. As said elsewhere,

Language has been and continues to be a barrier to access and success in higher education; both in the sense that African and other languages have not been developed as academic/ scientific languages and most students entering higher education are not fully proficient in English and Afrikaans (Ministry of Education 2002:4±5).

From this view, without being pedantic or ostentatious, it is explicit as all researchers agree that there is a need for redress in the field of language in an attempt to level the playing fields and to narrow language discrepancies between nations.

South African Colonial -Apartheid Language Context in South African Schools and Universities

Considering the quotation made by the Ministry of Education previously, under this subheading, I attempt to present a brief context of language as an affirmative in South Africa since the 17th/18th /19th/20th and the 21st century but doing so without boring the reader with considerable colonial and apartheid past events. The concern is that since 1652 when the first school was built by the

Dutch Empire, language has always been a political point of departure in the South African nation (Marks, 2014). Despite the resistance and intense frontier wars fought between the indigenous Khoi + sans (Khoisans) in the Cape of Storms, renamed Cape town during the 17th/18th century, the power dynamics in the main were centred around language, particularly as a medium of instruction in schools (Pre-colonial history of SA). Not to educate the primitive/ancient nation but, according to history, solely for acculturalisation (imposition or adaptation of one's culture upon the other) (Pre-colonial history of SA).

Dutch/Afrikaans was imposed as the only medium of instruction at the beginning of the 17th century, and the indigenous people were excluded from the learning process. This situation was exacerbated by the arrival of British settlers in 1820 after the Napoleonic wars when Britain was experiencing a serious unemployment problem, which led to immigrants migrating to the Cape colony with the approval of the British government. The British government then sent missionaries to build more schools as a way of expansion. The expansion of schools by the English government led to the widespread of English culture, norms and values inculcated through the medium of instruction English overtaking the Dutch/ Afrikaans (Arrival of Europeans in South Africa, 2015).

The Dutch government felt that the English curriculum was devaluing their culture and that they could no longer send their children to be taught English values and lifestyle contrary to their own. Although we know, as history tells us, the conflict fought between the British Empire and the two Boer Republics in the Transvaal and the Orange Free State) in Southern Africa from 1899 to 1902 was against the British Empire following the discovery of gold discovered in the Boer republics. We also know that in the education departments, the language of teaching and learning was an issue in schools because it was viable, if not the main device, to advance their empires (South African History Online, 2015).

Having referred to a colloquium on 20 September 2021, held at Universities South Africa (USAF) where Dr Mabizela, the Rhodes Vice-Chancellor extrapolated among other things that language not only facilitates engagement with other communities more deeply; "it gives access to people's culture, values, practices and a whole lot more", he said. In teaching, he alleged that language could either form a doorway to opportunity or become a gatekeeper to block and frustrate one's opportunities in life. He posits that the nation should ponder through this as a layer to think of the postcolonial aegis for SA. Dr Mabizela remarked that if the indigenous languages do not make it into the academic discourse, they will forever remain second-class. They need to be brought on par with the languages of the world.

Dr Mabizela emphasised, and I concur, that South Africa's universities should commit to partnerships at every level in collaboration with stakeholders, such as the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB) and others to develop flourishing language departments aimed at producing teachers competent and fluent in South Africa's indigenous languages. But he made a clarion point that resonated with my literacy project, mentioning that language alone could not succeed and that, more basically, we must aspire to achieve language literacy — academic literacy.

Without overstating my contribution to literacy, I have tried it through my literacy intervention efforts where a need exists for it, and it works as I will display the benefits in a short while. But first, let us take a quick glimpse at the below table where I illustrate the eleven/ 11 languages of South Africa spoken per nine provinces:

See Eleven African Official Languages: <https://southafrica-info.com/arts-culture/11-languages-south-africa/> Updated 11 June 2021. Email mary1alexander@gmail.com

Spoken official languages in South Africa per province

Eastern Cape –	
IsiXhosa	78.8%
Afrikaans	10.6%
Free State –	
Sesotho	64.2%
Afrikaans	12.7%
Gauteng –	
isiZulu	19.8%
English	13.3%
Afrikaans	12.4%
Sesotho	11.6%
KwaZulu-Natal –	
isiZulu	77.8%
English	13.2%
Limpopo –Sesotho Sa Leboa	52.9%
Xitsonga	17%
Tshivenda	16.7%
Mpumalanga –	
siSwati	27.7%
isiZulu	24.1%
Xitsonga	10.4%
isiNdebele	10.1%
Northern Cape –	
Afrikaans	53.8%
Setswana	33.1%
Northwest –	
Setswana	63.4%
Afrikaans	9%
Western Cape –	
Afrikaans	49.7%
isiXhosa	24.7%
English	20.3%

Spoken official languages in South Africa per province, Email mary1alexander@gmail.com

Relevance Of 2015/16 Call for Curriculum Decolonisation, #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall and Later #Black Lives Matter

In my previous work, I also remark that schools and tertiary education, are not neutral domains, and teachers/lecturers/academics themselves are culturally orientated beings. However, just as English should not be reduced to “good grammar, or good English only”, language articulates culture, and culture articulates language and, therefore, culture is entrenched in the language (Kepe, 2019). Among other crucial facilities to note and try is a bilingual library in high education, particularly for teacher trainees whose origins are less affluent, to unlock what Le Grange (2021) has called interlocking domains of knowledge and power that have established expression in the recent student protests in South Africa, otherwise known by the two main movements, #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall and later #Black Lives Matter.

‘Decolonisation of the curriculum’ as the protesters were chanting it, and according to Le Grange (2021), was about exterminating the distressing segregation/exclusion and daylight micro-aggressions inextricably linked to institutional racism within university spaces. But it is also about laying bare the failures of the heterosexual, patriarchal, neoliberal capitalist values which have become so characteristic of the country’s universities (Dismelo, 2015 in Le Grange, 2021). For Maldonado-Torres (2007), cited in Le Grange (2021) this is perpetuated alive in our time not only through coloniality but ... is maintained — in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience (pp. 240-270).

