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Translanguaging and how to handle multilingualism in the classroom

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Preview of the presentation

- Aim: To show the dilemmas faced by South African universities in implementing their language policies and innovations they have adopted to address them.

- Argument: I will argue that most current language policies are not suitable for complex multilingual contexts, as they are based on monolingual or monoglossic approaches to teaching and learning, and are not consistent with students' heteroglossic language practices.

- Recommndation: use of translingual approaches such as translanguaging for bridging institutional language policies and pedagogical practices

- Examples from the Multilingualism Education Project, UCT to demonstrate how translanguaging pedagogy can be used for bridging institutional language policies and pedagogical practices

Introduction

- Africa Day and the language question on the continent (over 2000 languages and none of them is used as a medium of teaching and learning in other than language disciplines.

- COVID-19 highlighted serious challenges of the lack transformation and existing inequalities in our country.

- The challenge of language policy in South African universities (policies without implementation, SAHRC report 2014)

a) The lack of a uniform understanding of what transformation means;

b) The lack of institutional will to transform university cultures in some universities; poor integration of the transformation project at all levels of institutional life;

c) The persisting disparities between racial groups inherited from our Apartheid past, as well as the persisting disparities between former white and former black universities;

d) **The lack of commitment to multilingualism in institutions of higher learning, as well as the lack of real commitment to the development of indigenous languages as academic and scientific languages that can be used as mediums of instruction**;

e) The insufficient attention being paid to the role of sport in the transformation agenda;

f) The slow progress in changing student demographics in some universities and the failure of some universities to diversify the student demographics on its campuses;

g) **The slow progress in changing the demographics of academic staff (particularly senior management staff) and university management in some universities toward more representivity and progression programs for identified staff;**

h) The persisting subcultures of discrimination and domination within universities;

i) The insufficient supply of adequate university accommodation and ineffective residence placement policies which hinder racial integration at university residences;

j) The inadequate governance structures in some universities;

k) The under- funding of the system of higher education by the state;

l) The insufficient collaboration between various actors within the higher education sector

Language and decolonisation

 In my view language was the most important vehicle through which that [colonial] power fascinated and held the soul prisoner. The bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation'

(Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o *Decolonising the Mind, 1986*)

- In most South African universities, the English academic discourse which emerged in the 17th century as a vehicle for the new rationalist/scientific paradigm, continues to be perceived as a panacea for educational problems of students for whom English is not the first language.

- This discourse is considered prestigious and its mastery is perceived to be essential for academic success or for one to be able to play a role on the international stage or to qualify for what Neville Alexander referred to as the "profits of distinction" or "elite-closure"

- The monolingual English discourse hegemony seems to continue unchallenged in South African universities, not even by the students #hashtag movements.

Universities	Official languages				
• Cape town	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa		
• Rhodes	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa		
• Wits	English	-	Sesotho	isiZulu	
• Stellenbosch	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa		
• Pretoria	English	Afrikaans	Sepedi		
• Free State	English	Afrikaans	Sesotho		
• Johannesburg	English	Afrikaans	Sepedi	isiZulu	
• North West	English	Afrikaans	Sesotho	SeTswana	
• UKZN	English	-	isiZulu		
• NMMU	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa		
• Zululand	English	-	isiZulu		
• Fort Hare	English	-	isiXhosa		
• Unisa	English	Afrikaans	All nine African Languages		
• W. Sisulu	English	-	isiXhosa		
• W. Cape	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa		
• CPUT	English	Afrikaans	isiXhosa		

Critical issues

- The concepts "language" "multilingualism" and the "multilingual university"
- Language policy as text vs language policy as practice
- Pedagogical theories and practices
- English as a *dominating* language

"English [is]Unassailable but Unattainable"

(Alexander, 2002 English Unassailable but Unattainable The Dilemma of Language Policy

in South African Education (Alexander, 2002)

- Africa, and South Africa in our case, stands out as one of the few developing countries that educate its children mainly through foreign languages despite all studies such as those of UNESCO that have proven unequivocally that there is a strong connection between mother tongue and educational achievements or academic development in as a whole.

- Ali Mazrui (1996:4) argues that the choice of European languages as mediums of instruction in African universities has had profound cultural consequences for the societies served by those universities.

- According to him, professional scientists in countries like Japan, Korea, German, Italy, Norway, or Finland can organise their conferences and discuss professional matters entirely in their mother tongues, but "a Conference of African scientists, devoted to scientific matters, conducted primarily in an African language, is for the time being sociologically impossible" (Mazrui 1996:4 cit in :16).

