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Translanguaging in the classroom: a strategy for English First Additional Language learning

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Abstract: This article explores learners' experiences of using translanguaging as a strategy for learning English as a First Additional Language by examining the opportunities and barriers associated with it. We followed a qualitative research design and conducted six focus group discussions with 44 multilingual learners who participated in after-school peer-tutoring programmes. These learners came from township schools in Gauteng province, South Africa. An inductive thematic approach was used to analyse the data. The findings of the study indicate that translanguaging acts as a tool for meaning-making and identity construction, thereby affirming learners' linguistic fluidity. However, mismatches between teachers' and learners' home languages and monolingual school practices were identified as barriers to translanguaging. We argue that failure to include indigenous languages in educational systems is an act of curricular inequality that causes alienation as learners struggle to find their voice in a monolingual learning environment. The promotion of indigenous languages is a vehicle for inclusion of all learners in the school system as multilingualism facilitates greater opportunity for these learners to have their voices heard. We maintain that the valorisation and acknowledgement of all languages as legitimate sources of knowledge could have far-reaching benefits for education and could enhance nation building.

Introduction

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, many policy changes have been made to ensure the quality of basic education. These policy changes were introduced to provide equitable education for disadvantaged learners, which had been lacking for most black learners during the colonial and apartheid eras (Spaull 2013; Hurst and Mona 2017). During apartheid, the colonial languages of the dominant white racial group were elevated (Afrikaans 10.6% and English 8.7%[1]), which resulted in the marginalisation and suppression of the nine indigenous languages, isiZulu (24.4%), isiXhosa (16.3%), Sepedi (10%), Setswana (8.3%), Sesotho (7.8%), Xitsonga (4.7%), siSwati (2.8%), Tshivenda (2.5%) and isiNdebele (1.7%) (StatsSA 2023 (Year of release of report on census data. Ned 2019). The suppression of these languages was a deliberate silencing of the voices of indigenous people and their knowledge systems. This situation has resulted in the unequal access to education, as the minority of learners learn and acquire knowledge in their dominant language(s), while the majority of learners are forced to learn in a language in which they are not fully proficient.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) implemented radical educational reforms in an attempt to redress the ills of colonial and apartheid education and to prepare all South African learners to be globally competitive (Ned 2019; Maseko and Mkhize 2021). These reforms included the alignment of school language policies with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996). Notably, the DBE adopted the Language-in-Education Policy, which guided schools in choosing the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) (Department of Education 1997). The Language-in-Education Policy (1997) supports an additive bilingual/multilingual approach that promotes the maintenance of the home language(s) while facilitating the effective learning of additional languages. This language policy was designed to elevate the status of indigenous languages and to improve attitudes and practices of these languages (Plüddemann 2015). The language policy advocates additive bi/multingualism, but does not prescribe which language should be used in schools. Despite the language policy's promotion of additive bi/multilingualism, the common practice in South Africa

is to adopt the early exit model from Grade 4, which favours English as the LoLT (Department of Education 1997; Madiba 2012; Plüddemann 2015).

In the South African context, the majority of learners' home languages (L1) include one of the nine indigenous languages, while only 8.7% of the learner population's home language is English and 10.6% is Afrikaans (StatsSA 2023). However, 65% of South African learners are taught in English (LoLT) from Grade 4. This implies that learners are expected to have a high level of competence in English for optimal performance in all learning areas by the end of Grade 3 (DBE 2011; Plüddemann 2015; Taylor and Von Fintel 2016). Research shows that learners in Grade 4 have barely mastered reading comprehension in their L1, yet they are expected to learn successfully in a first additional language (FAL) (Robertson and Graven 2020; DBE 2023). The bias towards English as LoLT ignores the empirical evidence which indicates that a learner's L1 is an important resource for knowledge construction and meaning-making (Cenoz 2017; Wei 2018; Makalela 2019).

Many scholars have critiqued the practice of teaching learners in a FAL or second additional language. They have highlighted the barriers this creates in literacy acquisition and the underperformance this causes in other school subjects (Taylor and Von Fintel 2016; Robertson and Graven 2020). Various scholars have argued that the LoLT is key to learner performance and arguably the biggest single factor that affects learning (Plüddemann 2015; Taylor and Von Fintel 2016). This is because language plays a major role in cognitive development as it provides the concepts for thinking and acting to express ideas and to ask questions (Vygotsky 1978). Therefore, language allows individuals to think autonomously, and to engage critically and meaningfully with the world around them. Without this fundamental resource, learners cannot engage effectively with learning material, which alienates them from the learning environment.

