TRANSLANGUAGING IN THE CULTURALLY DIVERSE CLASSROOMS OF A SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL: TOWARDS IMPROVING ACADEMIC SUCCESS AND LITERACY COMPETENCIES, A PARADIGM SHIFT TO TRANSLINGUALISM?

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Abstract

In this study, I have argued that language structure should be adapted and shaped by the task of producing talk and meaning for others in human interaction in ways that give shape to a particular social world. This premise was seen in the context for this study - the multi-racial school of De Vos Malan High School in King Williams Town, in the Province of the Eastern Cape in South Africa. The study was informed by Gutiérrez’s Third Space as a theoretical framework. The study explored how can the English first additional language be taught through translanguaging to culturally diverse learners in a South African school. The study was interpretive based on a qualitative method. The context underpinned the conclusions of the study which were drawn from key findings from journaling, observation and Gibbon’s curriculum cycle. Results revealed a need to attend to contradictions and rethink a strict temporal analysis of classrooms - that is, a diachronic view of talk and interaction in classroom activity - to a view of classrooms as having multiple, layered, and conflicting activity systems with various interconnections. Based on these findings, I have proposed an unorthodox approach to pre-writing structure and language use, and a cognizance of the importance of affording students agency.

Keywords: Anxiety reduction, Journal writing, observation, Reflexive competence, Semiotic resources and Translanguaging.

1 INTRODUCTION

To be able to understand the language and education situation in South Africa (S. A.) today, it is necessary to look at the historical background of languages in schools and tertiary institutions in this country. Cuvelier (2003) states that most written evidence of language in education in S.A. comes from the arrival of Europeans in the Cape, the Dutch settlement in 1652. Mainly Dutch (Afrikaans after 1925) and English were used in schools which implied ongoing mother-tongue education for white and some of the so-called ‘coloured’ people. African languages only received a degree of recognition in policies during the apartheid era in South Africa where mother-tongue education was proposed for at least the first couple of years. This invokes Gutig and Butler (1999), observing that the Bantu Education Act (1953) coerced the black learners to receive mother-tongue instruction in lower and higher primary grades with a transition to English and Afrikaans thereafter. Language in South Africa became a political issue. The learners whose mother-tongue was not English failed to achieve the same level of academic success as their native English peers. Their literacy competence debilitated as most past educational approaches to support English First Additional Language (EFAL) have been biased in favour of the native English language learners (McLeod, 2018). Invoked by this situation, this study presupposes and presents an unorthodox approach for translanguaging. Translanguaging is a bilingual pedagogy that interchanges language modes in which teachers as mediators of knowledge attempt to create bilingual and multilingual opportunities for the learners in the classroom, taking into consideration their identity, cultural background and a learning environment (Williams 2002). Adamson, Coulson and Fujimoto-Adamson (2019) concur that this provides the learners with the agency to negotiate disciplinary norms. This study represents one aspect of my Doctoral thesis (Kepe 2017) on translanguaging. This study advocated a teaching and learning environment through translanguaging which stripped learners of fear and anxiety, with the teacher playing the role of the facilitator as was the case in De Vos Malan High School. This study stems from a longitudinal ethnographic case study research conducted at De Vos Malan High School in King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study took 3 academic years. It consisted of 36 learners. I followed the learners from Grade 10 -12 from 2014 to 2016 for continuity to mark their progression within the period. I will return to this under the methodology.
De Vos Malan consists of a diverse body of students and teachers. It is a comprehensive high school which begins from grade R to 12. It is situated at the hub of King William's town District in the Province of the Eastern Cape. It composed of isiXhosa speaking learners some of whom utilised English/Afrikaans as Home language (HL); people of colour who are Afrikaans native speakers some of whom chose English as home language; Indian learners who utilised English as a HL and lastly white Afrikaans natives some of whom chose English as their HL in school. De Vos Malan High School adopted English and Afrikaans language streams as the medium of instruction in which learners could either utilise one of the two languages from grade 1 up to grade 12. The streams appeared to run parallel in this school, however, the instruction in grades 10 to 12 blends languages for further clarity of the subject matter/content due to diversity whereby the Afrikaans speaking students would be introduced to English terminology and English speaking students to Afrikaans as their first additional language to help with content comprehension. This policy appeared quite susceptible because the explication of concepts was conducted mainly in English or Afrikaans whereas most learners were of African origin in both classes.