- The main linguistic reason for not using African languages in higher education is that they have not yet developed terminologies for the respective disciplines.

- As Neville Alexander often pointed out, this argument is "a conceptual nosense" as literature abounds with studies that show that languages develop through use.

- It is my contention in this presentation that linguistic decolonisation in Africa, and South African higher education in particular, is about moving indigenous African languages from the margins to the centre of the curriculum

- It is my contention that unless indigenous African languages get used in high domains such as education their intellectualisation will remain a pipe-dream.

- Translingual approaches such as translanguaging provide a better alternative strategy for the institutionalization of indigenous African languages **as academic languages or their "intellectualisation"**

Translanguaging approach

The term 'translanguaging'

- The term *translanguaging* (originally *trawsieithu* in Welsh) was first used in Welsh schools in the 1980s by Cen Williams to refer to the use of
  - ➢ one language to reinforce the other in order to increase understanding and in order to augment the pupil's ability in both languages. (Williams, 2002:40)

Translanguaging approach

- Translanguaging approach takes as its starting point the language practices of bilingual speakers who use their linguistic resources flexibly to make meaning of their lives and their learning, and even go beyond them (García, 2011).

- Against monolingualism in favour of fluid and dynamic bi/multilingual languaging practices

- Translanguaging denotes _one linguistic system_ with features that are integrated throughout and from which speakers select features (structural/ systematic) _strategically_ to communicate effectively (García, 2011).

- Translanguaging takes the position that language is *action* and *practice,* and not a simple system of structures and discrete sets of skills, hence the use of an *-ing* form, emphasizing the *action* and *practice* of languaging bilingually. ((Pennycook, 2010; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; García, 2011)

- Translanguaging approach focuses mainly on *languaging* rather than 'language':
  - ➢ the process of using language to gain knowledge, to make sense, to articulate one's thought and to communicate about using language. (Li, 2011, p. 1223)

- Languaging goes beyond the conception of language as a code or a system of rules or structures ((Garcia and Li, 2014:9)

- In languaging, multilingual students engage in cognitive processes such as creativity and criticality.

  ➢ *creativity* may be defined as "the ability to choose between obeying and breaking the rules and norms of behavior, including the use of language" (Garcia and Li (2014:67).

- Translanguaging emphasises agency of multilingual speakers who draw from a wide range of different sets of features (Jorgenson, 2008) and act upon or against socially constructed linguistic norms and standards (e.g. monoglossic ideologies)

- It may produce new and complex discursive practices that cannot be ascribed to one single code (Garcia & Li 2014)

- Translanguaging pedagogy takes as its starting point the language practices of bilingual learners who use their linguistic resources flexibly to make meaning of their lives and their learning, and even go beyond them (García, 2011).

- Against monolingualism in favour of fluid and dynamic bi/multilingual languaging practices

- Translanguaging denotes _one linguistic system_ with features that are integrated throughout and from which speakers select features (structural/ systematic) _strategically_ to communicate effectively (García, 2011).

- Translanguaging takes the position that language is *action* and *practice,* and not a simple system of structures and discrete sets of skills, hence the use of an *-ing* form, emphasizing the *action* and *practice* of languaging bilingually. ((Pennycook, 2010; Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; García, 2011)

- Translanguaging pedagogy promotes *languaging*:
  - the process of using language to gain knowledge, to make sense, to articulate one's thought and to communicate about using language. (Li, 2011, p. 1223)

- Although languaging is important for both monolingual and multilingual learners, as it goes beyond the use of language as a code or a system of rules or structures, for bi-/multilingual learners it enables them to use their multilingual language practices in an ongoing process of interactive meaning making (Garcia and Li, 2014:9) in the learning space.

- In so doing multilingual students engage in cognitve processes such as creativity and criticality.

  ➢ *creativity* may be defined as "the ability to choose between obeying and breaking the rules and norms of behavior, including the use of language" (Garcia and Li (2014:67).

- Lastly, translanguaging pedagogy emphasises <u>agency of multilingual learners</u> who draw from a wide range of different sets of features (Jorgenson, 2008) and act upon or against socially constructed linguistic norms and standards (e.g. monoglossic ideologies)
- Produce new and complex discursive practices that cannot be ascribed to one single code (Garcia & Li 2014)
- Transformative pedagogy for leveraging bilingual students' multilingual competence

Description of the study

- This study is based on the multilingual concept literacy tutorials conducted for first-year economics students.

