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Exploring views on praxis possibilities of multilingualism in university literacy pedagogies

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Background: South African literacy-as-social-practice theoreticians, language-in-education experts, educational linguists, and language policies advocate multilingual pedagogies to acknowledge and cater to diverse multilingual learners' literacy development. Universities purport multilingualism to provide for the multilingual norm, students' literacy, and educational development, as scholarship shows that multilingualism benefits academia and literacy education. Yet, these universities remain locations for monolingual and epistemological biases. Concerns about such praxis pretensions in pluralistic literacy education and the failures in literacy-as-social-practice strategies have been raised. However, the perceptions of lecturers and students on their role in implementing desirable praxis in multilingual literacy education are under-researched.

Objectives: This qualitative study explores lecturers' and students' perceptions and their impact on practising linguistic plurality in literacy for educational development schemes.

Method: The research uses in-depth individual and focus-group interviews with four lecturers and four first-year undergraduate students at a selected linguistically diverse university. An interpretivist paradigm was applied consisting of participants' subjective experiences as members of a higher education institution (HEI).

Results: Findings reveal that lecturers have difficulty coping with multiple languages due to inadequate training and misconceptions about multilingualism, and monolingual pedagogy perceptions carried over from their institutions whose culture denies students' linguistic plurality.

Conclusion: The study demonstrates the importance of shifts in epistemological orientation and adequate training, focused on multilingualism, to develop versatile and agile lecturers equipped for multilingual universities.

Contribution: This research contributes to understanding the complex implementation problems regarding multilingual literacy education and possible solutions. It postulates new ways of forging multilingual literacy practices to erase praxis morbidity.

Keywords: multilingualism; higher education; multilingual literacy pedagogies; perceptions; translanguaging; sociocultural perspectives.

Introduction

The World Literacy Foundation has identified illiteracy as a global problem since nearly 20% of the world's population cannot read or write. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) maintains that literacy gaps hinder social progress, and the problem of low literacy in South Africa is even more pressing at all education levels, characterised by reading and writing deficits (Bharuthram 2017; Meiklejohn et al. 2021; Spaull & Pretorius 2019; Yafele 2021). Educational achievement reports indicate the worst functional failures in literacy skills (Lancaster & Kirklady 2010). The Annual National Assessments (ANA) reveal discouraging reading performances (Van der Berg 2015). Rule and Land (2017:1) also bemoan shortfalls in 'reading for comprehension of meaning in a text'. The latest 2021 PIRLS – International Comparative Reading Literacy Tests – results, released in 2023, show that the Grade 4 pupils unable to read for meaning rose from 78% in 2016 to 82% in 2023 (Stent 2023).

Many interconnected factors are cited as leading causes of poor literacy performance. These reasons include overcrowded classrooms, teacher's increased workloads and the unavailability of learning and teaching resources or books in learners' home languages (Naidoo, Reddy & Dorasamy 2014). Makalela (2015) blames educational establishments for promoting a culture of silence through

Note: Special Collection: Literacy in practice.

English monolithic hegemony. South African translanguaging scholarship on literacy (e.g., Makalela 2016, 2015; Mbirimi-Hungwe 2021; Motlhaka & Makalela 2016; Yafele 2021) generally argues that monolingual biases negatively affect literacy and learning abilities. Many multilingual students find reading, comprehending, and writing academic texts in English complex (Currin & Pretorius 2010; Makalela 2014). Because English is currently the primary medium of instruction, South African multilingual learners must cope with a two-pronged learning challenge. Firstly, they have to master an additional language, and secondly, they need to master subject content in that additional language. Many fail to do so under conventional pedagogies.

Applied linguistics and literacy-as-social-practice theorists (e.g. Gee 2021; Street 2017) locate the problem of low literacy within the sociolinguistic and sociocultural frames. They link literacy education to linguistics and society. For example, these ways and Language of Teaching and Learning (LOLT) may both be at odds with the learners' languages and various societies and cultures, impacting literacy education negatively. This social viewpoint accentuates that literacy learning must acknowledge, value, and exploit the literacy practices that participants and their communities are already involved in (Prinsloo & Baynham 2013). The argument is that culturally relevant ways and methods of teaching in which students use their repertoires in the literacy classroom are best in a multilingual, multicultural context like South Africa. García (2020) calls for elevating heritage languages and culture in reading and literacy teaching and learning.