Much research has been conducted into how the English First Additional Language can be taught through translanguaging, however, this study extrapolates translanguaging as the one unorthodox approach that may bring a lasting solution to the unending dilemma of a negative cycle of failed language acquisition outcomes and academic underperformance in South African schools. Since teachers themselves are culturally located beings this study promulgates that adornments/heritage days in school should not degenerate as a traditional symbol to edify diversity although this is important, but symbols of that nature could be used to support and promote the language and literacy learning across the cultures as was the case in De Vos Malan. The greatest challenge of the learners (participants) in this study did not appear to stem from the use of EFAL language or the first language, but rather from how it was taught in the classrooms as that appeared to have a negative impact on academic performance and overall literacy skills competences. This was confirmed by previous research indicating that both teachers and learners in South Africa were still struggling with literacy in the African Languages as well as English (Foncha, 2013). This is parallel to the purpose of this study which emphasises on language and content acquisition to help both EFAL and native students to conceptualize, and attain, a level of completion beyond their current capability (Adamson, 2019). There is no central community in which we can define norms or standards of English competence for all communities. Competence in academic language use is a holistic construct that needs to be pluralized to reflect the broad diversity of international settings it is used (Nunn, & Langille 2016). The interchange of language during the teaching and learning of the English language might compromise the identity of the English language (Taglialatela 2012). The traditional view of ‘speech community’ as the natural home of English competence may be susceptible, especially if the construct implies that one needs to be born into a homogenous community to be a competent member (Hymes 1972). Against this backdrop, when learners see their family backgrounds and narrative valued at school, they may possibly engage more positively with their school mates, as shown in my thesis (Kepe 2017).

2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As mentioned in the background, this study promulgates that the teachers’ dialogical engagement with the texts through questions, feedback and reviews (in addition to peer review) may help learners’ writing develop their translanguaging proficiency further (Canagarajah, 2011). The constant use of the grammar-translation method appears to obstruct learners from constructing their own knowledge and may engender a negative impact on academic performance and overall literacy competence. The teacher incapacity to teach cooperatively and give student constructive feedback appears to constrain learners toward rote learning. This is worrying as it may lead to a failure to channel the learners’ linguistic resources in appropriate directions. A failure to affirm the learners’ choices of language use may, consequently, preclude their efforts to write with a sense of voice and agency.

3 CENTRAL QUESTION

How can the English First Additional Language learners be taught through translanguaging pedagogy in culturally diverse classroom in a South African school?
4 OBJECTIVES

1. This study explored measures that could be put in place to reduce anxiety during teaching and learning.
2. It sought to investigate how can multimodal/affordances be utilised to benefit culturally diverse learners in a South African school.
3. The study explored how could journal writing contribute to improving language acquisition and proficient writing in a school.
4. It examined how can poetry be utilized to acquire diction, figurative language, 1st person voice, parts of speech, vivid words, and even the necessity of punctuation and proper grammar.

5 REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Theoretically, this study is underpinned by Gutiérrez's theoretical framework of Third Space (1995), in line with Social Constructivism theory (Vygotsky, 1978). To achieve this, the study explored seven Multimodal pedagogies (Thesen 2014) to teach the English First Additional Language learners through translanguaging: anxiety reduction, journal writing, observation, poetry, semiotic resources, reflexive competence and translanguaging. However, since these approaches appear to be interthread and inextricably linked, they are not discussed in isolation. The Third Space, in the context of this study culminated out of observing closely the differences in involvement, participation, and learning of learners in the diverse classrooms of De Vos Malan denoting instructional activity and noting multiple social spaces with distinctive participation structures and power relations (Gutiérrez, 1995). This invoked a need for a method that encourages teachers to examine interacting contexts or activities i.e., “Script, counter script, and under life in the classroom” (Gutiérrez, pp. 445–471) to produce more complicated understandings of how the social organization of people’s everyday practices like De Vos Malan High School supports and constrains people’s cognitive and social development.

In Gutiérrez’s (1995) terms the above view included attending to contradictions and to rethink a strict temporal analysis of classrooms—that is, a diachronic view (i.e., development and evolvement of a language through time) of talk and interaction in classroom activity—to a view of classrooms as having multiple, layered, and conflicting activity systems with various interconnections. The developmental trajectories of English First Additional Language in South African schools must be understood in relation to the boundaries imposed by the past educational approaches through the policy of segregation culminating into inferior schools for the black schools. Consequently, language (the use of words and signs) became an affirmative issue in South Africa. Multimodal pedagogies acknowledge that the use of varieties in classrooms is always the effect of the work of culture, history and power in shaping materials into resources for meaning making (Thesen 2014). Hence, from the onset this study has been advocating for translanguaging pedagogy in which poetry plays a massive role as explained below.