Le Grange’s (2021) observations on the decolonisation of the curriculum follow Dr Mabizela’s suggestion that “It is the responsibility of higher education institutions to develop and intellectualise languages and to develop appropriate terminology so they can serve as scientific languages”. He foresees a critical role in academics in an environment where multilingualism is observed as a device to improve cognitive advancement, social cohesion and respect for all languages. He challenges universities to take responsibility for developing learning and teaching materials or endure lethargically with stoicism the agony of the vicious cycle of language deficit in the mainstream carrying over to higher education.

For me, Dr Mabizela, the Rhodes Vice-Chancellor and Professor Bawa were spot-on in that colloquium held on 20 September 2021, at USAF. Dr Mabizela, for example, bemoaned access to several languages akin to receiving a multi-focal lens through which to access knowledge, noting that diverse language resources grant access to various perspectives and angles to the same concern – “a critical aspect to knowledge creation,” he said. As I always argue, he added that a student for whom English is a second or third language, when allowed to learn in his mother tongue, tends to articulate his thoughts with more confidence, rigour, clarity, depth and precision (colloquium on 20 September 2021, Universities South Africa (USAF)).

Invariably, Le Grange (2021) indicates that the 2015/16 students’ movements, #Rhodesmustfall and #Feesmustfall, make a clarion call to us All – exempting no one, as no one is immune, to participate in decolonisation movements to free our minds. This study attempts to respond to that call by proposing a cutting-edge restructuring of academic curricula, so it mirrors people’s mental and psychological competence and their persona and considers their backgrounds to chart

their own course. In concert, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013) concurs that the [very] leading academic voices on decolonisation are also products of westernised universities, which taught them to think in a particular way. What they are engaged in is self-unlearning, and there is, therefore, the need to unlearn and then relearn. And the pitfalls of falling into what we are trying to change are always there. We also need to be honest and say we are the products of these processes and structures of power we are fighting to change (pp. 10-15).

Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2013) input in the quotation above is an honest take as very few of us, if any, left, ever lived before 1652, a year when the early coloniality started in South Africa. In this sense, we all are obligated to self-unlearning and, therefore, unlearn and relearn.

In this study, I attempt to do that, somewhat of a redress, advocating for a hybrid literacy between traditional conceptions of academic literacy and instruction for students' sociohistorical lives, affluent and less affluent (Kepe, 2017). I discuss and illustrate the hegemony of English in high-learning institutions and the post-apartheid mainstream education system. Alongside my previous work, I interrogate the impasse of language policy in high education and South African schools. This study intends to afford the provision and guidance for classroom instruction and autonomous learning modes balance, where developing new knowledge is heightened, allowing students' voices, the 'third space' in Gutiérrez's terms (2008, p.159). But in doing so, I support my argument by advocating for the notions of biliteracy suggested by Hornberger and Link (2012) and translanguaging (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018). I empathise with the concepts since they oppose the ownership of language and culture, and its territorialisation and challenge the traditional Anglicisation of speakers and their connection to a particular nation-state. Below, I describe the three concepts that support my argument briefly. I begin with the notion of 'third space'.

Third Space

Theoretically, this study is supported by Gutiérrez's (2008, p.159) concept of third space as also explained in Gutiérrez et al. (1999). The author/s postulates that the third space involves using multiple, diverse, and even conflicting mediational devices or zones of development, therefore expanding learning inherently hybrid contexts to a transformative pedagogy where the "conflict, tension, and diversity are intrinsic to learning space (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.159)." To this point, included in the third space is a purposeful use of hybridity and diversity that stimulates the transformation of the mind during studying focusing on the concrete and material practices of a transformative learning environment, which is what curriculum decolonisation should look like, particularly as it relates to language, an affirmative concern in South Africa. Although Gutiérrez (2008) in Nunn, Brandt and Deveci (2016) is considering migrant youth 'communities' in the US, there is a useful interconnection with [our] attempt to provide an alternative curriculum in South Africa's universities. My focus in this view, therefore, hinges on emergent literacies that link to Lee and Canagarajah's (2018) idea of the translanguaging process inter threaded with Hornberger and Link's (2012) concept of biliteracy, where I foresee a co-constructed context through which there is potential for participants to "build new identities" (Gutiérrez, 2008, p.159) through collective problem-solving. In all my literacy projects, the third space construct became a celebration of the local literacies of students from non-dominant groups and unquestionably stimulated curiosity, a catalyst for learner identity. Next, I explain the translanguaging process.

Translingual Process

Lee and Canagarajah (2018), help us see a slight distinction between code-switching and code-mixing, which conceptualise the interlingual relationship between languages, and assume each language preserves its own structure, autonomy, and separate identity, positing that the translingual process treats pure, standardised, or autonomous languages as an ideological construct. The translingual process questions the concept of ownership of language and culture and its territorialisation and challenges the traditional contrast of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers and their connection to a particular nation-state (Kramsch, 1993). As an alternative, translingual considers the languages in interaction, generating new forms and meanings in contact, and treats communication as constituted by mobile verbal resources appropriated and fluidly used beyond separate labels (Blommaert, 2009; Lee & Canagarajah, 2018). This is where the third space resonates concerning how it connects to curriculum transformation and multilingualism, but translingualism and biliteracy as possibilities complete the cycle in 3rd space because regionalism and language as belonging to a certain ethnic group or nation are refuted; the emphasis is on how these concepts can empower students to understand and learn new knowledge beyond their geospatial regions. Adamson and Coulson (2015) agree that transformations in teaching/learning need the provision and guidance of a balance of classroom instruction and autonomous learning modes. Guiterrez et. al. (1999) and Stigger (2018) all advance a need for opportunities in the classroom for students to speak their mother tongue as they engage in critical thinking.

Biliteracy

According to Hornberger and Link (2012), biliteracy is about communication in two (or more) languages in or around writing; crucial are the languages and scripts—the media— through which biliteracy is learnt and used. ...biliteracy offers a lens for considering learners' communicative repertoires and how they are acquired and used. It brings into focus language varieties and writing systems learners need to learn and use and, especially how diverse or similar they are and, whether they are being learnt simultaneously or successively, whether the educational setting is organised to encourage or discourage translanguaging (p. 244). Biliteracy was exhibited in my literacy projects through various literary activities.