- This study focuses on selected key concepts in economics.

- Only one concept, 'deficit', will be discussed in this case study to illustrate the use of translanguaging pedagogy for concept literacy.

- The following methodology was adopted for the study.

  ➢ First, two groups of students were selected from the first-year students enrolled in the Extended Academic Development Programme in the Faculty of Commerce (one group for isiXhosa and another for Tshivenda). The focus in this presentation is on the isiXhosa tutorial.

  ➢ Two tutorials (1 hour each) were organized for each group. A tutor was also appointed for each group to assist the Principal Investigator in facilitating the tutorial discussion.

  ➢ Lastly, students were expected to use both English and their home language (isiXhosa) during the tutorial discussion.

  ➢ A multilingual glossary for economics terms was developed and uploeade on *Vula Online multilingual glossaries.*

  ➢ Students were asked to read the definition and the translations of this concept on Vula and give their comments.

  ➢ Before the tutorials started, students were again asked to write down the definition of the term and its translation equivalents in their home language.

  ➢ Thereafter, they were asked to discuss their understanding of the concept in English and in isiXhosa.

  ➢ The following extract is the transcripts of the discussion on the concept 'deficit', which was done in English only.

1. S1: I can describe it as when you have less of something and refer to it as a loss

2. S2: It can also be described as when your inputs are less than your outputs, but all in all, it can be described as a shortage.

3. Facilitator: It is interesting because you seem to be a disagreeing here.

4. [Laughs....] Ok let's hear it in Xhosa or isiXhosa now.

5. [Some laughs about pronunciations.........]

6. S1 : It's like mhhh ngesiXhosa ithetha intoba na ukusebenzisa imali ude ugqithisele kule mali ubuyibekile. Masithi uthathe imali ubuzoyisebenzisa kwinto ethile, uze usebenzise ngaphezu kwalo mali ubuyibekile. Uzixelele ukuba uza kusebenzisa mhlawumbi ikhulu, uze ngoku usebenzise ikhulu PLUS neshumi.

7. S3: Ukutsho ke nam ndithe yilahleko

1. Faci: uthetha ukuthi yilahleko

8. S1 & S2: Sithetha ukuthi yiloss

9. S2: Sithetha ngelahleko kwishishini, masithi umzekelo ishishini lithengisa impahla, incwadi zalo ziye zibe nenani elikhulu kuneli liseluvalelweni. Lo nto ithetha ukuba liyalahlekelwa.

10. Faci: LET'S LOOK AT THAT ONE FIRST, THE LOSS AND LET'S DISCUSS IT FIRST. CAN WE SAY DEFICIT IS A LOSS.

11. S3: BECAUSE nam ndithe yilahleko kwishishini

12. Faci: Yintoni ilahleko ngesiNgesi? CAN THAT BE A LOSS?

13. S1 &S3: Oh! OK ilahleko IS A LOSS

14. S1: Olu hlobo ndithetha ngalo nam, abalahlekelwanga yinto yonke, masithi balahlekelwe yinto embalwa. AsiyoDEFICIT ke leyo okanye yahlukane?

15. S2: Kaloku iDEFICIT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE TWO

16. S1: TO ME THAT IS MORE THAN iLOSS BECAUSE ACCORDING kwabanye abantu bathi iDEFICIT IS WHEN YOU SPEND MORE THAN YOU WANTED.

17. S2: Umzekelo kwezi mpahla zakho, kwi-ECONOMICS ufune impahla ezibiza iR100, kwaze kwathengwa eziyi-120 MORE uzoba nantoni apho? Uzoba neSURPLUS andithi. Ngoku wena uthi, I MEAN (interruption)

18. S3: Uthi kaloku uP........, le mali iseluvalelweni incinci kunexabiso lezinto ozikhuphileyo. Masithi iijezi zakho zikuCOST(e) malini, masithi iR100, wena imali oyizuzileyo yiR50, ngoku imali eseluvalelweni lakho yiR50. YiLOSS ke leyo.