The role of Poetry in acquiring diction, figurative language, 1st person voice, parts of speech, vivid words, and even the necessity of punctuation and proper grammar.

As literacy teachers, perhaps we need to remember that we have two goals, that is, the first is to teach our learners to read. But the second more challenging task is to create an environment that motivates them to read. Since many teachers appeared not to be certain about how to make their learners’ needs a focus of instruction, poetry in this study has proved to be one answer. This invokes Atwell, (2006a) pointing out that poetry has become the workhorse of the curriculum for its brevity and generosity as shown in (Kepe 2017). There appears to be no other genre seem to match poetry in terms of teaching about diction, precise vivid words, importance of first-person voice, the value of all parts of speech, the beauty of figurative language, and even the necessity of punctuation and proper grammar. Poetry appeals to learners in this study as they could either find or write a poem about any interesting subject from comic book heroes to prejudice (Kepe, 2017). To ascertain this, when learners wrote their own poems in this study, they fictitiously and vicariously (sympathetically) travelled even farther into the genre utilizing multimodal including the use of a poster as an interpretive mechanism. Literature teachers too often deals with the experiences of human beings as they observe learners making life connections to text. In teaching literature, teachers are basically helping their learners to learn to respond to a text (Rosenblatt 1978).
5.1 Anxiety reduction

My thesis and many other studies conducted by various researchers showed that anxiety among other major aspects has emerged as one factor that leads to the cycle of failed reading and writing outcomes we are faced with today in South Africa. This study is invariably advocating for a learner-centred environment free of anxiety. Krashen (1982) observed that foreign language anxiety is evoked by an individual’s low self-esteem. Such feelings might lead to a loss of concentration, and memory in class. When learners are exposed to various reading practices and the ground for reading is well prepared, the opposite could be said. Krashen (1982), maintains that language acquirers with favorable and desirable attitudes are assumed to have “low” affective filters, adversely, to “high” affective filters. The high affective filter (negative emotions) are regarded as a “mental block” that block efficient processing of the language input. In attempting to reduce anxiety Kress and Bezemer (2009) observed that people choose how to represent meaning from a range of possibilities which are shaped in a context. They postulate that this recognition of students’ resources is key to a transformative agenda especially in higher education in South Africa. This takes us to the significance of reading and writing.

5.2 Reading and writing

Anderson (1999), states that reading is an essential skill for students to have a good command of a second or foreign language. Hence, the reading process ends when the readers have interpreted as much of the writers’ intended meaning as is relevant to them (Huang 2012). The writers put their meaning into language and the readers reconvert the language into meanings. In other words, the writer’s intended meaning is under the printed materials and the reader should read between the lines to get it. Huang (2012) observed three main elements involved in reading process: reader, text and interaction between the reader and the text. She says that during reading process the readers should make use of their background and linguistic knowledge to reconstruct the writer’s intended meaning.

5.3 Writing

Adamson et. al. (2019), extrapolate scaffolding of pre-writing structure and language use, and a cognizance of the importance of offering student’s agency/a voice. They say that this is fundamentally a negotiated process, punctuated using translanguaged planning and modelling. Mainly, the intention to present reading and writing pedagogy as one of the key approaches in this study was invoked by the academic gap between the English First Additional Language learners and the native speakers concocted by the Bantu Education Act (1953), effectuated by the Apartheid regime. In view of this, this study became highly convenient specifically through encouraging reading and writing practices by means of journaling as a data collection tool. As a premise, this study besought to close the academic gap and level the playing fields between the English First Additional Language learners and the native speakers. As will be explained in greater detail later under the methodology section journaling as one of the data collection instruments in this study became a practice ground for composing writing.