The practice of adopting English as a LoLT is rooted in the Western monolingual perspective, which views languages as separate entities and that situates English in a hegemonic position as a superior academic language (García and Lin 2016; Makalela 2019; Ndlovu and Makalela 2021). This practice disregards bi/multilingual learners' full linguistic repertoires by elevating English and by devaluing indigenous languages. Mbirimi-Hungwe (2022) argues that this practice renders the bi/multilingual speaker, in this case the learners, voiceless and relegates them to second-class citizens. Against this background, the aim of the article is to explore the experiences of bi/multilingual learners in using translanguaging as a strategy for learning English as a First Additional Language (EFAL) in the South African context. The research question of this study is: What are learners' experiences of using translanguaging as a strategy for learning EFAL? In our effort to answer the research question, we explored the opportunities and challenges associated with translanguaging.

Literature review

Theorising translanguaging

The term translanguaging refers to a number of different realities in different contexts and is defined as a pedagogical strategy, social practice and a theory of language (Makalela 2019; García & Wei 2014; Cenoz and Gorter 2022). Translanguaging as a pedagogical strategy refers to the process by which bi/multilingual individuals engage, in both the spoken and written form, to make sense of their worlds by drawing on their full linguistic repertoires (García-Mateus and Palmer 2017; Sefotho and Makalela 2017; Cenoz and Gorter 2022). In the classroom setting, this involves teachers carefully planning the languages used for teaching. This includes allowing the learner to receive input in one language (reading or listening) and to give output (speaking or writing) through the medium of another language. This process enhances understanding of concepts, and develops the weaker language by making use of learners' full linguistic repertoires (Sefotho and Makalela 2017; Maseko and Mkhize 2021; Cenoz and Gorter 2022; Fang et al. 2022). This approach not only helps learners to understand new concepts better, but also enables them to access more information in the subjects they are studying (Cenoz and Gorter 2022). García & Wei (2014) postulates that pedagogical translanguaging liberates the voices of learners by making provision for the flexible use of their linguistic resources. Therefore, pedagogical translanguaging valorises the voices of those learners whose languages have been relegated to the margins of the classroom. This is confirmed in

a study conducted by Hurst and Mona (2017) with university students where students were permitted to submit their assignments in any language. The results show that the use of translanguaging pedagogy legitimised and valued the languages of the students. Consequently, students who felt marginalised in an English-only classroom were empowered to express their contributions through the language of their choice.

Translanguaging as a social practice emphasises the social and interactive aspects of language use. It highlights how individuals innovatively and strategically utilise their linguistic repertoires to facilitate meaningful communication and to navigate their multilingual environments (Wei 2018; Makalela 2019). In the context of the classroom, translanguaging as social practice is learner-centred and primarily concerned with learners' meaning-making by allowing them to align their linguistic resources with the contextual needs of the classroom (Lin 2019; Mbirimi-Hungwe 2022). Moreover, translanguaging practice acts as a tool for agency and empowerment where individuals actively make choices about how to use language to achieve their linguistic goals, and to connect with others and express themselves (Parra 2023). This highlights the complexities, nuances and the dynamic nature of language. It further emphasises the multifunctional nature of language and its social embeddedness, which play a critical role in the lives of individuals and society. Creese and Blackledge (2015) contend that translanguaging practice in the classroom allows translingual learners greater access to content through their dominant language, while it simultaneously facilitates learning the additional language. This practice provides multilingual learners with greater equity and access to knowledge. Therefore, the use of translanguaging creates a positive experience for learners and maximises pedagogic and cognitive benefits (Makalela 2015; García-Mateus and Palmer 2017; Wildsmith-Cromarty 2018).

Translanguaging theory conceptualises language as a practice through which bi/multilingual individuals shape their identities and negotiate power relationships (Wei 2018). Drawing from sociocultural and critical theories, translanguaging challenges traditional linguistic theories that treat languages as discrete systems and advocates for the integration of various linguistic, cognitive and semiotic resources to make sense of the world. As such, it critiques the view of separate linguistic codes and views language as dynamic and fluid, as well as a semiotic resource which individuals can draw from for meaning-making (Wei and Lee 2023). This meaning-making process differs from traditional code-switching or code-mixing theories as the emphasis is on the speakers and their meaning-making, rather than on the specific languages being used. While code switching assumes distinct grammars for each language, translanguaging centres the linguistic practice in bi/multilingual interactions (Cenoz 2017). Moreover, in contrast to code-switching theorists, translanguaging theorists maintain that languages do not neatly fit into bounded, static and clearly defined units, but assert that languages are fluid and dynamic (Creese and Blackledge 2010; García-Mateus and Palmer 2017; Canagarajah 2018; Lin et al. 2020). Furthermore, translanguaging challenges the stigma associated with non-standard language forms by normalising bi/multilingualism (Creese and Blackledge 2015; Wei 2018). A key feature of translanguaging theory is that it has pedagogic implications, suggesting that educators and policy makers should recognise and leverage learners' translingual skills rather than adhere to monolingual approaches (Wei 2018; Lin et al. 2020).