Bulembu and Bumbanani Literacy Projects, 2019-2021

I have been single-minded in my effort to contribute to language and across disciplines by promoting basic literacy in schools and academic literacy at the university level. However, and because of the scope of this paper, which prohibits me from going to town on this matter, I will confine myself only to two successful teachings and learning communities, ethnographic action-based, research projects from my previous works.

My literacy projects at Bulembu, subsequently joined by Bumbanani L/H Primary Schools in both schools, I have been making a persuasive call to those who care that with enthusiasm and skill coupled with material support, EFAL students studying in the most difficult circumstances can be encouraged to read age-appropriate, attractive, contemporary reading material (See Kepe & Weagle, 2021). Bulembu and Bumbanani's extensive reading projects/ ER tell a fascinating story and reflect an interesting collaboration between me and international scholars.

As Nunn et al., (2016) explain,

approaches and methods cannot be usefully compared, or even meaningfully discussed in the abstract, as context-less entities. The method practised, the method-in-use, allows us to consider the effectiveness of a so-called method. The attempt to then translate actual practice from one context to another context is what can make [learning] internationally more meaningful (p. 42).

It is precisely such 'translatability' in Nunn's terms (2011), of 'knowledges' for Le Grange (2021) that manifested at Bulembu and Bumbanani that qualify the above assertion that a translation of actual practice from one context to another context can make learning more meaningful. It Starts with a Story! Towards ER is one such communicative competence 'intrinsic case' (Stake, 1995) that focused on six intermediate phase pupils (Grades 4 to 6) in King Williams Town, in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The project was intended to enhance learners' literacy at the school. I conducted the study through a variety of media, such as resource-auditing, pre-post case study interviews, and providing plenty of opportunities to access reading materials that pupils enjoy reading in a relaxed atmosphere, such as fairy tales, folk tales, novels, plays, poetry and media journals (print, audio and visual). It generated other media resources, such as video recordings, classroom corner libraries, translatability, book reports, continuous assessment, long-term intrinsic motivation for reading, and a comprehensive extensive reading project report. The project also funded, trained, and mentored professional literacy tutors [my contribution to unemployment] in the areas of reading, writing, mathematical literacy and integrating technological literacy. They (literacy tutors) became my foot soldiers on-site, armed with facilitation skills and involved in data collection.

The project changed the learners from what Sivasubramaniam (2017) calls 'one right reading', which he claims destroys the natural basis for a plurality of responses and love of reading. The Bulembu project saw the beneficiaries: the learners who used to channel their energy to their football team on the field, a passion, which kept them on the field, as the lack of books – and the inability to read -- kept them out of the classroom. Their performance brought power from their own language in their land, yet they were marginalised by not reading and writing in English. I then correlated the lack of a school library on-site/ on-premises to low reading performance and low motivation. I hypothesised, and I was right, that a library and a regimented reading programme that prioritised reading for pleasure could be a solution. I will return to the successes of the project in the findings.

Methodology

As I indicated earlier, this paper is possibly best placed in an ethnographic research paradigm congruent to interpretivism since it is intrinsically connected to and empathetic towards exploring the local context rather than quantitatively measuring and reducing it (Stake, 1995). Qualitative methods of ethnography, narratives, collaborative autoethnography, and case studies suit this attempt (Adamson & Coulson, 2015). I visited the sites occasionally and was also acting as a participant observer. Reflexivity counted for neutrality as I interacted with the participants to observe elements of objectivity, although both studies are subjective projects. I used

representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. This meant that ethnographers and qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena concerning the meanings people bring to them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011).

Right from the beginning of this study, I have been pursuing a hybrid literacy among traditional conceptions (L1 for reference of L2) of basic and academic literacy and instruction for students' sociohistorical lives (Gutiérrez et al., 1999), affluent and less affluent. An ethnographic study (Adamson & Coulson, 2015) follows the interpretivism paradigm, where I have used semi-structured interviews for data collection. In line with Nunn et al., (2016) "... method-in-use, allows [us] to consider the effectiveness of a so-called method. The attempt to then translate actual practice from one context to another context is what can make [learning] internationally more meaningful (p. 42).

I supported my argument with notions of biliteracy (Hornberger & Link, 2012), and translanguaging process (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018) as the cutting-edge ideologies against ownership of language and culture, its regionalism, challenging the traditional paradox of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers and its connection to a particular nation-state. I argued against the English language as the only LoLT in South Africa's mainstream schools and tertiary education (see Kepe, 2019/2020 & 2021). I contended that English in South Africa has been dominant since its inception and at the expense of the indigenous languages, by and large, the majority but, most importantly, have been avowed as official languages by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. I position biliteracy (Hornberger & Link, 2012) and translanguaging process (Lee & Canagarajah, 2018) as alternative media devices hoping the powers that be: those policymakers and lead academics will devise a role for L1 for the reference of L2 to help students like the B.E.d ones premised in my previous study in a South African university for maximum understanding of new knowledge and attaching value to (L1s) marginalised by the colonial and apartheid education. It is also hoped in this study that some recognition for those L1 scholars/ students in tertiary education, their deeply empowering means for L1 both as scholars or teacher trainees, will eventually achieve a higher status in their discipline and society. The above view is in line with Foley (2002), who contends that the concern is not so much in South Africa's case using the indigenous languages as a medium of instruction, but the concern is the instrumental value of the African languages.

Adamson and Coulson (2015) postulate that the challenge is to decenter English-only research conversations and western disciplinary research processes while still embracing English as the final product of research (Adamson & Coulson, 2015). This view was acknowledged in "It Starts with a Story! Towards extensive reading" (see Kepe & Weagle, 2021), although the focus was on primary school, the "Beliefs of Students About Their Translanguaging Practices in a South African University" (Kepe, 2021) is a case study focused on five third-year students from the Bachelor of Education Undergraduate Class. The participants ranged in age from 18 to 35. The researcher was an insider, presenting English Methodology to those students. The study was conducted through the students' pre-writing process with the Gibbons Curriculum Cycle (2002) aid to collect data. Method-in-use and translatability by Nunn et al. (2016) underpinned the study as the theoretical framework. The study already revealed that when translanguaging is adopted, it accommodates cultural and linguistic negotiation practices, informed by plurality to reflect a broad diversity of

global settings while accommodating successful communication, including in our language classrooms.