6 METHODOLOGY

The theoretical underpinnings examined in the literature review section suggest that teaching the EFAL through translanguaging pedagogy in culturally diverse classrooms of a South African school, where reading and writing are viewed as pivotal can best be understood qualitatively because teaching by way of translanguaging is context based and can only be understood from a participant’s perspective. This study is based on my Doctoral thesis (Kepe 2017), that was premised within an ethnographic case study design of De Vos Malan High School in King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape Province of South Africa. The study took 3 academic years in which the participants (learners) were followed from grade 10-12 from 2014 to 2016 for continuity to mark their progression within the period. The total number of learners took part in the study was 36 (18 females and 18 males). Their ages ranged from 13 to 16 with a mean of 15.8. They were selected according to their academic performance in EFAL and HL. I played the role of participant observer since I was the class teacher. The study was interpretive based on a qualitative method which followed the students for 3 years to see the strategies that worked towards building a reading culture among them. As it was qualitative triangulation was perceived necessary by way of the tools used to collect data to ascertain credibility and trustworthiness of data. The tools included affordances, anxiety reduction, journal writing, observation, reflexive competence, semiotic resources and translanguaging. Since data collected was
enormous and due to limited space in this study, it was impossible for me to utilise all of it. As the tools were interthread and inextricably linked, from the above-mentioned tools the following were selected: translanguaging paired with the observation method, reading and writing paired with journaling. The focus of the study was on translanguaging in the diverse classrooms of a South African school. Based on this, the study proposed shaping a chain of narratives and interpretations in this section. This presupposes a construction of a story of their story where my narrative is seen as an interpretation of their interpretations.

7 RESULTS

The tools used to collect data may not have been analysed and interpreted in isolation as they appear to be inextricably linked. Of the seven tools, I considered journal writing and observation as the key tools. In the representation of the data to follow shortly, the key tools were depicted as segments. Three strands of data for both (Segment 1) journal writing and (Segment 2) observation were used just to make sure that the presentation was salient. The data stretches were illustrated in the analysis by using italics. The participants were grouped into two: students & teachers as focusing on the individual participant as the principal unit of analysis might have produced an incomplete and an unrepresentative story (Willet, 1995). For the purposes of reference and harmony the learners would be labelled as (L) and the teachers as (T). 2 appendices were attached: Appendix 1 is a newspaper article which served as a stimulus for the journal writing and Appendix 2 is a learner script which served as the evidence of the journal writing. It was essential to recognize the data collection tools in contrast with the themes. Below are the key tools (2) to be merged with only 2 themes.

1 Observation
2 Journal writing

Only two themes were utilized since they were interdependent: translanguaging paired with the observation method, reading and writing paired with journaling method. Given the immensity of the data provided by the participants in respect of the theme of Journal writing the study opted for the theme of observation first as it emerged as the strongest for the purposes of data analysis. In this section, the findings of the study were related to the research objectives as that could serve as a summary. This will be done through fusing the research objective with the two selected themes in italics being contrasted with the key methods i.e. translanguaging paired with the observation method, reading and writing paired with journaling. These included the main research question which appears to cut across this investigation.

7.1 Translanguaging observations from the learners’ informal conversation

Below are some of the data (labelled L1, 2 & 3) observations extracted from the learners’ informal conversation in the hall of De Vos Malan in which the participants and I held a Reading Club launch. At this launch the programme director was a learner/participant. On the day of the launch various activities such as narration, book discussions, book reviews, poster presentations including musical items by some gifted participants were conducted. Mainly extract 1 shows 3 learners’ (L)/participants conversing about the proceedings.

Data segment 1: from the learners’ informal conversation

Extract 1:

L1 Thank you ... thank you ... ladies and gents, guys and dolls, let’s give a big hand to our special ‘Vossies’ artists (programme director who was also a learner in musical revue/ extravaganza for learners in De Vos Malan High School) here today …

L2 Nee, die eene is funny ... uthi guys and dolls. He thinks he comes from the states, but he speaks like a tsotsi …

L3 There is old people that has been standing please provide them with seats.

The above data segment which relates to the central question was solicited from the participants’ informal conversation. The above conversation appeared to unwittingly correspond the proposition that translanguaging among learners’ spaces is happening. This view in the above private conversation among the participants in question entailed inadvertently relaying of information from one language to another, bridging communication gaps between themselves.
7.2 Observations in the Home Language class

In the Home Language (HL) class, where most learners were isiXhosa speaking natives, a few Indians, students of colour, and English native students witnessed a communication breakdown in teaching and learning environment, in which the teacher, who was a native English speaker, did not seem to understand isiXhosa whereas in this class most of the learners were isiXhosa natives but doing English as HL. Seemingly, the content taught was based on the rules of sentence construction, (grammar translation approach) and not based on contextual language in my view. The learners appeared bored and were conversing in isiXhosa bemoaning their complete confusion and frustration with regards to what was taught. Extract 2 shows the learners’ feelings in this class.