Many researchers have heeded this call for multilingualism in literacy pedagogies. Promising translingual literacy research in multilingual settings increasingly recommends harnessing students' heritage home languages and their cultural power in reading and writing pedagogies, targeting the multilingual learner. Examples include Madiba, Van Der Walt & Hibbert (2014); Makalela (2014, 2016); Mbirimi-Hungwe (2016); Ngcobo et al. (2016). García and Wei (2014) and Pacheco et al. (2019) also celebrate the potential of fluid multilingualism/culturalism to transform language and literacy education progressively. Makalela (2019) contends that research on translanguaging and multilingualism has begun creating versatile and flexible teaching spaces in multilingual contexts and has grown: e.g. Palfreyman and Van der Walt's (2017) investigation acknowledges the success of multilingual literacy, or subject-content pedagogy lessons. Benefits include deeper learning, increased participation (Mbirimi-Hungwe 2016; Vaish & Subhan 2015) and heightened higher-order reading development proficiencies (Hornberger & Link 2012). Research (e.g., Yafele 2021; Mbirimi-Hungwe & McCabe 2020) continues to validate the efficacious uses of multilingualism in education and reading literacy pedagogy in multilingual higher education (HE).

Local literature demonstrates the significant benefits of translingual, multilingual practices – see Mbirimi-Hungwe and McCabe (2020); Ngcobo et al. (2016); Makalela (2014, 2015); Mbirimi-Hungwe (2021). Also significant are bilingual

programmes initiated at the University of Limpopo (Ramani & Joseph 2004) and, most recently, the University of Fort Hare (Ramadiro 2022). International research and literature have similarly documented the viability of multilingualism-sensitive literacy instruction. García and Lin (2017) argue that theoretic concepts of multilingualism have unlocked new prospects for literacy pedagogy. Cummins (2019) reaches identical conclusions. Multilingualistic frames in literacies permit improved understanding of academic readings, fostering self-confidence in writing and reading, as well as cultivating critical metalinguistic awareness (Garcia & Kleifgen 2020).

These multilingualistic frames, though, are canvassed differently, with two frames emerging. Generally associated with Global North multiple-language settings like New York, one is premised on vertical/linear multilingualism and knowledge, or standard proficiency in multiple but distinctly separately named languages. The other is horizontal, as in Johannesburg, South Africa, where the multiple languages seep into each other. It is based on languaging and fluidity (Heugh 2021) in an ubuntu relationship of languages (Makalela 2016). One can uphold both simultaneously, but this research embraces the latter as contextually more compelling and less problematic. García et al. (2017), García and Lin (2017), Yafele and Makalela (2022) and Hillcrest (2021) all commend the ability of fluid translanguaging models of multilingualism to allow linguistic flexibility and academic success in literacy education. Translanguaging here refers to the fluid simultaneous use of more than one language in the classroom for either language, subject content or literacy teaching and learning in which a student may receive input in one language and give output in another. Translanguaging scholars argue that scaffolding students in text meaning-making is achievable by using English and students' languages in practice.

Heugh et al. (2019) add that such multilingual literacy education creates manoeuvering spaces for lecturers and students to unpack and access academic text content using their own languages while concurrently learning new languages or accommodating English. Applied Language Studies continue to show that multilingualism, linguistic pluralism, and linguistic fluidity benefit literacy and academic purposes (cf. Heugh 2021; Hornberger & Link 2012; Yafele 2021). Despite mounting evidence from cited empirical studies, learners' identities in literacy, languages, or culture are hardly used in academic reading literacy pedagogy. Therefore monolingual-oriented pedagogies persist.

Many scholars (e.g., Heugh 2021; Yafele & Makalela 2022; Hattingh et al. 2016 and Hornberger 2009) are concerned about the perennial disconnection between progressive pedagogies sensitive to multilingualistic theories and deficiencies in multilinguism in the actual literacy classroom practices. This disjuncture, felt in Higher Education Institutions (HEI), indicates implementation glitches in multilingual literacy pedagogies. Scholarship on the linguistic practices

of students in urban HEI settings (e.g., Heugh 2009) points out the lack of harmony between how multilinguals learn literacy and what current research recommends. Current literacy pedagogy mismatches the prescriptions of literacy theories as a social practice. Yafele and Makalela (2022) argue that although theory-based research into multilingualism has created transformative pedagogies, these practices have remained lifeless. Non-enactment of multilingual literacy pedagogies has academically deprived speakers of local African languages, destroying their self-esteem in HEIs.

This article explores the role of students' and lecturers' perceptions of multilingualism in literacy instruction. The interest is in how perceptions affect the implementation of research-proven multilingual literacy practices in HEI. Polyglot practices may have failed implementation as part of literacy as a social practice due to the pervasive power of English and the associated monolinguist predispositions. Lecturers' and students' perceptions, awareness, beliefs and theories are central to implementing pedagogical improvement or remodelling (Zepke, Leach & Butler 2014). Perceptions of multilingualism were the primary source of information for the article.