Below I refer to the selected findings of both projects and would discuss briefly why such findings in a way, attempt a response to the winding and central question in both projects, and that is, how I can afford the concerned student and others with similar English language deficits with some provision and guidance for classroom instruction, and 'autonomous learning modes balance' (Adamson & Coulson, 2015), where developing new knowledge is promoted, allowing students' voices and agency. However, as Nunn et al. (2016) like Baker (2008) stated previously, there are no all-encompassing paradigms to cover every situation as each is different. Because of this, the wide context and multidisciplinary nature of this task mean that not all possibilities for engaging in such research can be covered; however, it is hoped that some benefit can be gained from the experiences I draw upon.

All the participants in both projects consented to using the interview data, and there was no request for anonymity; instead, participants were keen to have their names and even possibly photographs to be included, if needed, in any report or conference report. However, the scope of this paper prohibits me from dwelling a lot; therefore, I selected the most relevant comments and pictures as evidence. As alluded to earlier, the name of the Bulembu project is, "It Starts with a Story! Towards Extensive Reading". The designated strands of data for this project would be presented by five selected participants and would focus on the background of the school and/or ER, the beneficiaries and some of the methods-in-use featured prominently in the projects. such methods included: free writing, dialoguing, pen-pal writing, book reviews and poster design and presentations through translanguaging. Due to the broad context and multidisciplinary nature of these projects, not all possibilities for engaging can be covered; however, it is hoped that some benefit can be gained from the experiences that I draw upon. I, therefore, begin with the comments about the influence of extensive reading at Bulmbu L/H Primary School. First, the principal, Mr MX Mgolombane (excerpt 1), second, the literacy tutor (excerpt 2) from the four I trained and third, (excerpt 3) the language teacher I have coached on implementing the project, Mrs Nqadala, ever since it was launched on 24 October 2019. I also selected two learners (excerpts 4& 5) based on their academic performance and reading fluency in the intermediate phase. Lastly, and as alluded to previously, the success of the Bulembu's extensive reading project attracted the interest of other neighbouring schools as a symbol of good practice, such as Bumbanani Lower and Higher Primary School. This is my second ER project as a reading coach following Bulembu's applauded extensive reading project. Because of this, Bumbanani's story also features in this article briefly. Hence, I integrated their teacher comments who coordinates the /ER project at the school by the name of Mrs Soci as the only respondent and will feature in excerpt six. Additionally, I will extend the correspondents' comments to higher education where I chose only two B.Ed. teacher trainees' strands (excerpts 7 & 8) to allude to the positive results of the translingual process in which I engaged them and having participated in the previous study/project as well. I will explain my choice of the two respondents later.

Concerning the methods-in-use, I propose to infuse them within the participants' comments rather than addressing each of them (more interest and information about those is available online as both projects are published: English Scholarship Beyond Borders Volume 6, Issue 1, 2021- It Starts With a Story! Towards Extensive Reading Kepe and Weagle/ and Beliefs of Students About Their Translanguaging Practices in a South African University, ESBB Volume 7, Issue 1, 2021 Mzukisi Howard Kepe). See the selected comments below as indicated.

Excerpt 1, Bulembu Principal presents a brief background of the school and some benefits of the/ ER:

Principal: Bulembu Primary was built by illiterate community members who had never been to school before, being founded in 1937. Most people in this village are not working and are solely dependent on various grants offered by the government. The situation unlike before is very bad, with social ills e.g., alcohol abuse and drugs, especially since there are no role models. Learners have no desire to learn. The educator's confidence has dropped significantly. Amidst this situation we found our school in, a bonafide of this village Dr Kepe visited us. A meeting with the SGB was held on 15 July 2019 where Dr Kepe came up with various strategies to help bring back positive learning. He came up with a special programme called Extensive Reading. The program involved reading with pleasure and enjoyment. Creating an environment where learners are not forced to read, providing material for learners to read, and creating posters about their storybooks. A team of four literacy tutors was assembled and had to be paid for by Dr Kepe himself. A stipend of R 1200 for each month for at least a year. This project was meant for grades 4-7.

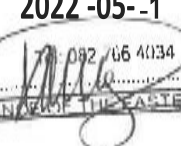
Note. An important point to flag about Dr Kepe's extensive reading project is that he emphasised reading both the vernacular, being isiXhosa, the spoken language of the school and English. To this point, the learners were not limited to reading English only. He referred to this as biliteracy. He also advocated translanguaging during the learners' discussions, as he is an aficionado of bilingualism. We received reports from the parents that even during the COVID-19 pandemic the learners were busy reading, and writing book reports and pen-pals, something that was not existing before in our school.

From Bulembu Pr
Mqolomane XM (Principal)

DEPARTMENT OF ~~EDUCATION~~
EDUCATION

Date 2022-05-1

71 082 06 4034

Principal: 

PROVINCE OF THE EASTERN CAPE

The Duties of the Literacy Tutors/reading coaches, they facilitated a free environment, and reported to the school principal, but were not supposed to teach but facilitate learning. Attempted to create a positive and conducive environment for reading and learning and teaching in general. Each class had a corner library. Big display tables for books for selecting "books of choice" were an order of the day and corner shelves were built in the classes. Dr Kepe would do monitoring thoroughly. The workshop for the tutors and teachers was conducted by Dr Kepe.

Excerpt 2, literacy tutor

Literacy tutor: We started the ER programme by introducing reading aloud and later silent reading. At first, they were not comfortable reading in front of the class, but with time we let each learner select a book that she/ he likes and were gradually at ease and their self-esteem built up. As a consequence, "bayazizela," come on their own to select a book on the display table and from the reading box eagerly. Unlike before, no one is pushing them now. They borrow books and come back with book reports in their journals. Both languages have improved in reading and writing. Importantly, they are not only reading English books but also vernacular [Isixhosa].