Translanguaging also offers epistemological access to content that would otherwise be difficult for learners to understand (Wildsmith-Cromarty 2018). A study by Wildsmith-Cromarty (2018), which explored the use of translanguaging at North-West University in South Africa, revealed that translanguaging provided epistemological access to content and made learning easier for students. Participants used both isiZulu and English during an isiZulu lesson, which facilitated greater understanding of concepts. This deepened student understanding and heightened student confidence to express themselves clearly. Students in this study also indicated that they would pass the course as translanguaging helped them to understand the content (Wildsmith-Cromarty 2018). Similarly, a study by Makalela (2015) demonstrates that student teachers applied translanguaging to bridge the perceived divide between South African languages. Moreover, when compared to the monolingual control group, student teachers who were given the opportunity to translanguage scored higher in vocabulary and oral reading. The fact that the student teachers in Makalela's (2015) study used

more than three languages simultaneously was significant because it shows that translanguaging is relevant in complex multilingual classrooms.

Identity and language learning

The use of translanguaging is pivotal not only in meaning-making, but also in identity construction (Nkadimeng and Makalela 2015; García-Mateus and Palmer 2017; Wei and Lee 2023). From a translanguaging perspective, identity is flexible and constantly evolving rather than a fixed construct. Consequently, individuals are continuously transforming and inventing their identities as they interact with others, thereby co-constructing their personhood (Makalela 2019; Wei and Lee 2023). Wei and Lee (2023) describe this collaborative co-construction of identity as 'transpositioning', where individuals adopt different identities in their interactions with others. They suggest that in communication, individuals initially choose certain identities and create a sense of self that is based on labels drawn from their repertoires. However, as individuals interact with others, they continually adjust their identity positions to fit the situation. This process of constructing personhood is influenced by language as a means of communication and by its role in shaping one's identity, cultural expression and social belonging. The significance of translanguaging in identity construction is illustrated by Nkadimeng and Makalela (2015), who indicated how high school learners negotiate and perform their identities in the complex multilingual context of Soweto, South Africa. This study revealed that learners consistently construct multiple identities by employing translanguaging as a resource to gain epistemic access to knowledge. Similarly, studies by Makalela (2015) and Mbirimi-Hungwe (2022) also show that multilingual speakers seamlessly recreate and adopt new identities within different cultural and linguistic spaces.

In the Global South, the relationship between language and identity is best explored through the 'ubuntu translanguaging' framework proposed by Makalela (2016). Makalela and da Silva (2023) postulate that the core of ubuntu translanguaging rests in the ubuntu value system of 'I x We', which refers to the African value system of 'I am because we are; we are because I am'. The ubuntu value system of 'I x We' emphasises the interconnectedness of individuals and communities and reveals how one's identity is intrinsically linked to the collective existence of others. In the same way that no language exists in isolation but is intertwined with other languages, individuals are bound together in a collective sense of being that is rooted in interconnectedness and communal well-being, which are integral components to human identity (Makalela 2015; Makalela and da Silva 2023). Viewed through an ubuntu translanguaging lens, identity transcends the individual to include the identities of the collective.

Challenges to translanguaging

Although research has illustrated the value of translanguaging in the schooling ecosystem, there are continuous debates regarding the implementation of this linguistically complex pedagogy (Makalela 2019). These challenges range from language hierarchies, negative societal attitudes towards certain languages, linguistic complexities and the breakdown of meaningful communication (Creese and Blackledge 2010; Canagarajah 2011; Duarte 2020; Lin et al. 2020). Lin and colleagues (2020) note that translanguaging is often met with resistance in contexts where dominant languages are preferred and perceived to be more prestigious than others. Such resistance can lead to linguistic inequalities and language hierarchies. Moreover, Cenoz and Gorter (2022) aver that prevailing ideologies that advocate for the separation of languages are widespread. Some educators support the notion that the target language should be isolated from other languages and that teaching should model the monolingual native speaker. These monoglossic ideologies maintain racial and linguistic inequalities in the classroom, thereby positioning bi/multilingual learners as inferior and silencing them from being legitimate contributors to knowledge generation in the classroom (Hurst and Mona 2017). The infusion of hegemonic Western languages into South African society has given rise to these monolingual ideologies that marginalise and devalue indigenous languages. This has led to the belief that these languages cannot be utilised for knowledge generation. The relegation of indigenous languages to maintain the privileged position accorded to English is also a challenge to translanguaging in South Africa. According to Taylor and Von Fintel (2016), the

default to English is attributed to the fact that, in South Africa, English and Afrikaans are the only languages with a substantial body of academic literature. Moreover, despite the Draft Language Policy of Higher Education (Department of Higher Education and Training 2018) advocating for the development of indigenous languages as mediums of instruction at universities, English remains the predominant language of instruction at many of these institutions (Makhanya and Zibane 2020). These monolingual ideologies and practices continue to marginalise indigenous languages and alienate learners.