Extract 2

L1 Hayi, hayi! Akuzange usifundise ke leyo uyithethayo. [i.e. Oh! No, no, you never taught us what you are saying.]

L2 Andinaxesha la le mfixhi mfixhi ka (...) makhe ndibali i-Maths yam [I do not have time this nonsense, let me do my Maths]

L3 Hoe! Jere, Hier die skool is n’ tronk! [Oh! Gosh, this school is a prison] Jadit is waar my broer, sisetrongweni apha. [Yes. That is true my brother we are in prison here]. Waar bly jy? [Where do you live?] Ek bly daar by Komga. [I live there in Qumrha].

From the above comments, the learners were venting their frustrations with regards to the lesson that was presented by the teacher in question but along the same lines as in extract 1. What can be ascertained from this conversation was that meaning in this case, appeared to come from the context of communication and it had become a common practice within the environment of De Vos Malan to hear the diverse participants (students of colour, Indians, Afrikaans speaking learners and a few native English speaking learners) speaking that way. isiXhosa native learners were not an exception since when they spoke English there appeared to be a lot of translation from their mother tongue into English FAL which seems to be challenging both in terms of syntax.

Data segment 2: Translanguaging observations from the teachers’ experiences

Extract 3

Teacher 1 Yes, we know that English isn’t actually really their home language, and so we have to explain word meanings to them, they don’t often understand idiomatic phrases and that they have difficulty with spelling and yes, when you look at their language papers, they don’t always understand figurative language and some of the new answers of the language.

Teacher 2 English or Afrikaans, learners either converse with me in English or Afrikaans. Sometimes with isiXhosa kids I will use a mix of isiXhosa and English.

Teacher 3 It’s either English or isiXhosa depending on the child. The child or parent can sometimes understand the situation better when they are addressed and understand the situation in their own language. It meets them at their point of need, shows respect and recognition for them as a person.

In the above comments, one participant’s explanation appeared to be bias in favour of Afrikaans. This appeared unfair as it could be seen that in fact, the other students in this diverse class were not of Afrikaans origin and were battling to comprehend concepts.

7.3 Reading and Writing: Journaling

This section shows how the reading practices including poetry cultivated a fertile ground for writing through journaling. The participants had to read quite several contemporary attractive books, newspaper articles, magazines, watching news, sports, listening to the radio etc. Whatever knew knowledge gained had to be reflected upon by the participants to promote a reading culture. The students often expressed their own feelings in the journals through poetry, identifying life experiences and related stories based on poetry/ on various reading sources.

When this happened the act of reading became a composing process, which is writing, translating into all forms of expression through dialogues, discussions, debates/poster presentations about the
learners’ own stories/from their sources of choice they read/watched or listened to. Below are some of the learners’ responses in relation to reading and writing.

**Data segment 3: Learners reading and writing practices through poetry**

**Extract 4**

L1 Firstly, reading broadens my vocabulary. Personally, if I had used a vernacular language I would have a lot of difficulty with my studies. English helps a lot because even if I wanted to study overseas, I know it would be possible because I speak English. English is a vast language so, every day I learn something new.

L2 We have been speaking and learning in English since grade 7 therefore it has made it quite easier for us to study well. I understand my work very well whereas if I would have to study in my own home language it wouldn’t be much easier.

L3 Reading helps me a lot because when I must do research-based assignment almost all information is in English.

Of interest to me even though not surprising was the purportedly unanimous endorsement of the use of English as the only medium of instruction by most of the participants (students) which may imply the negative impact of the English language hegemony.

**7.4 Teachers’ perspectives of translinguaging through reading: Journaling**

Since the purpose of my thesis in the main was to promote a reading culture not only in English but across subjects, it was then important for me to hear the perspectives of the teachers in relation to reading at this site. Below are some of the teacher responses.