The research site was the multilingual University of Johannesburg, located in the heart of the linguistically super-diverse metro of Johannesburg, South Africa. The data were collected through in-depth interviews with four first-year lecturers and their four undergraduate students in the Department of Applied Communicative Skills (ACS). This unit in the Faculty of Humanities prepares students for the literacies of universities and their professions. The department initiates first-year students into the reading and writing discourses (Gee 2021) expected in academia and professional spaces.

The current study was prompted by a need to research the role of students' and lecturers' perceptions in embracing multilingualistic literacy practices, given that they are the local agents of teaching practices. According to Hornberger (2009:3), local actors, like the research participants, may open up or shut down agentive spaces for multilingual literacy education. They may embrace or conceivably resist multilingualism in literacy education initiatives. Institutions, lecturers and students are, therefore, players in the implementation failure or success of scientifically proven multilingualistic theories of literacy education. They play a role. If there is an unwillingness to use different languages for literacy development, teaching and learning, the institution remains monolingual. Negative attitudes from students and lecturers can derail multilingualism in literacy development (Magocha, Mutasa & Rammala 2019).

This study hypothesises that undergraduates' and lecturers' attitudes towards multilingualism in HE impact whether multilingual literacy education is adopted or rejected. Participants' perceptions and attitudes could reveal whether or not students and their lecturers play any meaningful role in applying multilingual literacy practices in HE contexts.

Hence, the research question asked is:

What do lecturers' and students' perceptions of multilingualism reveal about the possibilities of successfully applying multilingualism-oriented literacy pedagogy in HEIs?

Theoretical framework

This study on perceptions of multilingualism and literacy pedagogies uses sociocultural theories of learning and cognition that investigate the relationship between lecturers' and students' internal constructs and external behaviours. Sociocultural theories of cognition suggest connections between the development of learners' thought processes, education, how they get motivated or communicate, and the society from which their culture and socialisation stem. The theory clarifies the close links between society, culture, and student learning (Vygotsky & Cole 1978) by positioning learning as social. It is premised on students bringing information, knowledge, identities, and literacies learned from their communities and homes to the classroom. Literacy teachers must utilise these in pedagogy. Socio-culturalists would argue that how students frame their learning and thinking or cognitive processes is profoundly entrenched in their own cultures. Additionally, problems in literacy classrooms, relationships, and pedagogic choices may arise when there is a disconnect between learners' culture and the educators' or HEI's culture.

It may set up progressive sociocultural-oriented literacy pedagogies for failing if the university HEIs or the lecturers are insensitive to students' cultural and linguistic identities and needs. Students' cultures, languages, and home ways are resources that can be harnessed for literacy education unless there are clashes between students' cultures and the monolingual cultures and biases in HEIs. Hence, sociocultural theorists of literacy education assert the presence of the students' culture as the starting point of the literacy pedagogy process. Challenges emerge when sociocultural rifts exist or develop between those responsible for delivering literacy education (lecturers, institutions, HEIs) and the students for whom the literacy education is intended. In interviews the extent of inclusion of students' cultures and languages in lecturers' literacy pedagogies is explored.

Literature review
Multilingualism and literacy education

Research has long demonstrated the viability of multilingual literacy education and has given much guidance on the practicability and benefits of multilingual literacy classrooms at different levels in the education system. There is universal consensus in local and international research on the use of two or more languages in pedagogy and the educational benefits of multilingualism via home languages (Heugh et al. 2019; Makalela 2015; Yafele 2021; Mbirimi-Hungwe 2021; Seltzer & García 2020). The trend since Pearl and Lambert's (1962) findings on the links between increased Intelligence Quotient (IQ) and bilingualism has been to look

for the positive effects of bi-/multilingualism on thinking. Hakuta (1990) emphasises bilingual instruction and developing learners' first language alongside others to cultivate literacy and other forms of education. Baker (2006) adds that experiential research confirms that bi-/multilingual literacy education promotes and develops divergent and critical thinking. Hornberger (2003) documents classroom success in an investigational bilingual literacy education programme involving students speaking Quechua in Puno (Peru), and Seal (2021) applauds the benefits of translanguaging pedagogy and practice. Such multilingualistic pedagogy research offers clear examples of the practical possibilities in a multilingual literacy education that may be replicated.