Wei and García (2022) argue that translanguaging in the classroom should be instructionally purposeful and adhere to the language education policies of the school. This necessitates the development of assessment frameworks that provide for translanguaging, while ensuring that proper linguistic registers and standards are maintained. This assertion is supported by Canagarajah (2011), who maintains that although translanguaging occurs naturally among bi/multilingual learners or between bi/multilingual learners and teachers, there is still a need to teach translanguaging pedagogy. He points out that translanguaging can give a voice to learners who may otherwise be alienated, but that translanguaging should still adopt the correct written registers and conventions. He cautions that each context adopts a specific writing approach and that multilingual learners should learn this approach even while they apply their linguistic repertoires. He thus advocates for a balanced approach, which allows for the learners' languages to be included in academic writing in a guarded and appropriate manner.

Research design and method

The research reported in this study forms part of a larger mixed-methods study that explored the language-learning strategies used by EFAL learners participating in peer tutoring (Machimana 2020). To address the aim of this article, a qualitative research design was used, in particular, focus group discussions (FGDs). We analysed data from six FGDs conducted in six locations in Gauteng province, South Africa. For each of the focus groups in the six locations, only one discussion was conducted with each group consisting of approximately eight participants as recommended in the literature (Busetto et al. 2020). These FGDs were carefully planned and designed to determine participants' experiences of using translanguaging as a strategy for English FAL. Part of the planning for the FGDs involved consulting programme managers of the various peer-tutoring groups and language experts about the content and language level of the questions. Moreover, a pilot of the FGD was conducted with Grades 8 and 9 English FAL learners to ensure that the language was at an appropriate level for them. Discussions were held with learners after the pilot and it emerged that no changes were required, as they had no difficulty in understanding the questions. All FGDs were moderated by the first author, who has extensive training and experience in facilitating and moderating FGDs. In line with the aims of the larger study, the questions asked during the FGDs included the following: 'What motivates you to learn English?; What makes English learning easy for you?; What challenges do you experience in learning English?; How do you overcome these challenges?; When listening/reading and you come across a word or phrase you have never heard before, what do you do?; When speaking/writing and you cannot think of an English word or phrase, what do you do?'.

From observing the peer-tutoring sessions, it was evident that English was the main language of communication, however, learners and tutors often used translanguaging during the sessions. The FGDs were conducted in English to standardise the process and to maintain the focus of the larger study. However, no restrictions were placed on the learners regarding how they should respond. Group participation was encouraged and learners were allowed to discuss the questions in a language of their choice. Separate venues were provided for conducting the FGDs, and tutors were permitted to observe the discussion if the learners agreed to this. This created a permissive and non-threatening environment, which allowed learners to co-construct knowledge. During the FGDs, learners engaged in debates and were encouraged to raise conflicting views, thus generating rich data that would not have been possible through other research methods (Yin 2016). At the end of each discussion, the moderator compiled a summary of the discussion and verified this information with the learners to ensure that their inputs were adequately captured.

Sampling peer-tutoring programmes and participants

The participants consisted of 44 Grade 8 and Grade 9 English FAL learners from schools in the Gauteng province of South Africa who were participating in peer-tutoring programmes. The peer-tutoring programmes are facilitated and presented by various non-profit organisations (NPOs) that support learners in overcoming the educational challenges they face. These peer-tutoring programmes provide much needed after-school support to learners who may not have sufficient support at school or at home.

The snowball method was used for sampling peer-tutoring programmes that met the inclusion criteria. These criteria included peer-tutoring programmes that used volunteers as tutors and not trained professional teachers, and programmes that charged no fees. Snowball sampling involved approaching the peer-tutoring managers of three programmes and asking them to assist with approaching other similar programmes (Yin 2016). Six programmes participated in the FGDs in which EFAL learners were purposefully sampled to provide in-depth information regarding the aim of the study. Before conducting the study, ethical clearance was obtained from the University of Pretoria, Faculty of Education's Ethics Committee (ref no: HU 18/09/03). All ethical guidelines were followed which included obtaining consent from the parents of the learners.