**Data segment 4: teachers’ perspectives on reading and writing practices**

**Extract 5**

Teacher 1 I do know that the Department feels that we had to bring in IsiXhosa as the third language and are busy working with INCREMENTAL INTRODUCTION OF AFRICAN LANGUAGES (IIAL) situation where they trying to phase it in from grade R or grade 1 up and we started phasing it in with grade 1, 2, and 3. Now I don’t think we adopted a policy to that situation yet in our policy but we are exposing our grade 1, 2, 3 to IsiXhosa. I do not think it is effective for children who intend to go to the university or study further. They prefer to have Afrikaans or English instead of IsiXhosa even if their background is IsiXhosa; they still want to stick in Afrikaans and English. It betters their chances, you know some go to Port Elizabeth and Cape Town and those kinds of places got a lot of Afrikaans and Bloemfontein, whereas East London and Johannesburg very much focus on English but a child that wants to go further I think it’s better to have Afrikaans or English than IsiXhosa. I also think that learners who do not speak IsiXhosa, it’s also important to develop love for that language through reading. It is eventually a very big value to expose the children to IsiXhosa literature, to at least grasp the language.

Teacher 2 Oh! Yes, reading is the Alpha and the Omega. Is the A, B, C, is the 1, 2, 3. And what’s important in my subject where we use numbers, before numbers we start with language even if we do calculations, calculate percentages or ratios we first need the language. What do I need to do? What do I need to calculate? So, the language is the foundation. I think when a child is born his/her parents should buy him/her a book, that is how strong I feel about it; I don’t think we must buy any other gift other than a book, from a very, very young age. And then also in the language that you want them to be brought up, say for an example my child is Afrikaans, we are Afrikaans at home, but my plan for the future is to put that child in English school where the medium of instruction is English I should lay the foundation but also introduce that other language, otherwise the child is going to struggle. So, I feel that especially with IsiXhosa Home language learners, they should be introduced to English earlier. For these children (IsiXhosa speaking learners) English is almost a 3rd language for them. It is not their home language; it is as if English is another subject. It is not that they are making their own language since the small age.

Teacher 3 It is a big factor in my subject because they get a lot of comprehension and scenarios that they must read. So, if they don’t read the scenario, they won’t be able to answer it correctly. You know, to be able to express themselves in a medicinal sort of way they need to read a lot. In my
subject, even though I am not a language teacher I can pick up that they battle with language when they are asked to write essays. They battle to express themselves. They are looking for these big words, but they can’t use them properly.

From the above responses it seems some schools’ language policies in use were not necessarily user-friendly and do not seem to accommodate diversity. The problem with such policies was that not all learners in English Home Language class were from English speaking background and same applies with the Afrikaans class.

7.5 Pre-writing through journaling toward proficient writing in translanguaging: Journaling

The journal entries showed a development in both learners’ writing and reading. One learner reflected on her journal that she did not believe after reading her third draft that it was her work. She pointed out that she was then able to write how she felt unlike before when she used to fear what the teacher and friends would say about her writing. She said with confidence that she knew after a few times of writing, she would be able to write well. The following are the reflections as observed by the learners,

Data segment 5: learners’ pre-writing through translanguaging using journaling

Extract 6

L1 I did not believe after reading my third draft that it was my work. Now I write any how I feel but I know that after a few times of writing, I will be able to write well. This is unlike before when I use to fear what the teacher and my friends will say about my writing.

L2 Even though I prefer English than my own mother tongue for school I find reflecting not so easy. We are asked to read on various readings, class discussions, react and try to interpret to what we have read or watched or listened to.

L3 I thought asking my peer to list her ten things was easy nut when it was my turn to write a poem out of the ten things it was a bit difficult but as I started working on it thoughts started coming and I wrote a nice poem about my peer.

Most of the learners’ writing showed signs of improvement as they reach phase 3 of their final drafts. All the students from the tree grouping of high, medium, and slow showed improvement in their writing and a boost of self-esteem which validated a call for translanguaging.

7.6 Reading as a stimulus for translanguaging: Journaling

The data presented below in extract 7 shows the learners’ responses based on their interaction.

Data segment 6: presents reading as a stimulus for translanguaging using Journal writing

Extract 7

L1 The story I like is the story portrayed in the novel titled, ‘To Kill a Mockingbird’, by Harper Lee. The story portrays a black male’s criminal trial after he is accused of assaulting a white female. This story also tracks the oppression experienced by black natives in America in the early 1940’s. I could definitely relate with the story given South Africa’s high rate of gender violence and given atrocities of the past during the apartheid era.

L2 The title of the book that I read is: “Stronger than the Storm”. The book touched my heart. It tells a story about a young girl who lived a below average life with her mom, siblings and grandmother. She was raped and got infected with HIV. She almost lost her life.