Excerpt 3, the language teacher

Teacher: Even though our learner-teacher ratio is a problem, the morale in this school is now different. Not only the children that have benefited but also us as teachers, we are spiritually uplifted. There is a vibe, and joy and things are happening, Sir. Thank you for the ER project. I do not have words for you, our God knows and sees what is in your heart. Continue to be a blessing to others as well.

Excerpt 4, Bulembu learner 1

Learner 1: Yes, my mom can read and write. Sometimes she does read a storybook to me. My brother also tells me stories about hunting and so on. Since the beginning of the ER programme, I find that reading boosts my imagination. I can now compare fiction with real things that affect my life. If I only listen to a story and do not read it, I will not know how to read it. I like reading stories for fun because it develops my mind and challenges my brain. I like it very much. It helps when I feel down. Yes, I do read stories at home, which mostly are not for homework purposes. Yes, I can briefly tell a story through book reports from several books that I read in the ER programme. For example, I enjoyed a story by Margaret Ryan titled, *Fergus the Forgetful*. In the story, Fergus Ferguson forgets things, not important things like how asteroids are made or why a cork floats, but unimportant things like wearing matching socks or peeling a banana before eating it.

Excerpt 5 Bulembu Learner 2

Learner 2: Firstly, reading broadened my vocabulary, whether I am reading my vernacular or English. Personally, if were not allowed to use our vernacular languages in our groups, I would have had a lot of difficulty with my studies. English is not our mother tongue; therefore, sometimes the big words can confuse us, but we need (English) a lot. Even if I want to study overseas, I know it would be possible because I speak English. English is a vast language of business, so, every day I learn something new. Reading in English and our mother tongue helps, I enjoy it, but I have to do research-based assignments and almost all information is in English.

Summary of Comments Made Above

Briefly, all the participants, included: the principal of the school and the language teachers/teachers expressed heartfelt gratitude for the ER project, claiming that it has achieved its intended learning outcomes. Bulembu and later joined by Bumbanani are a continuation of my literacy projects across the Eastern Cape, South Africa, in my 23 years as a teacher. The most successful ones were Toise High School and Hoer Skool De Vos Malan High School, also in King Williams Town District. However, I then realised a little later that, truth be told, the extensive reading project was even more needed in primary schools judging by the poor input in literacy of those who start grades eight/8 at secondary school and beyond matric entering tertiary level with an immense language deficit. I strongly believed, and by now, I know I was right, that if ER started

there, then to secondary, it would leverage indirectly into tertiary education. As the Principal of Bulembu, Mr Mogolombana has alluded to above, I was determined to make a difference, and drew inspiration from seeing them (pupils) enjoy reading, unlike before when they used to spend more time on the soccer field. Now more energy was channelled parallel, sports and reading for the love of it was evident when some reported several books they read. Below I show working with the Principal, the SGB, and the staff, but most importantly, a book sponsorship/ media resource from Biblionef led to the success of all my literacy projects. See below a picture of the school community, and I labelled photo A.

Photo A below demonstrates the school community, showing sponsorship courtesy of Biblionef, Cape Town. Many thanks, Sunitha, for lending an ear and help when we knocked at your door.

Photo A



Photo A above is the Bulembu school community, the Principal Mr Mogolombana is on the far right, next to him is his Deputy Mrs Nyamakazi, followed by the Chairperson of the SGB Mamma Zikhali and her Deputy, Mr S. Kebhe and the secretary of the school, behind is Mrs Nqadala, the language teacher whom I work with. Thank you, Ms Nqadala. Like Atwell advocates:

"For students of every ability and background, it is the simply miraculous act of reading a good book that turns them into readers. The job of adults who care about reading is to move heaven and earth to put that book into a child's hands" (2006, p. 144) — Nancy Atwell

Photo B, below shows a published piece courtesy of the Bugle, showing the development of my literacy project. Many thanks to the Bugle:

Photo B



Photo B, above is a published piece courtesy of the Bugle, showing the development of my literacy project. Many thanks to the Bugle:

Literacy is also about advocacy, roping everyone to model reading ubiquitously (Kepe and Weagle, 2021)

Photo C shows Mrs Nqadal, EFAL teacher for Bulembu and [me], the reading coach/ Dr Kepe



Photo C above shows Mrs Nqadala on the left and the reading coach, Dr Mzukisi Howard Kepe, showing the books sponsored by Biblionef and a little modelling and inspiring.

Of importance is that the pupils were reading across media, included were: newspaper articles, and magazines, watching the news, adverts, sports, films/plays, and radio programmes. Note that

60% of the material read or listened to, or watched had to be in the vernacular, and 40% was in English. Whatever new knowledge gained from those affordances would be reflected upon in writing or through classroom dialogue by the participants to promote understanding and reading culture.

Translanguaging was evident and demonstrated particularly when they designed the genre of the poster and attempted to interpret and understand the genre of poetry through the picture on a flipchart sheet. But also the pen-pal activity in writing, where they write letters and emails to each other about the books they read. Role-plays, drama and debate emanating from the stories they read, and relating with characters was a great deal. But the one activity that stood out in improving writing proficiency was pen-pal writing especially writing poems to each other and reciting them aloud in class. But a participant would not read her poem, but a friend/pal who wrote it would read/recite in front of the class, and the three well-written ones would then be voted to by the whole group and subsequently published. Book reports were written every day and reported during book discussions on Fridays. Fridays were also journaled days, where they reflected on the project and how it was assisting them, and the challenges and how to resolve those, if there were any. This 'multimodal/media classroom discourse' resonates with (Thesen, 2014) and (Atwell, 2006) 'reading zone, where the students identifying with characters in the book would fictitiously escape the classroom and vicariously zoom into the book, laughing, weeping and pitying with characters'. If you ask me what a reading zone looks like, how about this original picture labelled photo D from Bumbanani's extensive reading? Below, photo D shows Bumbanani pupils in an imaginative state of a 'reading zone'.