Data analysis

All the FGDs were audio recorded and transcribed verbatim soon after data collection. In instances where learners spoke in their L1, language experts were consulted to provide translations. The transcriptions and translations were audited for accuracy by a fellow researcher and a language expert. Furthermore, the inter-reliability of the transcribed data was obtained through a comparison of the transcriptions with the summaries that were compiled after each FGD. Once we had confirmed the accuracy of the transcriptions, we analysed the data through an inductive thematic analysis approach. This method involved the use of an iterative process, enabling us to move between the data, the codes and categories to generating the themes in the data (Braun and Clarke 2022). Each FGD was coded separately, thereby refining the categories generated and ensuring constant comparison of new date sets with those already analysed. Throughout the data analysis process, we maintained continuous reflexivity to ensure that our own positionalities and biases did not affect the results of the study (Busetto et al. 2020; Braun and Clarke 2022).

Findings

The following section presents the findings derived from the FGDs, which we present verbatim to enhance reliability and to give voice to the lived experiences of the participants.

Linguistic fluidity

The results of the analysis show that participants in this study spoke a minimum of three indigenous languages with Sepedi (11.7%) being the most common, followed by isiZulu (9.5%), Xitsonga (7.3%) and isiXhosa (5.1%). On further analysis of the languages spoken by the participants, it became clear that the combination of languages went beyond the broad language clusters commonly used to group the indigenous languages in South Africa. These clusters typically group indigenous languages into Nguni (isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele, siSwati) and Sotho (Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi) language clusters, along with Xitsonga and Tshivenda (Makalela 2015). However, in this study, participants indicated using language clusters in combinations such as Nguni/Sesotho or Nguni/Xitsonga or Sesotho/Tshivenda, which reveals the fluidity that exists between the language clusters. Participants in this study indicated that they often move from one language to the other. Linguistic fluidity was evident during the FGDs as participants often transitioned from one language to the other within a single sentence as substantiated by the following extracts: '*Ku endla a meaningful and peaceful life ka ba bangwe for the next generation*' (FGD 3: Female 5) [To create a meaningful and peaceful life for others – authors' own translation]. In the above extract, learners demonstrated their linguistic fluidity through the use of Xitsonga '*ku endla*', English and Sepedi '*ka ba bangwe*' in a single sentence. Linguistic fluidity is also demonstrated in the following extracts '*iEnglish iFirst Additional Language yasesikoleni, that's the reason re tshwanetse go ithuta yona*' (FGD 1: Male 1)

[English is the first additional language at school, that's the reason we should learn it – authors' own translation]. In this excerpt, the participant transitions between isiZulu '*iEnglish iFirst...yasesikoleni*' and Setswana '*re tshwanetse go ithuta yona*'.

'*Underline or write the words down and masekufika isikhathi ses'kole* [when it is time for school]*, you talk to your teachers*' (FGD 4: Female 3). In this last excerpt the participant moves between English and isiZulu to convey how she deals with linguistic challenges, in particular when she is reading. Participants' use of languages from multiple clusters of named South African languages supports translanguaging theory, which holds that languages are fluid and dynamic rather than bounded systems or codes (García and Lin 2016; Wu and Lin 2019; Mbirimi-Hungwe 2022). The participants demonstrated their vast language repertoires, which are a critical resource for meaning-making and knowledge co-construction in the classroom.

Constructing meaning through translanguaging practice

As consistently pointed out in the literature (Makalela 2015; García-Mateus and Palmer 2017; Wildsmith-Cromarty 2018), participants in this study indicated that translanguaging was one of the strategies they relied on for EFAL learning: '*When I run out of words, let's say I am speaking English, I speak* [in the] *vernacular*' (FGD 1: Female 1) and '*speak in your language*' (FGD 6: Female 2). The strategy of resorting to the home language ensures that communication does not stop; therefore, learners were not silenced by their limited English vocabulary. This demonstrates the learners' creativity and the criticality of language use, which allowed them to use all their language resources in the process of meaning construction. Learners, furthermore, indicated that they gained new insights when school teachers or their peers explained concepts using their home language(s): '*she speaks English and also speak in my mother's tongue*' (FGD 4: Female 3); and '*someone to translate into your home language*' (FGD 6: Female 2). From these excerpts, it is clear that learning EFAL would have been an arduous task for these learners without the use of their home languages. Understanding of concepts was made possible through explanations conducted in the learners' home language(s), thus allowing these learners to draw from their rich home language knowledge to construct meaning in EFAL. The use of the home language(s) for meaning construction not only took place during social interaction, but also occurred when learners processed information. Evidence also suggests that participants used the home language(s) for higher mental processing: '*I stop and then think and think in my home language*' (FGD 3: Female 7) and '*I just stop talking and think because I can't just put any word. I want the word that I want so I'll wait until it comes to my mind. Because most often people, they will use words that they didn't want to use. Like someone will say "like" and then it breaks the whole thing…explain words from our home language to English*' (FGD 4: Female 3). The use of the L1 for processing thought suggests the need to strengthen learners' L1 so that it can be utilised effectively for EFAL learning. However, in cases where participants were not permitted to use the L1, they became disengaged during dialogue or they changed the topic when they could not think of the correct English phrase to use: '*I will try and change the sentence and then yes*' (FGD 3: Female 2) and '*you change the topic*' (FGD 1: Female 1). Denying learners the use of their home language is to deny them their identity as learning not only involves the construction of knowledge, but also includes the construction of identity (Creese and Blackledge 2015; Nkadimeng and Makalela 2015). This denial alienates learners from the learning environment, which results in cultural alienation (Hurst and Mona 2017; Parra 2023). However, when monolingual learning conditions were disrupted and participants used all their linguistic resources, they were able to continue with the conversation using their L1. This confirms the argument in the literature that the L1 aids cognitive development and that denying learners the use of their L1 through the implementation of an early exit model in Grade 4 destabilises academic language development (Madiba 2012).