Local bi-literacy and multilingualistic research initiatives include a Ramani et al. (2007) study at the University of Limpopo involving an undergraduate Bachelor of Arts degree programme delivered in Sesotho and English. Chick (2001:7) found that using isiZulu in language in KwaZulu-Natal literacy classrooms could be beneficial. In two cases, Makalela (2015) and Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenbergen, (2015) used small-scale case studies to demonstrate and prove the possible benefits of multilingual practices and genre-based pedagogies. Kerfoot and Simon-Vandenbergen, (2015) conducted empirical research on second-language writing improvement for learners in Grades 4 and 6. Multilingual education promotes and maintains indigenous languages, making text learning, for example, more accessible to students. The scholarship (e.g. Cummins 2019; Heugh 2021) continues to show that multilingual classroom practices contribute to bi-/multilingual students' cognitive and academic growth, enabling them to learn academic literacy by drawing on their existing linguistic knowledge while adding other languages to their linguistic repertoires. When students get a chance to learn from texts in languages they are proficient in, they understand text concepts better, and their academic performance improves.

The translanguaging lens and framework

Translanguaging, as theory and pedagogy, is for this study a useful theoretical lens on multilingualism and literacy education and has shifted understandings of multilingualism. Yafele and Makalela (2022) demonstrate translanguaging as moving fluidly between multiple languages. Hornberger and Link (2012:262) and Makalela (2014:2) define it as 'a purposeful interchange of languages in written and spoken and productive and receptive modes'. The concurrent use of several languages in literacy and subject content lessons is accepted. Research demonstrates translingual pedagogies as viable for executing translanguaging literacy education. There is a developing need for translanguaging approaches in multilingual exchanges in the literacy class (e.g., Makalela 2015; Mbirimi-Hungwe & McCabe 2020; Yafele 2021). García and Lin (2017) and Wei and Lin (2019) indicate that translanguaging research is increasingly becoming established in content-focused instruction (including text content) in bi-/multilingual teaching contexts. Translanguaging, as pedagogy and theory, has unlocked new teaching and learning possibilities

for multilinguals' accomplishment in literacy education (Cummins 2019; García & Lin 2017).

Translanguaging models have effectively boosted learners' higher cognition proficiencies in reading growth and progression (García & Lin 2017; García et al. 2017; Hornberger & Link 2012). Translanguaging is part of 'new' initiatives and critical research opportunities that have started to query the legitimacy of strict borders around languages and the monolingual lenses through which literacy has thus far been viewed. Therefore, substitute pedagogical strategies for multilingual classrooms have begun accepting concurrent employment of multiple languages in pedagogy for communicative or academic subject-matter topics, including writing and reading for comprehension.

Studies conducted in the past 10 years on translanguaging and text comprehension at local South African universities and other educational levels are briefly described to show the importance of this topic and the feasibility of multilingual literacy pedagogies. Makalela (2014) successfully used translanguaging techniques with student teachers at Wits University and reported success with primary school pupils in a reading development intervention in Limpopo. Yafele (2021) successfully used translanguaging for academic reading at the University of Johannesburg. Mbirimi-Hungwe and McCabe (2020) and Mbirimi-Hungwe (2016) used translanguaging in summarising and paraphrasing texts to enhance students' understanding of medical reading material at Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University. The cited research draws on translanguaging to reinforce recent empirical studies that dispute monolingual and monoglossic language habits.

Translanguaging criticism

Although valuable, heralding notable advancements and opportunities, multilingualism and translanguaging research have been criticised. Chaka (2020) opposes translanguaging for analysing and challenging named languages, albeit employing the same languages. Translanguaging researchers (e.g. García et al. 2017 and Yafele & Makalela 2022), in rebut, clarify that socially, people have always named the *external* discursive topographic features of meaning-making as English, isiZulu, Sepedi, etcetera. However, these lingos do not continuously operate as isolated entities (but as one language system *internally*) for somebody who utilises them concurrently while engaged in meaning-making processes within communicative episodes.

Other criticisms and quibbles involve neglecting indigenous languages, reinforcing dominant languages, structural inequality and power dynamics, as well as limited practical implementation. In response, the translanguaging scholarship continues to reflect on critiques, contradictions, challenges, complexities, and opportunities proffered by translanguaging but also offers compelling defences for the theory and practice (cf. Makalela and Silva 2023; Hillcrest 2021; Cenoz and Gorter 2021; García 2020; Hattingh et al. 2021; Wang and Li 2020 and Heugh 2021). Translanguaging pedagogies promise solutions in

complex multilingual educational settings and the soundest pathways to end the academic marginalisation of multilinguals and the literacy crisis in South Africa.

The study

Higher Education literacy pedagogies are expected to transform multilingually to cater to multilingual norms, educational access and achievement. Lecturers' and students' perceptions are central to success. This study examines these perceptions to understand how they impact desired multilingual transformations.

The qualitative research explores students' and lecturers' perceptiveness of multilingualism, using individual and focus-group interviews to get insight into multilingual literacy pedagogy implementation possibilities and challenges. The hypothesis was that participants' perceptions and attitudes may reveal whether or not students and their lecturers could play a meaningful role in a bottoms-up approach to implementing multilingual language pedagogies in HE contexts.