Photo D



Above, photo D shows Bumbanani pupils in an imaginative state of a 'reading zone'

This was common in one activity called Uninterrupted Silent Sustained reading/USSR, borrowed from Stephen Krashen (1982), an American academic and linguist.

Postscript. The genre of poster design (not a collage) was just another exceptional one. I label the poster as photo E

Photo E shows the genre of poster design

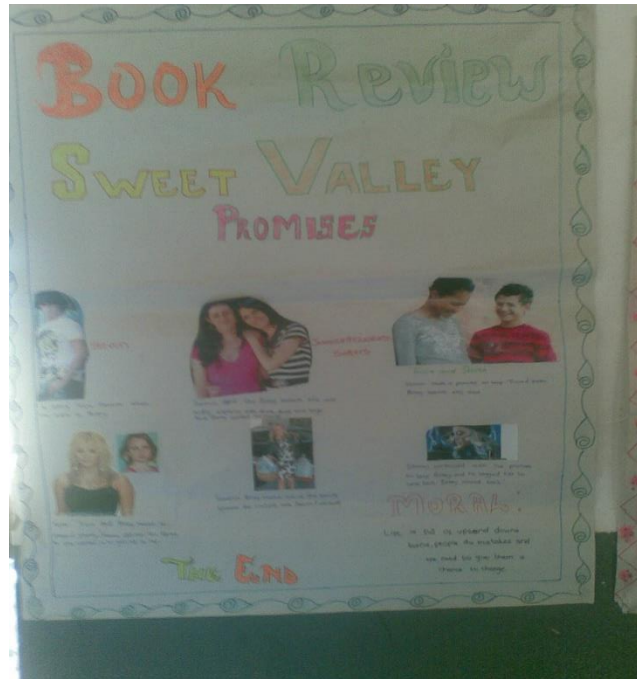


Photo E above shows the genre of poster design and presentation

In addition to reading for enjoyment, the genre of poster design stands out as one of those most loved by the learners using the book of choice, magazine (s) cuttings, pair of scissors v tearing, frame construction, captions, interpreting characters by pictures, patterns, background colour, choice of colours, thinking about a legible captivating head, font choice, discussions and engaging about the suitability through negotiation and persuasion used to be fascinating as I facilitate interactive learning, stimulating curiosity and encouraging enthusiasm. The massive energy displayed during the preparations of the genre of the poster, sharing responsibilities and collecting resources was astounding. See below some of the translingual practices by the beneficiaries in a poem taught using the genre of poster design:

"I am doing the header, ndenza [i] background, hayi mna ndizokwenza [ii] captions", man, I am cutting pictures with a pair of scissors. "Hayi, man, let's do tearing vs cutting"—all this was spontaneous, not dictated. Others imagined the characters; others would be busy discussing and thinking/reflecting on a story but selecting pictures that sought to interpret either semiotic resources or the poem's theme. When this happened, the act of reading became a composing process (Kepe, 2020), writing, and translating into all forms of expression through dialogue about reading and free writing or journaling. For Bumbanani L/H Primary school's progress on/ER project, Mrs Soci's who coordinates the project had this to say about it:

Excerpt 6, Bumbanani EFAL teacher

Mrs Soci: Bumbanani was established in 1992 at Quzini Location, a deep rural village on the outskirts of King Williams Town, Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. It was built by community members who had virtually very little education and are enthusiastic and very keen to get a quality education for their children. Bumbanani is relatively a big higher primary school situated in Quzini administrative area. This village is fairly big with more than 2500 households. Unemployment, in this village, is very rife, as people are dependent entirely on various grants offered by the government.

In January 2020 Dr Kepe held a meeting with our SGS wherein he introduced an extensive reading project which involves positive learning and reading. Dr Kepe was well received by the parents and his untiring and unwavering support is deeply appreciated by the community and the teachers. Our constructive and meaningful engagements with Dr Kepe have yielded positive results and have also impacted our learners positively. His strategy is to help bring back the positive quality contribution to uplifting the morale of our children.

He assembled a team of four literacy tutors and had to be paid by Dr Kepe, himself. A stipend of R1200 for each month for at least a year. The programme is meant for grades 4 to 7. The literacy tutors were his foot soldiers since he is a lecturer at the University of Fort Hare. Mainly, the literacy tutors had to create a friendly positive learning environment free of fear in collaboration with permanent staff members. Coaching reading. Assisting in imparting mathematical literacy and instilling a love for reading. They made learners own the library by giving them responsibilities, such as library monitors, accession registers etc., but monitoring was done by Dr Kepe.

A workshop for teachers was conducted by Dr Kepe. Mrs NB Soci was chosen as the coordinator of the programme. The project was launched in January 2020. There has been a great improvement in learner writing. The learners' self-esteem was boosted as they displayed confidence during role-plays and book discussions. There is more willingness on the part of the learners to read than they were before. We see improvement in the pronunciation of English words as well. Learners can now read fluently. This has influenced teachers, as well as they, appear to be motivated a great deal with uplifted spirits. And this sudden impact and influence could be attributed to Dr Kepe's passion as our reading coach in our school.



Comment

Mrs Soci from Bumbanani L/H Primary School at Quzini, 5 km from King Williams Town, is a wonderful teacher. Since the inception and launch of the extensive reading /ER in her school, she ran with it none stop. Consequently, there is a significant improvement in learners' reading and writing skills. Photo F below shows Mrs Soci and the SMT with books sponsored by Biblionef at my behest.