Identity construction through translanguaging

In this study, participants' desire to learn EFAL was driven by their need to claim a legitimate position as translingual speakers and to challenge existing stereotypes regarding what they can and cannot do. Drawing from ubuntu translanguaging (Makalela and da Silva 2023), participants in this study demonstrated a strong will to associate their personal identity with the identity of the

collective. This interconnectedness inspired them to pursue proficiency in EFAL as substantiated by the following extracts: '*When I improve my English, it gives me power to change the saying of people that says people from* [a] *government school cannot speak English fluently. They are all told it's fine, whatever, so when I speak English, I will be proud kuthi ja* [to say yes (authors' own translation)]' (FGD 3: Female 5); and '*…is when I hear black people speaking so fluent in English, so I get motivated to say, and myself, I can also speak like them*' (FGD 3: Female 1). Female participant 5 (FGD 3) predominantly used English, but also included the isiZulu word *kuthi*, which means 'to say' and the Afrikaans word *ja*, which means 'yes', which illustrates linguistic fluidity. The use of the word 'power' in her response may be symbolic of an awareness of the power relations which position bi/multilingual learners as incapable of achieving fluency in English. Therefore, participants' motivation for learning English FAL was driven by their desire to change the power dynamics and reposition themselves and their peers as legitimate translingual learners (Nkadimeng and Makalela 2015; Wei 2018). Moreover, participants in this study perceived the acquisition of EFAL proficiency skills as not only a practical tool for classroom engagement, but also a means of cultural expression and social belonging. This indicates participants' ability to adjust their identity positions to fit the monolingual context they found themselves in. The following extracts substantiate this claim: '*I want to speak English better so I can participate in class*' (FGD 5: Female 3); and '*I believe that English helps you with your education. I believe that when I speak English, I will be able to cooperate with my teachers when it's English period, when he/she ask something*' (FGD 5: Female 4). Participants also reported that learning EFAL presented prospects for vocational opportunities: '*When I speak English, it can help me achieve my goals. When there is an interview, I need a job, I speak English*' (FGD 3; Female 5); '*When I go for interviews and meet white people, so that I can to respond*' (FGD 1: Female 1); and '*When you go and look for a job because there are places, if you do not know how to speak English, they cannot give you work, because let me say if you want to work with a computer and you do not know how the letters will work so that you can get the English words right*' (FGD 6: Female 5). These excerpts suggest that learners' motivation to learn EFAL was related to their desire to actively participate in class and thereby to contribute meaningfully to the learning process. From the above extracts, it is evident that participants were acutely aware of the power dynamics at play in society, which demand that they use English in school and in the marketplace. Moreover, participants had to adjust their identity to fit the monolingual context in which they found themselves.

Translanguaging as a challenge to learning

The general finding in this study was that participants viewed translanguaging as a valuable pedagogic strategy for EFAL learning. However, participants also raised concerns about the use of translanguaging in the classroom. We point out that if these issues are not resolved, they might act as a challenge to learning. One of the concerns stemmed from a language mismatch between the teacher's and learner's L1, as indicated below: '*When a teacher...usually, in our school, teachers often explain using their home languages, so I find it difficult to understand what they are saying*' (FGD 3: Female 5); '*Or the isiZulu one, because it's common, and sometimes they use deep words and though we understand the home language, we need English so that we can write something*' (FGD 3: Female 1). From the participants' responses, it is evident that they experienced language difficulties as some of their teachers spoke languages in which they were not proficient. These participants had a basic conversational understanding of isiZulu, but struggled to understand isiZulu for cognitive purposes. In these instances, translanguaging reinforced the hierarchy of languages, as isiZulu is the dominant and most spoken indigenous language in the country. This highlights the need to tailor translanguaging pedagogy to the relevant context, thereby ensuring that all learners benefit from the translanguaging practice in the classroom.