Ethical considerations

The research followed the protocols and requirements of the mandatory ethics clearance process.

Population and sampling

A sample is a 'subset' that epitomises or denotes the intended populace for the research (Polit & Beck 2004). The sample, selected for interviews, typified the university students whose literacy education and opportunities are directly affected by the monolithic hegemony of English and institutional biases. These participants comprised four diverse, multilingual first year students and their four lecturers from the Applied Communicative Skills Department (cf. Tables 1 and 2). Purposive sampling was used with multilingual students, but the lecturer participants were already conveniently the researcher's colleagues. Purposive and convenience sampling were used because the research

intended to select student participants with varying levels of multilingualism who were simultaneously willing to provide data based on their experiences and knowledge – in terms of depth and relevance – of the perceptions on multilingualism in literacy pedagogies under investigation (Petty, Thomson & Stew 2012). Respondents were chosen according to their answer to the research question about their perceptions and attitudes towards multilingual literacy practices in HE (Teddlie & Yu 2007). There was a real need to utilise gathered knowledge of perceptions and attitudes to understand implementation problems and promote multilingual practices.

Data collection methods

The case study conducted semi-structured focus groups and individual interviews with participants to explore their perceptions towards multilingual approaches. Case studies typically conduct interpretative phenomenological investigation aimed at developing insights from the perspectives of those involved in the experience and exploring for meanings and experiences about a phenomenon (McMillan & Schumacher 2010). This methodology contributed to understanding participants' perspectives on their experiences. The four audio-recorded interviews lasted between 50 and 90 min each.

Data analysis

Theories of multilingualism and translanguaging were used to examine and deductively analyse data within the socio-cultural framework to reveal views and attitudes towards multilingualism in academia. The interview data transcripts were inductively coded using thematic analysis for emerging trends, categories and supported ideas. The researcher condensed these into themes and sub-themes in the analysis.

Results and discussion

The interview data captured the respondents' perceptions, attitudes and experiences of institutional multilingual

TABLE 1: Lecturer participant information.

Participant (Lecturer)	Gender	Age (years)	Education	Lecturing since	Nationality	Languages
A	F	40	MA	2012	SA	English, Afrikaans, IsiZulu, Gujarat
B	F	60	MA	2000	SA	English, Afrikaans IsiZulu, Tamil
C	M	58	PhD	2001	SA	English, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, Sesotho, IsiZulu
D	M	32	PhD	2019	SA	English, Sepedi, Xitsonga, Tshivenda, IsiZulu

Note: The lecturer participants are distinguished in the data presentation as Lecturers A, B, C, and D.
F, female; M, male, SA, South African.

TABLE 2: Student participant information.

Student	Gender	Age (years)	Student-year	Nationality	Languages
A	F	17	1	SA	English, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Setswana
B	F	18	1	SA	English, Afrikaans IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Setswana
C	M	17	1	SA	English, IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Setswana
D	M	18	1	SA	English, Afrikaans Sepedi, IsiXhosa, Setswana

Note: The student (A, B, C, and D) are new to any multilingual literacy pedagogy intervention.
F, female; M, male, SA, South African.

practices. Six themes from the exploration are introduced, illustrated, analysed, interpreted and discussed:

• The monolingual carry-over effect: An obstacle to multilingual literacy.
• Lecturers' inadequacy in managing multilingualism.
• The undermining monolithic hegemony of English.
• Problematic views on multilingualism in education.
• Lacking support, guidelines, and resources for multilingualism.
• Embracement, ambivalence or cognitive dissonance.

The monolingual carry-over effect: An obstacle to multilingual literacy

Responding to a question about their opinion on whether multilingualism or African languages could work in the context of an actual literacy classroom for epistemic access, the older lecturers (B and C) and student participants expressed a negative attitude and scepticism, as shown in the excerpts below:

> 'I will not even try it. I will not simply go into class and expect students to respond to me in their mother tongue or me to address some issues in their mother tongue with the hope that the message will be delivered. I never did it and never will.' (Lecturer C)

> 'I do not think multilingualism will work. How many languages will you be able to accommodate in the teaching setup? Too many languages add to language mix-ups and confusion. Students won't understand each others' languages.' (Lecturer B)

> 'I think African languages would not work in academia or academic literacy. One of our lecturers said so. I do not believe local African languages can be academic languages.' (Student A)

The three comments exposed lecturers' and students' negative attitudes as obstacles to implementing multilingual literacy education. If the notion of multilingualism in reading and writing pedagogy is an impossibility in the minds of the lecturers and university community, then no agency exists for implementation.