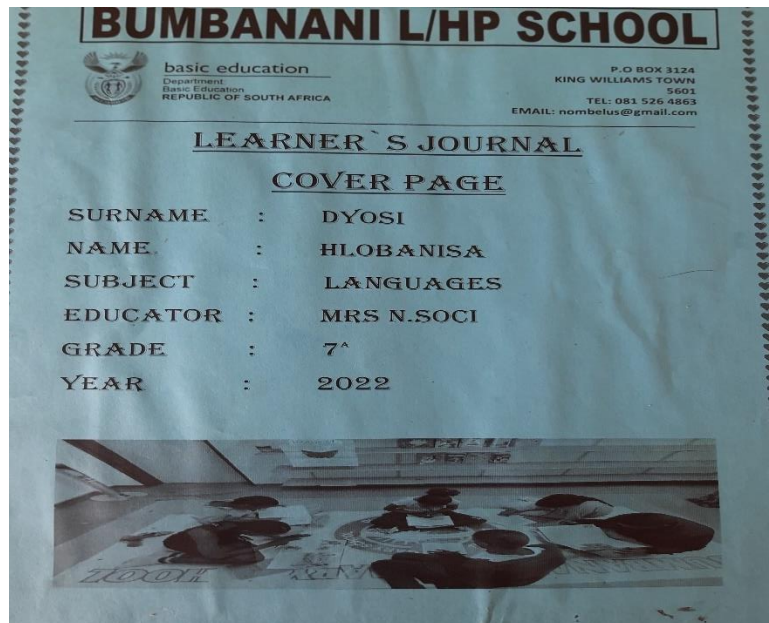
Photo F



Photo F above at Bumbanani L/H Primary School shows Mrs Soci, me, and the SMT with books sponsored by Biblionef

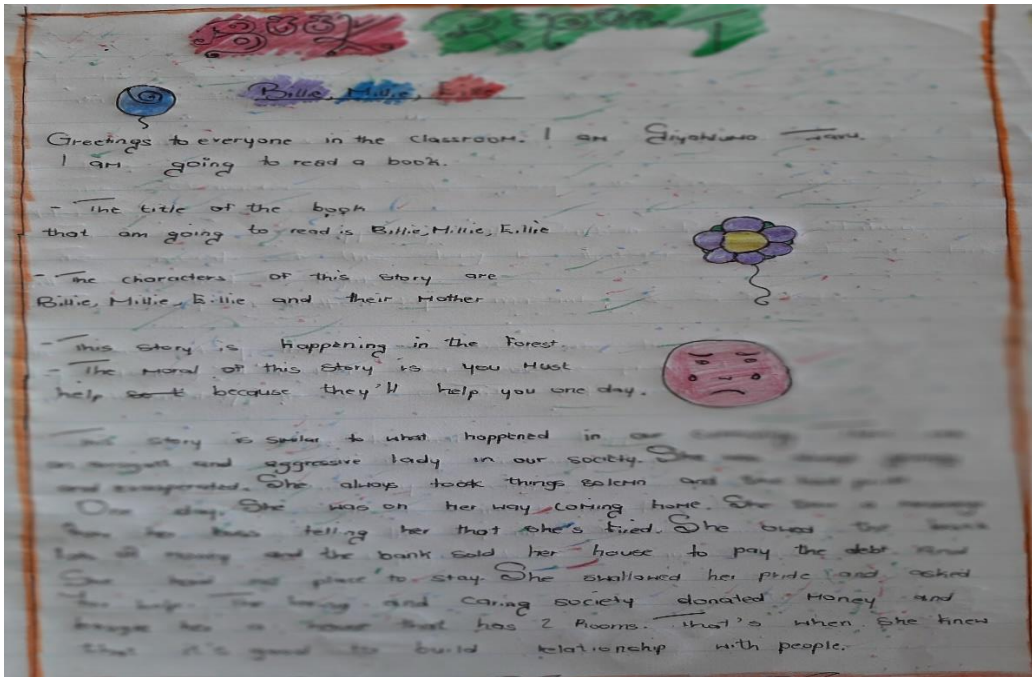
Below I show the two pieces of evidence of selected book reports by Bumbanani L/H Primary School extensive reading project.

Cover page of piece 1:



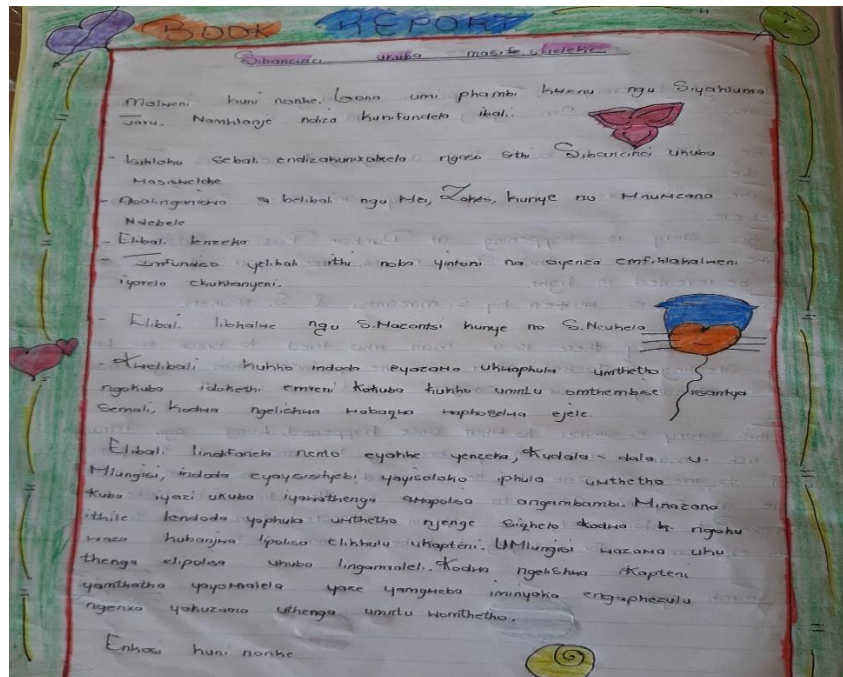
Grade 7 cover page above of the book report in English First Additional Language/EFAL

Grade 7 Piece 1 book report in English First Additional Language/EFAL



Piece 1 above is a book report in English First Additional Language/EFAL by Bumbanani

Piece 2 below is a book report in EFAL with no cover page



Grade 7 Piece 2 above shows a book report by Bumbanani pupil

As an initiator, also a reading coach, I trained and coached the staff in both schools, but credit should go to the teachers I work with to make literacy successful in less affluent schools. Many thanks, Mam Soci; your passion for literacy has not gone unnoticed. As alleged earlier, upon my arrival in academia, I realised that all along, I was right. If students have missed literacy from primary and secondary school (Kepe, 2017), the cracks will show in tertiary education.