Monolingual-based assessments in other learning areas besides English were also a concern for learners, who saw this practice as an elevation of English above their languages, as evident from the following extracts: '*Yes, that is why they* [English-speaking learners] *pass tests. They set exam papers in their own home language*' (FGD 2: Female 1); and '*if they set exam papers using English, they have to translate in our language*' (FGD 2: Female 5). These views refer to the subjugation of learners' L1, which disadvantages them in the learning environment.

Monolingual practices indirectly create divisions

The findings also revealed that when translanguaging was not permitted, learners distinguished negatively between English speakers and speakers of indigenous languages, as seen in the following extracts: '*They* [white people] *must learn Sesotho, not English only. English is for white people. English is their mother tongue. They must learn other people's languages. Is like we are forced to learn English*' (FGD 2: Female 1); and '*When it's home language, I speak my language and when it's English, I speak English. Maybe o kona o bowa English, a ke tlo bowa ka English because it is not our mother tongue* [Maybe you speak English, but I will not speak to you in English because it is not our mother tongue (authors' own translation)]' (FGD 3: Female 4). The distinction between '*their mother tongue*' (FGD 2: Female 1) and '*not our mother tongue*' (FGD 3: Female 4) pointed to how learners negotiated their translingual identity. They accepted these identities, but refused to have someone else impose a language identity on them. This resistance might be an indication of their desire to be recognised as translingual learners in an environment that advocates a monolingual identity. These findings highlight the need to valorise learners' translingual identity by affording them a voice in the EFAL classroom.

Discussion

The findings of the study highlight the value of translanguaging as a tool for meaning-making and affirming learners' identity positions. Extensive research has shown that the implementation of translanguaging pedagogy in the classroom empowers indigenous-language speakers by legitimising their discursive practices and creates possibilities for identity development (Cenoz 2017; Hurst and Mona 2017; Makalela 2019; Wei and García 2022; Parra 2023). The use of translanguaging by participants in this study is consistent with the findings of other scholars in the field of bi/multilingualism (Canagarajah 2011; Nkadimeng and Makalela 2015). This finding also supports the assertion that translanguaging empowers multilingual speakers to express their identities and to choose their identity positions (Makalela 2015). Therefore, we argue that failure to include indigenous languages in educational systems is an act of curricular discrimination and exclusion, which can result in alienation, as learners battle with identity formation and with trying to find their voices in a space that seeks to silence them. In a study conducted with Cantonese-speaking learners, Lin (2019) argues that translanguaging plays a key role in the co-construction of content meaning. She highlights the need for a dynamic view of language, which allows for the combination of spontaneous and planned spaces for translanguaging in which the target language is used to enhance learners' learning experiences. This view of language recognises the importance of expanding learners' linguistic and cultural repertoires rather than replacing them in a hierarchical manner, which privileges certain language codes. Consequently, we support the view by Mbirimi-Hungwe (2022), who asserts that incorporating a translanguaging approach to learning could encourage the indistinguishable usage of languages to ensure understanding of concepts. This could elevate the use and advancement of indigenous languages and allow learners to use their full linguistic repertoires for greater meaning-making in the classroom. Lin and colleagues (2020) argue that recognising and valorising individuals' multilingual identities and skills can contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society. Therefore, we contend that failure to incorporate translanguaging pedagogy may alienate learners from the classroom, and conveys a subtle message that their languages are deficient as a resource for knowledge generation.

Although translanguaging has been effectively used by teachers in various settings (Wu and Lin 2019), this was not the experience for some of the participants in this study. For instance, the use of the dominant isiZulu language by a teacher excluded the other indigenous-language speakers. Thus, we contend that it is essential for teachers to consider the linguistic diversity of the learners in the classroom to avoid learner exclusion and isolation. Moreover, teachers should recognise that translanguaging is primarily used for enhancing meaning-making by learners (Duarte 2020; Mbirimi-Hungwe 2022) and should thus ensure the inclusion of all learners' linguistic resources in the classroom. Translanguaging should not be seen as replacing one dominant language (English) with another widely spoken language (isiZulu, in the case of South Africa), but rather as a way to expand learners' linguistic repertoires. Although it may not be possible for teachers to know all

the languages spoken by learners, they should facilitate lessons that are inclusive for the majority of learners. Therefore, translanguaging should be carefully and systematically implemented in linguistically diverse classrooms (Lin 2019). More importantly, teachers require training to implement appropriate translanguaging methods in linguistically diverse classrooms as translanguaging transcends linguistic boundaries when applied appropriately. This is highlighted in a study by Mbirimi-Hungwe (2022), who found that students from different language groups could go beyond linguistic boundaries for pedagogic purposes. Similarly, research by Makalela (2015) demonstrates that translanguaging enabled student teachers to bridge the linguistic and cultural divides in a complex multilingual environment.