The two older lecturer-participants (B and C) support a monolingual pedagogy. They distanced themselves from students' languages and use English only. They see English as the only vehicle of text and other knowledge dissemination. These perceptions show a carry-over effect (Dhokotera & Makalela 2022) from the training they received from the monolingual universities they attended and now perpetuate. They disregard other languages within lecturing spaces.

Pacheco et al. (2019) vie for accommodating attitudes to facilitate recognition for students' languages and leveraging them into English-centred classrooms, supporting students' meaningful engagement with academic text content.

The data exposed the need to fight off entrenched nihilism about the practicability of multilingualism in academia. Catalano and Hamann (2016) persuade us to move from a philosophy of multiple languages as problematic to diverse languages as community capital. Similarly, Cenoz and Gorter (2021) contend that a conceptual shift from monolingual perceptions to multilingualism is necessary. Results show that ideological and attitudinal shifts are needed to allow multilingual practices in teaching literacy.

Makalela (2016) rejects Lecturer B's comments that multilingualism causes 'chaos and confusion'. He agrees that multilingualism could disrupt the traditional, orderly monolingual literacy classroom. However, order and fluidity in meaning-making replace the disorderliness of utilising multiple languages simultaneously. He emphasises the need for heteroglossic ideological shifts. Makalela (2015, 2016, 2019) re-thinks multilingualism as ubuntu translanguaging disruptive of Western linearity standards in reading literacy education. When students use their multiple language repertoires, there may occur a disruption to the linear meaning-making ideologies of the West. However, simultaneously, the multilinguals are together in meaning-making and deep text understanding. What Lecturer B sees as 'chaos and confusion' is, according to Makalela (2014, 2015, 2016), a break from colonial and Western paradigms of linear standardised notions of language, which perceive the ubuntu translanguaging as disruption or contamination in standardised making-meaning. The languages do not confuse but leak into each other fluidly, resulting in deep text understanding. Ubuntu translanguaging disrupts orderliness, creating the chaos of 'meshed languaging' (Makalela 2019), yet has cohesion, fluidity, and togetherness in meaning-making.

Yafele (2021) and Makalela (2015) have demonstrated possibilities and strategies to offset English dominance by creating productive multilingual havens in literacy classrooms where languages work together harmoniously. Pacheco et al. (2019) exhibit the viability of several effective multilingual pedagogy techniques, including contextualising, invoicing, and recontextualising strategies. Mbirimi-Hungwe and McCabe (2020) affirm that a method they coin *trans-collab* works well in multilingual university reading classes. Wei (2015) applauds the creation of 'translanguaging spaces' or classroom places and freedom for multilingualism to thrive. The cited empirical research reveals the endless possibilities of multilingualism in literacy classrooms. The studies indicate that even lecturers who are themselves monolingual and who do not share the students' heritage languages can still be very creative with multilingual techniques and pedagogies.

Lecturer inadequacy in managing multilingualism

The participants also identified the lack of proficiency in students' many languages as problematic. The study shows that lecturers who are not multilingual or proficient in students' languages feel impotent to implement multilingual education. Comments below indicate this challenge:

> 'The different languages that we speak cause language barriers. It's impossible to navigate multilingualism.' (Lecturer C)

'We are not multilingual ourselves, so I can only teach in English. In the class, you must have a good grasp of whatever language of instruction you use. One needs to know all these other languages, and there are so many. I need help managing a multilingual teaching situation.' (Lecturer A)

The excerpts above indicate that it is challenging to implement pluralistic literacy pedagogies because both lecturers and students feel they come from diverse linguistic backgrounds and lack proficiency in one another's local language. McNamara (2015) and Wang and Li (2020) acknowledge this problem and indicate that the difficulties of managing multilingual literacy classes include teachers' lack of multilingual proficiency and disabling power from the dominant monolingual beliefs.

The undermining monolithic hegemony of English

Interview results showed that English is perceived as a superior, unrivalled lingua franca and academic language, a view which undermines pluralistic orientations, practices or initiatives. The comments below from the lecturer and student participants in this study support this finding.

'I do not think English is replaceable. It is used in teaching and learning, workplaces, and in Government departments.' (Lecturer D)

'English is very valuable in academia. Using other languages would be difficult. Also, most students come from English-medium schools and speak and prefer English. Moreover, the departments in the university we service are specific about wanting English proficiency. Most of them say these students have English problems for us to fix. It is difficult to deviate from this English because, categorically, Departments ask for English. They do not have much tolerance for other languages. They want nothing else, just English for academic and work purposes.' (Lecturer B)

'The minute you cannot express yourself in English in university, that is where the problem begins.' (Student B)

'Trying to take out English would be like trying to take away cell phones, a permanent and central feature of our lives.' (Student A)

The demand is for English. The data give some credence to Jenkins' (2019) views that English has become the primary lingua franca of choice worldwide. As Lecturer B intimates, many HE systems modules and departments privilege English in academic discourse (Makoe & McKinney 2014). According to Jenkins, many universities have switched to English in their drive to internationalise. The internationalisation of universities is thus going together with 'Englishisation'. Universities are, ironically, becoming progressively focused on English, on the one hand and, on the other, progressively lingua-culturally more diverse.