As said previously, another project distinctly focused on translanguaging process and incorporated biliteracy, the former proposed by Lee & Canagarajah (2018) and the latter by Hornberger and Link (2012). The project was based on its published name: "Beliefs of Students About Their Translanguaging Practices in a South African University". I selected a few strands presented by B.Ed. teacher trainees of the University of Fort Hare who attested to the progress of the translanguaging process in an English language methodology class at Fort Hare, Alice Campus. I will use only two strands from two teacher trainees whose names are mentioned as they assented to being published. I chose two using similar criteria I used for the primary schools, which was based on academic performance and concept analysis in this case. The choice of two is informed by the fact that the project has since been published, so a full article is available online and on other academic platforms. I start with Jafter:

Excerpt 7

Excerpt 7, Jafter Portia: My mother played a vital role in understanding the difference between the languages [English, isiXhosa and Sesotho]. She helped me distinguish how various alphabets sound in each of those languages. For example, the "C" in isiXhosa does not sound the same in English. While the Sesotho Language does not use the 'C', instead, it uses 'K' with a different sound from 'C'. Even though my mother encouraged multilingualism, she advocated for better proficiency in English concerning speaking, reading, and writing above my vernacular languages. To be honest, when I first heard about translanguaging, I was a bit sceptical. I won't lie I just thought it was similar to code-switching and did not want to accept that it was different and so I questioned its relevance, however, when I started reading more about it and saw how it was used in the past by different researchers, I realised that this is something I used my entire life and it is a simple concept really and naturally occurring. As quite often, we use the existing language to decode and understand the new language, so, it is a teaching strategy that I would encourage my learners to use because it has worked for me even though I did not know what it was then, it can work for others too who wish to try it. Comments The above observations signal the stereotypes about using African languages as media of learning and teaching or as school subjects.

Excerpt 7 above is a selected strand of the UFH B.Ed. teacher trainees about their translanguaging practices in class.

Excerpt 8

Excerpt 8, Siviwe Sephoko, I never thought that languages can coexist in the classroom situation concerning having the liberty to express your views where English domination is controlled. I never knew that students' mother languages promoted by a teacher can be used in group discussions in what my lecturer calls exploratory talk in English Class. The only way I knew was that students should be taught in English as scripted in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS, 2012). But after I heard about translanguaging, I began to understand that learners' mother languages can be used in dialogues and discussions but to be presented in the target language (presentational talk).

Excerpt 8 above is a selected strand of the UFH B.Ed. teacher trainees about their translanguaging practices in class.

Comments

The teacher trainees agree that when they were introduced to translingual processes, it was a new experience and positively influenced their English language methodology studies concerning understanding philosophical concepts.

Conclusion

In this paper, I have been proposing a developing construct of a third space supported by the two concepts of the biliteracy and translingual process to help students, particularly the marginalised in South Africa's mainstream and higher education to build new local contexts and new identities and refute the ownership of language and culture, its regionalism, challenging the traditional paradox of 'native' and 'non-native' speakers and its connection to a particular nation-state. The third space, as exhibited in my award-winning literacy project, helps students learn from each other through regular interaction and it is more important that they share a common interest than a spatial geographical location. A commonplace where there is a transformative space and the potential for an expanded form of learning and developing new knowledge is heightened.

I aimed to afford the provision and guidance for classroom instruction, and 'autonomous learning modes balance, where developing new knowledge is promoted, allowing students' voices and agency. This was a humble attempt to respond to the 2015-2016 student protests on South African university campuses, where many were perplexed on how to respond to the demands of the students to end violent protests against western disciplinary norms that devalue non-centre practices and themes.

I argued against the English language as the only language of learning and teaching in South Africa's mainstream schools and tertiary education. I contended that English in South Africa as elsewhere in the globe has been dominant since its inception and at the expense of the indigenous languages, by and large, the majority but, most importantly, have been avowed as official languages by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa. I position biliteracy and translingual process as alternative media devices hoping the powers that be: those policymakers and lead academics will devise a role for L1 for the reference of L2 to help students like the B.E.d ones premised in my previous study in a South African university for maximum understanding of new knowledge and attaching value to (L1s) marginalised by the colonial and apartheid education. It is also hoped in this study that some recognition for those L1 scholars/ students in tertiary education, their deeply empowering means for L1 as scholars or teacher trainees will eventually achieve a higher status in their discipline and society. As argued elsewhere, the concern is not so much, in South Africa's case using the indigenous languages as a medium of instruction, but the concern is the instrumental value of the African languages. The challenge is to decenter English-only research conversations and western disciplinary research processes while still embracing English as the final product of research.

The article affirms a notion that when translanguaging is adopted, it accommodates cultural and linguistic practices of negotiation informed by plurality to reflect a broad diversity of global settings while accommodating successful communication, including in our language classrooms

Alongside my previous work in language, I interrogated the impasse of language policy in high education. South Africa's revised Language Policy Framework for Public Higher Education Institutions commits to the study and development of all official South African languages, especially those which were historically marginalised and that university students with a mother tongue other than English should not be at a disadvantage compared to those who speak English at home. As said, the third space supported this article as a theoretical framework.

The extensive reading projects yielded positive results in both natural settings. The students' critical thinking abilities evolved with their literacy rates, and they developed the ability to skim and scan, predict, and infer from context. At primary school/s debate societies and book clubs have been established, and the /ER programme itself now extends into later grades, ensuring that the first group has ongoing support since primary schools are feeder schools of secondary schools. In this way, the secondary schools' matric results of the fed by the primary outputs may improve. Academic students' scores are now much closer to the top of the district, and more recently, Bulembu Lower and Higher Primary School received the district award for excellence. Without a doubt, this work will be long-lasting and will inspire a new generation of students. Through this type of meaningful influence, I unequivocally attribute to a reading coach's [me] ability to inspire and teach using the same best practice central to my research track.

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