L3 I have read a story from the magazine article, titled, ‘Size Doesn’t Matter’ being a plus-size in their own skin doesn’t mean you can’t wear certain things. Every woman should feel beautiful, confident and comfortable.

This article gave me and every young women confidence to know that we are perfect just the way we are.

The journals were written in three phases. In phase I, the learners submitted their first attempt at the journal to the teacher who read and made relevant comments before returning them for correction. After corrections, they were then required to submit again as the second phase to create a written dialogue between the researcher and the students and among themselves. In this activity, the
students had complete control over the topic. This was realized through scaffolding of pre-writing structure and language use and being cognizance of the importance of affording students agency. In Phase II, the students submitted their revised work and shared their daily experiences. This kept the learners in touch with me since I had read and commented before returning the journal for corrections. Most students improved their writing and seemed to enjoy journaling more – because of their experience which made them share their stories with me (the class teacher). This was where the learners found their voice. They were in control and managed to take care of the grammar mistakes – as there were very few of these. Issues were presented in a logical manner. Feedback was given but doing so with caution not to use the red pen as punishment, instead modelled good writing when there was a need to do so.

8 CONCLUSIONS

The previous section presented the story of my understanding of translanguaging which influences the acquisition of EFAL competence in a South African school as seen through the understanding of my participants’ interpretations. The study focused on translanguaging in diverse classrooms of a South African school. Generally, the data revealed a need for the multimodal/approaches (Thesen, 2014) to teaching and learning which stressed the importance of learning English by a lived through experience. The paradox in this study lied on the contradictions that appeared to have emerged between its rationale and the South African language policy. The findings under the theme of translanguaging revealed that we had two major proposals concerning the use of dual language (Afrikaans & Language) as the current South African language policy each with its own fan base. The South African language policy on the one hand purports that learners need to learn in their mother tongue from grade R up to grade 4 and henceforth in English or Afrikaans. On the other hand, this study presented an unconventional option for translanguaging supported by the literature. The study revealed that even though the participants were not so overt in alienating different languages other than English and Afrikaans, however, they appeared to be in favour of dual medium of instruction. Besides, the isiXhosa (their mother tongue) undertones by the learners during the English HL period in which learners bemoaned a complete confusion concerning the subject matter imparted to them conveyed a need for transformative approach to teaching and learning. Whereas teachers are under no obligation to know all the different languages of learners, however, they need to open up a dialogue and opportunities for translingualism. One way of doing this is by listening to the learners’ family stories invoking Gutiérrez’s (1995) script, counterscript, and underlife in the classroom. Generally, the study revealed a need for the teachers to be aware of the consequences of their actions and the hidden curriculum in class. This augurs well with the Third Space because the Third Space sought to observe closely the differences in involvement, participation, and learning of students in classroom instructional activity and noting multiple social spaces with distinctive participation structures and power relations (Gutiérrez, 1995).

Furthermore, under the theme of reading and writing this study provided an educational inquiry which posed fundamental questions about the nature of human experience which humans share during interaction with characters in a ‘reading zone’ finding a voice/expression in their journals. The study revealed an attempt to learn new languages and discourses as the processes that contribute to language, education and human conditions. This study virtually revealed that the participants were congruent on the idea of reading as having a composing effect toward proficient writing. This means to say that we learn writing by writing and we do that by reading the role of a writer. The application of translanguaging might need transformative teachers who are able to create affordances in their learner settings which leads to a healthy engagement as proven by this study. The study advocated for an environment free of fear and anxiety. Foreign language anxiety (Krashen 1982), is evoked by an individual’s low-self-esteem. Under the theme of reading and writing a participant who happened to be the principal of this natural setting flagged sharply the question of Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) by the South African government to redress the language impasse. The IIAL as I understand it sought to incrementally introduce the African languages from grade 7 to 12. The participant felt strongly that that was not necessary as the learners were in content with the dual medium of instruction. This is a sentiment also shared by the admirers of Afrikaans and English (as dual medium of instruction). They argue that it is better to have English as the medium of instruction in South African schools as this may give learners the necessary English proficiency to be able to get educated at tertiary level and to go even further in academia at international level. In artless terms, Kepe (2017), observed that anyone that is not English will be disadvantaged if they do not receive education in the form of a language in their home language because concepts would be much harder for them to grasp than for a person whose home language is English. This also might imply that there
is less need to train teachers to be efficient in any of the country’s other official languages (11 official languages in South Africa) as well there might be a less need for new translated textbooks. The study revealed a need by the South African Department of Education to expedite the integration of African languages into the school Curriculum to pave some ground for translanguaging towards translingualism in schools.