Hornberger (2003:323) cautions that such viewpoints are against 'developmental evidence that learners learn best from the starting point of their languages'. She calls for educational institutions to neutralise entrenched ideologies favouring English only. Offsetting English monolingualism

dogmas may entail reconceptualising multilingualism to include fluid translingual models in which English works with other African languages. Coetzee-De Vos (2019) argues for multilingual, if not translanguaging, practices in HE that combine in simultaneous meaning-making, all South African languages, including English and Afrikaans, which have already developed as academic languages.

Problematic views on multilingualism in education

Lacking sociocultural perspectives, the participants revealed that the complex multilingual nature of South African HEI paralysed them. The following statements clarify some of these challenges:

'So, there are so many languages in the classroom. Which one am I going to use? It's almost impossible.' (Lecturer A)

'So, what language would work in that environment? Which languages? Which language is predominant? How would you choose?.' (Lecturer B)

Multilingualism here gets misconstrued as multiple monolingualism. However, multilingualism is not monolingual multilingualism (Makalela 2019; Makoni & Pennycook 2012). What multilingualism means and entails is vital to data analysis, as different understandings are possible. Makoni and Pennycook (2012) theorise that South African multilingualism is fluid rather than fixed. The notions of fixity and fluidity in multilingualism, as conceptualised by Makoni and Pennycook (2012), and adopted to characterise perceptions of multilingualism in this analysis, are clarified by Prinsloo (2023:1): 'fixity points to the persistence of boundaried and standardised language practices' regarding named languages. Fluidity points to multilingualism in which 'language and semiotic practices overflow boundaries, cross, merge or mesh resources from what has been thought separate languages'. Hence, named languages are fluid in this form of multilingualism.

These theorists would argue that in the presented data, there may be a misrepresentation in the participants' views on multilingualism in their statements because they view languages as distinct, rigid units or silos in a linear lingo competition. Such vertical/linear views of multilingualism mismatch the reality of the horizontal, fluid multilingualistic dynamics, or realities, of this urban research site of a university in the heart of Johannesburg – a super-diverse melting pot of South African languages (Creese & Blackledge 2010). The multilingualistic dimensions in this context are such that there is a complete overlap of languages, allowing for the adaptation of fluid forms of multilingualism or language practices (like ubuntu translanguaging) wherein languages seep into and complement each other – permitting flexibility (Makalela 2016). Incongruous views on multilingualism undermine multilingualism in HE.

In the above excerpts, the linear interpretative perception of multilingualism generates a grading or Olympics of

languages, resulting in dilemmas for a university aspiring to multilingual transformations. Yafele and Makalela (2022) resolve this problem by reconceptualising the dimensions of multilingualism as more fluid, flexible, and aligned with the assorted linguistically plural students in university spaces.

Perceptions on multilingualism must gravitate to linguistically flexible constructs that acknowledge learners' many languages for sense-making and acknowledge student identities where languages overlap and become incomplete when separated from other languages (Creese & Blackledge 2010; Makalela 2016, 2019).

Lacking support, guidelines, and resources for multilingualism

Lecturers and students expressed that they are not adequately guided, supported, and resourced for implementing multilingualism. The failure of the authorities in HEIs, or their unwillingness to enforce or support multilingual pedagogical practices, is a critical issue in the lecturers' and students' interviews, as shown in the excerpts below:

> 'Lecturers do not know how to implement this (multilingualism) because we have not been given guidelines. Some do not even know which languages are official. No one is monitoring or cares. No one is doing follow-up, researching, checking, or assessing if multilingualism applies to university academic literacy teaching or if we can use these languages. Management or authorities need to ask: What could be the challenges?.' (Lecturer D)

> 'The practice of it and its implementation need support.' (Lecturer B)

> 'I think lecturers should also have some training in teaching that incorporates multilingualism.' (Student A)

The data affirm Kaschula and Kretzer's (2019) conclusions that if insufficient support and resources are provided to back multilingual literacy pedagogies, lecturers become incapacitated regarding pedagogical guidelines or training in multilingual settings. Cele (2021:25) highlights failures to guide multilingualism pedagogies.