19. S4: ILOSS IS IT LIKE iDIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOSS AND DEFICIT?

20. Faci: OK, WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN LOSS AND DEFICIT THEN/

21. S4: I'D SAY LIKE IN XHOSA, uMzantsi Afrika uyabo..

22. All: e-e-e i-EXPORT ne-IMPORT

23. S4: Masithi uMzantsi Afrika kwi-eXPORT ne-iMPORT uyabona u-iMPORT(a)MORE THAN NO, NO, NO IT;S LIKE u-EXPORT(a) MORE THAN ufumana, THAT'S A DEFICIT leyo

24. S2: Uthi a-IMPORT(E) MORE THAN a-EXPORT (a)

25. S4: Yha, THAT MEANS MEANS u-EXPORT(a) MORE THAN uba ufumana

26. S1: THAT'S THE SAME THING

27. S2: Ndingathi iDEFICIT mna, singayicalula ngendlela ezohlukeneyo. Uba sisondela kwelicala le-IMPORT ne-EXPORT. Uyaqaphela nhe kwi-EXPORt uba ndithenga ngemali yam. Into esijonga kuyo phaya yiRAND a neh, uba yimalini iRAND, yimalini iCOUNTRY eyikhuphileyo yayisa kwamanye amazwe, yabe yona ifumene inkunzi ezingakanani kula mazwe. Ekugqibeleni IS NOT ABOUT iLOSS iS ABOUT umahluko.

28. Faci: Yha yha, THE CONCEPT OF LOSS THERE DOES NOT SEEM TO FIT IT IS BECAUSE NOW YOU ARE EXPORTING MORE, BUT YOU ARE IMPORTING LESS THE COUNTRY IS SUSTAINING LOSS THAN GAINING IN THE COUNTRY. THE DIFFERENCE IS WHAT WE BROUGHT IN THE COUNTRY THAN WE TAKE OUT OF THE COUNTRY.

29. S2: E-e, iDEFICIT andithi singayibeka IN TERMS OF ishishini lodwa, uyaqaphela kule nto yoba iCOUNTRY i-EXPORT(a) ayenzi lOSS, iLOSS kuxa mna ndithengisile ndaza ndafumana imali encinci kunale mna ndiyikhuphileyo. ILOSS yona isekuthengiseni.

30. S1: Ok, xa si-IMPORT(e) MORE iCOUNTRY, THAN si-EXPORT(e) iba njani iBALANCE yayo?

31. S2: YiSURPLUS ke leyo

32. S4: NO asiyosURPLUS, IF u-IMPORT(a) MORE THAN YOU SPEND MORE MONEY, YOU EXPORT LESS.

33. S2 & S3: THAT MEANS YOU EXPORT MORE PRODUCTS
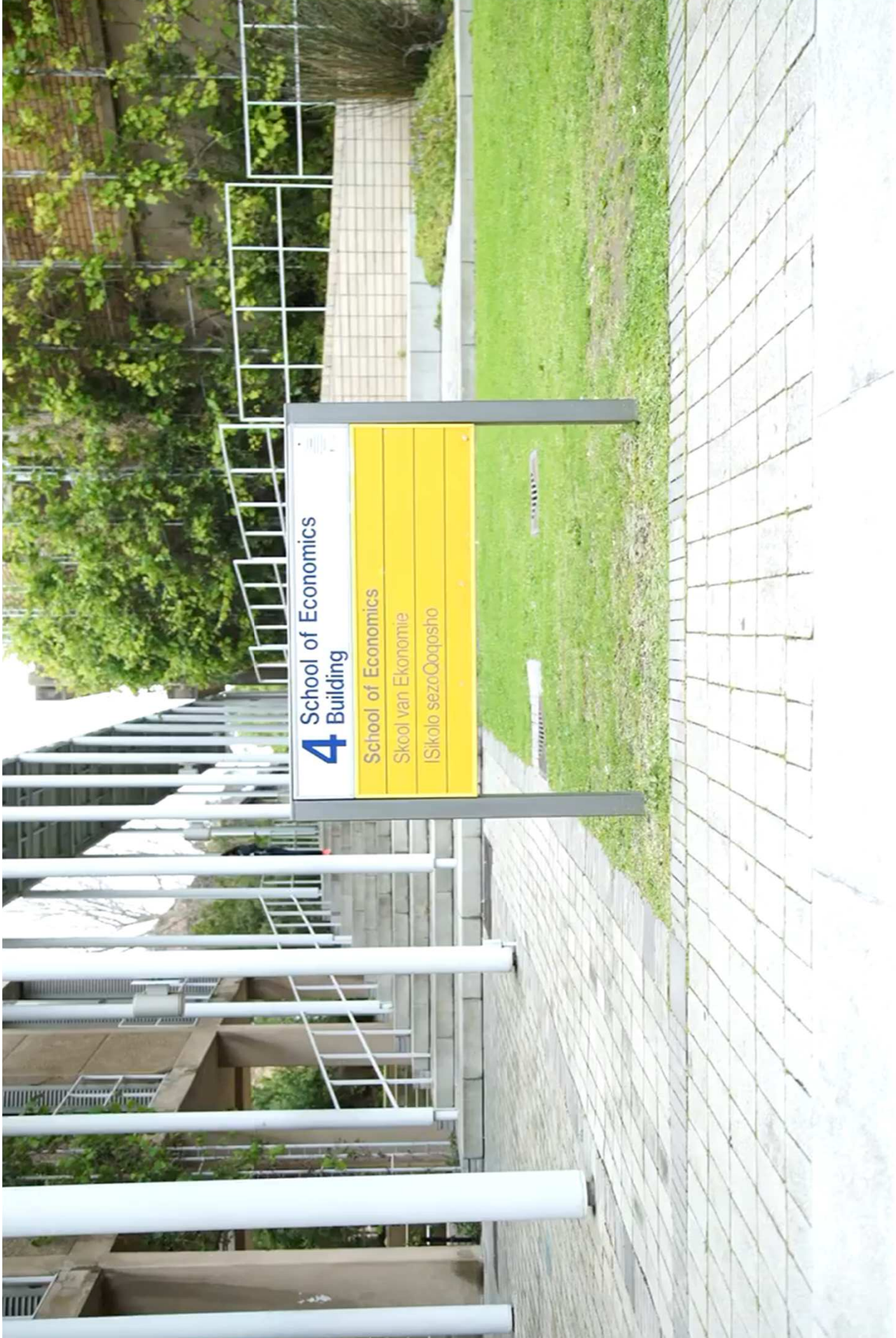
34. S4: NO IS NOT ABOUT PRODUCT, YOU LOOK AT imali