Wei and García (2022) argue that bi/multilingual learners must be accorded the same privileges as monolingual learners. They must be able to express themselves in a manner that is congruent with who they are and not be compelled to 'language' like monolinguals. Translanguaging pedagogy has social justice implications that underscore the equitable language practices in education (Hurst and Mona 2017; Wei and García 2022). It valorises and legitimises the language practices of indigenous speakers, allowing them a rightful place in knowledge generation. Participants in this study perceived English speakers to be benefitting unfairly in the classroom as examinations are set in English. To remedy this unfairness, participants suggested that examination papers should be translated into their home languages. As indicated by Wu and Lin (2019), the strict application of monolingual policies means that a significant portion of the language and social resources available to learners cannot be used to construct knowledge. This view is supported by Creese and Blackledge (2015), who aver that allowing learners to use their dominant linguistic resources increases access to content in the classroom. Consequently, we suggest that the DBE should consider and encourage the use of translanguaging to valorise learners' translingual identity by changing current assessment practices. As argued by Wei and García (2022) and Hurst and Mona (2017), it is important that assessment regimes are changed to allow learners to leverage all their semiotic and linguistic resources during assessments. This transforms the way learners view their own languages and legitimises the complex and dynamic linguistic repertoires of bi/multilingual learners. This is supported by Makalela and da Silva (2023), who contend that rather than viewing languages as bounded and separate entities, language policies should be designed to acknowledge the fluidity and connectedness of linguistic repertoires. Steps in this direction have been taken by the DBE with the previous Minister Angie Motshekga having stated that the DBE was drafting a plan for rolling out African languages mother tongue-based bilingual education throughout South Africa. This is in response to the Eastern Cape's initiative of L1-based bilingual education, where schools will use isiXhosa and Sesotho as the LoLT up to Grade 9. This entails that learners are taught Mathematics, Natural Science and Technology in isiXhosa and Sesotho (*Business Tech* 2022). The implementation of this plan would allow learners who understand a concept but fail to articulate the concept in the FAL to respond in the language in which they are most skilled. Until recently, English and Afrikaans were the only two languages in which school-leaving examinations were administered. However, recent developments have seen learners taking part in a pilot programme in which they used isiXhosa and Sesotho to write their school-leaving exams at the end of the 2020 academic year (Nowicki 2020). This will address learner alienation from the learning environment and encourage greater inclusion of all learners. However, this requires extensive teacher preparation and careful curriculum planning to ensure maximum capitalisation of translanguaging in the classroom. As suggested by Parra (2023), teacher preparation should include teachers critically reflecting on their own translanguaging ideologies, and on how they can bridge the gap between theoretical and pedagogic knowledge of this concept. This would allow teachers greater awareness of how their positionality shapes their interaction with learners. Teachers should critically assess how the interactions in the context of translanguaging may reinforce the same language and cultural hierarchies it seeks to transcend (Parra 2023).

Conclusion

In the interest of nation-building, it is crucial that learners are allowed to express themselves in their home languages wherever and whenever possible. Including translingual pedagogical practices in the classroom not only valorises indigenous languages, but also acknowledges learners' translingual

identity, which is of key importance for how they relate to the learning environment and the world around them. In the current study, learners' use of translanguaging and their views of having their languages valorised suggest that there is a need to reconsider the value of the home language(s) in South African classrooms. Although the learners in this study were motivated to learn EFAL by investing their time and resources in peer-tutoring programmes, they expressed the desire to have their home languages recognised and given the same status as English. This is critical since the context in which FAL learning occurs needs to legitimise learners' identity to invest optimally in FAL learning. A context that presents unequal power relations between the home language(s) and the FAL negatively affects learners' identity formation and their motivation to learn an additional language. This study highlights the need for curriculum planners to reconsider penalising learners for using their L1 in responding to questions (verbally and in writing during assessments) as this alienates them from the school environment. Instead of penalising and devaluing learners' L1, curriculum planners should allow learners to use their full linguistic repertoires during assessments. This may encourage active participation in the school system and create an educational environment where learners feel they belong.

Endnotes

[1] These percentages represent the home languages spoken by South Africans (StatsSA 2023).

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