Resource constraints have been documented in the literature, where resources and support for effecting multilingual pedagogies are either missing, limited or not provided at all, as alluded to in the interview data. Edwards & Ngwaru (2011) highlight a lack of appropriate learning materials or textbooks to support multilingual education. Omidire (2020:162–165) identifies educators' ill-preparedness to handle multilinguals and a need for training and support for pedagogies to accommodate polyglots. Portolés and Martí (2020), as well as Clegg and Simpson (2016), call for the necessary support with skills, resources and content knowledge. They propose multilingual educational support services via ongoing professional development.

Embracement, ambivalence, or cognitive dissonance

Interview results show ambivalence. Students and the younger lecturers – less influenced by 'colonial monolingual carry-overs' (Dhokotera & Makalela 2022:73) – report embracing multilingualism and are enthusiastic about multilingual educational transformations and change agency. The comments below support this finding.

> 'Students engage and can follow my lecture when I allow them to use their languages. I think it improves their grades when we remove language barriers. Multilingual pedagogy is doable and possible, despite challenges. I've tried it. It is working. When you give space to their languages, students become very excited. They sometimes fail to understand text concepts because English is not their mother tongue.' (Lecturer D)

> 'Sometimes, students respond in their languages to grapple with a text idea or complex concept. I encourage that. They react in their languages because that's how they get to understand.' (Lecturer A)

> 'Using our languages gives us advantages to advance within university spaces. It gives everyone equal opportunities.' (Student A)

The findings indicate an awareness of the benefits of and ambivalent support for multilingualism. Lecturers from the older generation also profess embracement of multilingualism but display cognitive dissonance representing mental conflict. Their support for multilingualism fails to align with their actions.

One lecturer displayed this cognitive dissonance:

> 'We can definitely use their languages to explain things. We can enable that and perhaps need to. But! We need to look at what the department wants us to do. We must teach English proficiency in reading and writing and can only do so using English. We also got taught that way. That is what the department wants us to do.' (Lecturer B)

Dhokotera and Makalela (2022) document these hanging-onto-past English-only ways as a hangover effect of monolingual teacher educational programmes. Lecturer B replicates historical educational experiences:

> 'We must teach English proficiency … using English. We also got taught that way.' (Lecturer B)

This lecturer perpetuates the inherited colonial monolingual education despite ambivalent multilingualism talk:

> 'We can definitely use their [*students'*] languages … we can enable that and perhaps need to.' (Lecturer B)

Past-era ideologies and beliefs about mono-language (English) in education persist and sabotage multilingualism implementation efforts. Dhokotera and Makalela (2022) demonstrate how educators trained in the colonial era embody colonial education's institutional identities. They argue, as we do in this article, that hangovers from the colonial era must be addressed for the transformation and decolonisation of multilingualism in university education.

Even so, the data hint that the participants (Lecturer D & A and Student B) embrace multilingualism and may exercise their agency for the realisation of multilingualism. Lecturer D (Male, 32) 'allows' students 'to **use** their languages'. He tries to 'remove language barriers' and has **tried** 'multilingual pedagogy'. He gives students 'space to use their languages', and Lecturer A (Female, 40) 'encourages' students' languages. These action verbs indicate active agency. Pirhonen (2022:613) endorses such agency, concluding that implementing multilingual pedagogies in universities risks derailments if participants lack agency. Nkosi (2014) argues that participants must similarly take on the agency for all pluralistic pedagogy activities of implementation.

Conclusion

The results show that while the younger ones embrace multilingualism, showing agency, lecturers have difficulties executing multilingual pedagogies. They struggle to reimagine literacy pedagogy to address complex multilingual contexts and require help and guidance in supporting multilingual students. Transforming the HE terrain to make it more accessible to the historically marginalised, multilingual students demands that university authorities provide support to leverage existing lecturer agencies for transformation via multilingual pedagogy guidelines.

The data show misconceptions about sociocultural viewpoints on multilingualism while left-over monoglossic perceptions distance lecturers from students' languages. The English-only beliefs of some lecturers silence other languages, excluding students' ways of being, doing, and knowing. Therefore, there is a need for large-scale advocacy on the value of multilingual literacy development, which hinges on the students themselves (ways of knowing, behaving, and being). In other words, their cultures and identities are significant for developing translingual literacy models. Lecturers need to cope with the multiple identities of all individuals in the class by acknowledging who the students are. They must allow multilingualism to thrive and students to exist as communities. Lecturers need not know all the students' languages but must allow a translanguaging space (Wei Li 2017), sensitive to students' identities. Educational programmes for instructors and universities must accommodate the realities of 21st-century multilingualism, prepare lecturers for the multilingual universities they serve, and tap into students' community capital. Solutions lie in increased knowledge of multilingual practices and advocacy to produce versatile, agile and resourceful lecturers.

Acknowledgements

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