4 School of Economics Building

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ISikolo sezoQoqosho

Students feedback on translanguaging pedagogy

1. **PI: I think basically the exercise which we are trying to do here, if we look at these concepts and how they were defined in English and then try to engage with them in our own language, it can help us to make sense, instead of just trying to rote-learn, the tendency in most cases is to memorize phrases and so on, without understanding the meaning.**

2. **S.: The thing is sometimes it becomes challenging, because most of us are not educated in deep deep Xhosa, we just have maybe home language until matric, or grade 7 or something and then they give us these and you go to a Xhosa website and it has got like deep deep, (dip) which you have never seen.**

3. **PI: Okay, the level**

4. **S: Like it does not help sometimes, because it is just deep deep deep**

5. **S: Xhosa is too broad, it is like for instance even** nase **Eastern Cape isiXhosa**, bakhona abantu abasithetha uqonde ukuba, ewe **it is my language but** andimvanga (isiXhosa is too broad, for instance, even in the Eastern Cape there are people who speak isiXhosa the way that I, myself cannot even understand)

6. **S**: IsiXhosa sinzima kakhulu, yeyona language, **but if** singayi-**understanda ngale-simple Xhosa**, esisisithethayo ngoku (isiXhosa is very difficult, it is the most difficult language, but if we can understand it like this simple Xhosa, that is the way we speak…)

Conclusion

- The study clearly show that translanguaging pedagogy provides an alternative pedagogic strategy in multilingual contexts.
  - ➢ First, this strategy resolves the tension that is often observed between "students' heterogeneous life-world reality and an institutionally maintained ideal of single, holistic and unitary language" (Mick 2011:25), which tends to exclude students' existing linguistic resources which they bring into the academic learning environment.
  - ➢ Second, translanguaging allows "multilingual speakers to intentionally integrate local and academic discourse as a form of resistance, reappropriation and/or transformation of academic discourse" (Canagarajah, 2007:56).

- ➢ Third, it enables students to develop their own <u>voice</u> and <u>engage critically</u> with academic concepts rather than learning definitions by rote. As Cazden (2005:8) pointed out, "there is a difference in 'reciting by heart' and retelling in one's own words".

- ➢ Concept literacy: Bakhtin (1981)'s view that the words that are *tightly* woven with one's own words awaken new and independent words that are organised from within, instead of remaining isolated and in a static condition.

- ➢ Lastly, translanguaging promotes a deeper and fuller understanding of the subject matter (Baker, 2011).

- ➢ "Translanguaging and genre, although conceptually originating from North Atlantic and Australian contexts, may well offer opportunities for students in southern contexts to expand their own linguistic repertoires and to bridge epistemological difference between community and school" (Kathlen Heugh, 2014).

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