Overall, the results in this study revealed a need to attend to contradictions and rethink a strict temporal analysis of classrooms - that is, a diachronic view of talk and interaction in classroom activity - to a view of classrooms as having multiple, layered, and conflicting activity systems with various interconnections (Gutiérrez, 1995). The study revealed an unorthodox approach to pre-writing structure and language use, and a cognizance of the importance of affording students’ agency (Adamson et al., 2019). To this end, there is a need to expedite translanguaging in schools. Nunn (2016) argues that the investigation such as this one needed to be seen as a confirmation that supports the relevance of context to human behaviour, and the centrality of the subjective belief systems of those involved in research to the process and outcomes of research. This means that, the conclusions should be seen as context-based, context dependent confirmation of a constructivist knowledge suggested through the subjective perspectives of the participants in the study through their lived through experiences in De Vos Malan (Freire 1972, Lantolf 2000, Kohonen et al 2001). Generally, findings gathered from this study have persuasively believed that one needed both cognitive and social interactive encompassed within the Third Space, affective skills, strategies and behaviours to become competent in EFAL. Over and above that, the findings of this study geared toward advancing translanguaging as the unconventional option if not the only way for the acquisition of EFAL in schools.

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Appendix 1

On 10 July 2015, Nozuko Motyumza failed to return home from work. After a few days her mother filed a missing person’s report with the police. If I was Nozuko’s mother, I would have been worried sick if my daughter did not return home. It is very strange that her mother waited for a few days before reporting her as a missing person.

Warrant Officer Vusumzi Sityoswana who worked on the case said that Xolisa Ntoni, the victim’s boyfriend, on the case said that Xolisa became a person of interest when they found Nozuko’s sim card in his phone. This sounded very suspicious to me, because why would a missing person’s sim card be in her boyfriend’s phone. The suspect denied everything.

Nozuko’s body was found only 120m from her home and it was discovered that she was strangled with her Shoprite uniform scarf. I find this very disturbing, because I do not understand this man’s motive for murdering this woman. On that sad day an innocent woman died and her mother lost her child.
Five die in horror accident near King Williams Town

A King Club employee was one of five people that died in a horror head-on collision on the N2 to Port Elizabeth about 5 kilometers from King on Sunday night.

Siphosetu Mavola, 19, who was a receptionist at the club, died instantly. Her twin sister, Siphalizi, who also works at the King Club, was taken to Grey Hospital by ambulance and later discharged. She was the only survivor of the accident.

On Monday, King Club staff were in a sombre mood on hearing of Siphosetu’s death.

A picture of her with a candle burning next to the photograph was placed on the reception desk where Siphosetu spent many hours tending customers.

Most people spoken to only had good words to say for the ‘short girl who was so friendly and polite to all who came into contact with her.” said King Olum

General manager Mark Lorenzo.

He said a memorial service was due to be held at the King Club yesterday so that friends and staff could pay tribute to Siphosetu.

The accident happened about 9pm Sunday night. According to information the car in which the twins were passengers was returning them home after a ‘family outing’. It could not be established why the car was driving in the direction of Peddie as it is believed the two stayed in Sedgefield.

The exact circumstances of the cause of the accident are also not clear but it appears that a white Polo travelling in the direction of Peddie veered onto the wrong side of the road.

It was hit head-on by an approaching Opel Corsa traveling in the direction of King. Both vehicles had their engines ripped from their chassis by the impact.

Both drivers died on the scene and rescue personnel had to use the jaws of life to free the bodies.

The driver of the Corsa was named as Shadwill Swartz of Brackenhurst who played soccer for Rising Stars. He was apparently returning from Port Elizabeth from where he fetched the Corsa.

According to paramedics two people were thrown from the white Polo and died instantly. A third passenger in the Golf also died on the scene.

“We have five dead when we arrived at the scene,” said a paramedic, adding there was only one survivor.

The road was closed for several hours to allow rescue operations and traffic had to be diverted.

Speed and negligent driving are believed to have played a large role in the accident. Police are investigating cases of culpable homicide.