Guidelines for the development of a transformative pedagogy to integrate Africanisation in a higher education English curriculum

Genevieve Suzann Lentz, Doctoral Candidate

Global Institute for Teacher Education and Society (GITES)

Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Cape Town, South Africa

Summary of PhD work

Supervisor: Professor Zayd Waghid

Introduction

Education plays a crucial role in shaping individuals and societies, and it is essential for education to reflect the diverse cultures, histories and knowledge capital of its students (Alam, 2022). According to Lindstrom (2022) there is growing recognition of the need to promote cultural relevance and improve epistemic success.

Indigenous African languages are undeniably an important component of South Africa's multilingualism. Many students that attend South African higher education institutions still find it difficult to enrol and succeed due to language barriers. Despite their status as official languages, indigenous languages have long been denied the institutional opportunity to act as academic and scientific languages (DHET, 2020). According to Motaung, (2021); Ndlangamandla and Chaka (2020) In this setting, the contradictions and inconsistencies between English monolingualism and the implementation of multilingual policies in South Africa remain contentious for both the decolonisation and transformation, particularly for HEIs. Despite the fact that HEIs have multilingual policies, research has demonstrated that these policies are out of touch with contemporary conceptions of language as a social phenomenon, digital practice, and linguistic attitudes that support translanguaging (Ra & Baker,2021; Ndlangamandla & Chaka, 2020).

Despite being the primary language of the majority of Africans, African languages have traditionally played minor roles in education (Web & Du Pleiss, 2016; Or & Shohany, 2017). According to Web & Du Plessis (2016) several languages occasionally do not have the freedom to practice autonomy when they are taught as subjects because a European language is the most commonly used medium of instruction (Web & Du Pleiss, 2016). Phaka, Vanhove, du Preez, and Hugé (2023), contend that South Africa is a multilingual country where the majority of the population does not speak English as their primary language. They further postulate that linguistic accessibility to all citizens is important to avoid perpetuating the pre-democratic exclusion of the languages spoken by the majority of the African diaspora (Phaka, Vanhove, du Preez, and Hugé, 2023). The challenge for learners is to learn new concepts presented to them through a language that they are still learning (Nhongo & Tshotsho, 2019). They further assert that unquestionably, a learner comprehends topics better when they are presented to them in their first language (Nhongo & Tshotsho, 2019). According to Katiya, Mtonjeni & Sefalane-Nkohla (2015) the stark reality at universities is that many students who enrol for studies, do not speak the language of instruction of the higher education institution (HEI). The more students have the freedom to communicate in their first language with peers, the higher the chances that students will achieve academic success (Lentz & Foncha, 2021).

Extensive studies on translanguaging and blended learning have been undertaken to determine how it is used in the English classroom. Rafi (2022) explored translanguaging as a pedagogical intervention in an English Language Teaching classroom at a Bangladeshi private university. The results proved that in a traditional English classroom the Bangla students were less motivated and understood less than their English-medium peers. However, translanguaging pedagogies provided students with a safe platform that catered for their diverse skill levels. Translanguaging helped the students with the English materials and helped them to be better prepared for assessment. Tai (2023) agrees that existing classroom translanguaging research has delineated affordance to improve multilingual students' metalinguistic awareness and creates a safe learning environment based on students' linguistic and cultural knowledge. Tai & Wong (2022) reminds us that even though extensive research has been done on translanguaging as a pedagogy in multilingual classrooms, research on creating a translanguaging space in the English classroom is limited. Tai & Wong (2022) further emphasises the role of the teacher in a translanguaging space should be co-learner and that for these reasons research should explore how teachers integrate translanguaging in the English classroom. Students engage in translingual style of learning more readily even when English is still the primary language of the classroom because they feel empowered and have a sense of control over the environment when their linguistic resources are acknowledged and recognised (Whitelaw, Dowling & Filby, 2019). Therefore, this study will explore the concept of transformative pedagogy as a means to integrate Africanisation in education, providing guidelines for classroom strategies for lecturers to implement in the classroom.

Problem Statement:

Historically, the African education system has reinforced a Eurocentric worldview, marginalising African cultural traditions and expertise in the classroom (Kayumova & Dou, 2022). Assefa and Mohammed (2022) state that the absence of African content and viewpoints in instructional practices impedes the establishment of a complete and inclusive educational system. Students of African descent are deprived of the ability to properly engage with and understand their own cultural history, resulting in a gap between their identities and the learning process. This gap necessitates the use of a transformational pedagogy to integrate Africanisation in the classroom, hence establishing an environment that celebrates African cultures, values, and knowledge systems. Furthermore, translanguaging and the use of multilingual glossaries have been offered as a tool with which to address the issues stated above.

Ngcobo, Ndebele & Bryant (2021) conducted a study on translanguaging, which was used as a tool to decolonise students' experiences of learning to write for academic purposes in the South African context. Adekunle, Mheta and Rapeane-Mathonsi, (2019) conducted a study on envisioning the use of translanguaging in public spaces as a resource in higher institutions of learning. Wildsmith-Cromarty (2018) focused on translanguaging being used to develop a knowledge basis for language education.

There is a dearth of studies addressing the transformative use of translanguaging within the framework of Africanisation. By addressing this gap, we may create a more inclusive and powerful educational experience that encourages cultural diversity, boosts students' self-esteem, and fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills in the English curriculum.

Study Plan: PhD Lentz

August 2024	Data Collection
September 2024	Transcribe Data
October - November 2024	Analysis
December 2024	Findings Chapter
January 2025	Discussion Chapter
February 2025	Conclusions & Recommendations
March 2025	Editor
June 2025	Corrections
July 2025	Submission
August 2025	Reviewers
September 2025	Corrections & Final Submission
October 2025	Article from Thesis
November 2025	Editor
December 2025	Corrections and Submission
January 2026	Article 2: Translanguaging

February 2026	Editor
March 2026	Corrections and Submit Article
April 2026	Article 3 Africanisation
May 2026	Editor
June 2026	Corrections and Submit Article